



CONFLICT BAROMETER | 2017

Heidelberg Institute for
International Conflict Research



disputes
non-violent crises
violent crises
limited wars
wars

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International Conflict Research

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Analyzed Period: 01/01/17 – 12/31/17

PREFACE

With the 26th edition of the *Conflict Barometer*, the HIIK continues its annual series of reports covering dynamics of political conflicts worldwide. 2017 was marked by an increased number of wars in Africa. New wars developed in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Central African Republic, and in Ethiopia. Also, new wars were observed in Myanmar and the Philippines. Additionally, non-violent interstate conflicts affected political developments in the last year. While the conflict between Japan, South Korea, and the US, on the one hand, and North Korea, on the other, significantly shaped international politics in the course of the year, the conflict between Qatar, on the one hand, and Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, and Egypt, on the other, especially influenced the Middle East.

In 2017, the HIIK introduces a new category of texts called 'spotlights'. These short articles complement the well-established conflict descriptions by presenting additional information on certain conflicts as well as their influence on political realities. The Spotlights are supposed to underline the HIIK's purpose of combining quantitative conflict measurement with qualitative approaches. Light will be cast on cyber conflicts, on political developments in Pakistan, Ethiopia, and the DR Congo, on how opium fuels conflict in Afghanistan, and on the current role of NATO in Europe. Additionally, the HIIK reflects and discusses its own methodology by exemplarily applying it to current conflicts in Colombia.

As in previous years, the *Conflict Barometer* also contains extensive accounts of measures of conflict resolution such as negotiations and treaties, UN peacekeeping missions as well as authoritative decisions by the ICJ and the ICC. Finally, the report provides a time series of network graphs visualizing interstate conflict constellations.

The Board of Directors would like to thank all who contributed to this report for their outstanding efforts, especially during the final stages of editing. Without their commitment, a publication like this would be impossible. The board would particularly like to thank Franziska Linke and Timo Werth.

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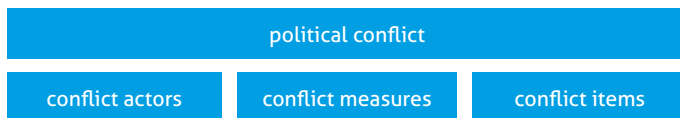
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Methodology

Since 1991, quantitative conflict research at the HIIK has analyzed political conflicts by focusing on conflict processes rather than e.g. purely quantitative thresholds of casualties of war. Thus, the HIIK is particularly concerned with the concrete actions and communications between conflict parties. Such a process-oriented approach gives the analysis of political conflicts, especially regarding intensities, a broader and more detailed empirical foundation.

Beginning in 2011, the HIIK in cooperation with Heidelberg University has taken steps to further elaborate its methodological approach. In particular, the institute has revised its definition of political conflicts and restructured its conflict intensity assessment. The latter now not only takes into account the intensity for a given conflict area in a given year, but determines the intensity of a conflict for first-level subnational political units and months as well. As such, it allows for a much more detailed measurement of conflict dynamics. Furthermore, the conflict actions and communications, on which the assessment of violent conflict episodes is based are now evaluated by combining qualitative and quantitative indicators of the means and consequences of violence. This is intended to further enhance the exactitude, reliability, and reproducibility of the conflict information provided.

THE CONCEPT OF POLITICAL CONFLICT



According to the Heidelberg approach, a political conflict is a perceived incompatibility of intentions between individuals or social groups. Such an incompatibility emerges from the presence of actors who communicate and act with regard to certain objects. These actions and communications are known as measures, while the objects form the issues of positional differences. Actors, measures, and issues are the constitutive attributes of political conflict.

CONFLICT ACTORS

Conflict actors are individuals or collectives that are relevant because they are taken into account by other conflict actors in their decision-making processes. Collective actors are characterized by a shared structure of preferences. They include states, international organizations, and non-state actors.

CONFLICT MEASURES

Conflict measures are actions and communications carried out by a conflict actor in the context of a political conflict. They are constitutive for an identifiable conflict if they lie outside established procedures of conflict regulations

and—possibly in conjunction with other measures—if they threaten the international order or a core function of the state. Established regulatory procedures are defined as those mechanisms of conflict management that are accepted by the conflict actors. Examples include elections and court proceedings. Established procedures of regulation must be performed without resorting to the use or threat of physical violence. Core state functions encompass providing security of a population, integrity of a territory and of a specific political, socioeconomic or cultural order. A state function or the international order is threatened if its fulfilment and persistence, respectively, becomes unlikely in a conflict actor's point of view.

CONFLICT ISSUES

Conflict issues are material or immaterial goods pursued by conflict actors via conflict measures. Due to the character of conflict measures, conflict issues attain relevance for the society as a whole—either for the coexistence within a given state or between states. Conflict issues are classified on the basis of ten items representing common goals of conflict actors: System/Ideology is encoded if a conflict actor aspires a change of the ideological, religious, socioeconomic or judicial orientation of the political system or changing the regime type itself. National power means the power to govern a state. Whereas Autonomy refers to attaining or extending political self-rule of a population within a state or of a dependent territory without striving for independence, Secession refers to the aspired separation of a part of a territory of a state aiming to establish a new state or to merge with another state. Furthermore, Decolonization aims at the independence of a dependent territory. Subnational Predominance focuses on the attainment of the de-facto control by a government, a non-state organization or a population over a territory or a population. The item Resources is encoded if the possession of natural resources or raw materials, or the profits gained thereof, is pursued. Territory means a change of the course of an international border, while International Power as an item describes the change aspired in the power constellation in the international system or a regional system therein, especially by changing military capabilities or the political or economic influence of a state. The item Other is used as residual category.

THE CONCEPT OF CONFLICT INTENSITY

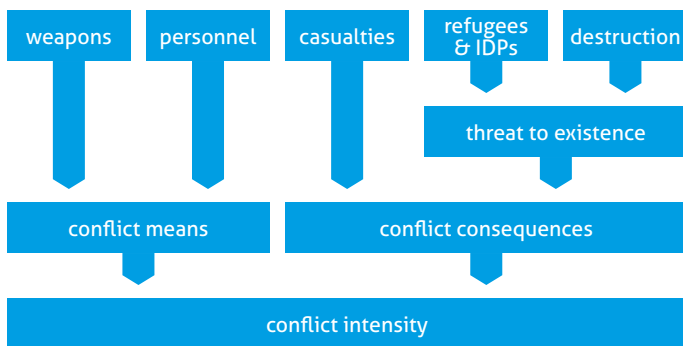
intensity level	terminology	level of violence	intensity class
1	dispute	non-violent conflicts	low intensity
2	non-violent crisis		
3	violent crisis	violent conflicts	medium intensity
4	limited war		high intensity
5	war		

In addition to the three constituting elements—conflict actors, measures, and items—conflict intensity is an essential feature of political conflicts. Conflict intensity is an attribute of the sum of conflict measures in a specific political conflict in a geographical area and a given space of time. The primary units of analysis are the calendar month and the region, i.e. the first-level subnational administrative unit of a country. The basic conflict intensity is therefore determined for a 'region-month.' Since 2003, the HIIK has been using a five-level model of conflict intensity. Under its revised methodology, the intensity levels are now known as dispute, non-violent crisis, violent crisis, limited war, and war.

The last three levels constitute the category of violent conflicts, in contrast to the non-violent conflicts (dispute and non-violent crisis). Whereas a dispute is a political conflict carried out without resorting to violence, in a non-violent crisis one of the actors threatens to use violence. This includes violence against objects without taking the risk to harm persons, the refusal of arms surrender, pointing weapon systems against each other and sanctions.

ASSESSING THE INTENSITIES OF VIOLENT CONFLICTS

When measuring the three levels of violent conflict, five proxies are used indicating the means and consequences of violent conflict measures. The dimension of means encompasses the use of weapons and personnel, the dimension of consequences the number of casualties, destruction, and refugees/internally displaced persons.



Each indicator is scored on a ternary scale. Aggregating the five individual scores results in the total intensity of a region-month.

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

WEAPONS

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

The weapons indicator determines whether light or heavy arms are used (e.g. handguns or hand grenades vs. artillery or heavy bombs). Regarding the extent to which the fighting capacity of heavy arms is exploited, we differentiate restrictive and extensive use.

PERSONNEL

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

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

CASUALTIES

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

Third, the overall number of casualties in the conflict in a region-month is evaluated, comprising the number of deaths from violent measures or their direct consequences. Persons dying due to indirect effects, e.g. starvation or disease, are not counted. The thresholds employed here are 20 and 60 persons killed.

REFUGEES & IDPs

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

Evaluated is the overall number of cross-border refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in a region-month. Displacement is the migration of human beings provoked by conflict measures, e.g. by creating inhumane living conditions. Taken into account is flow, not stock data. The thresholds employed here are 1,000 and 20,000 refugees.

DESTRUCTION

The amount of destruction resulting from the conflict during the whole month and within the subnational unit is determined in four dimensions considered essential for civil populations: infrastructure, accommodation, economy, and culture.

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

UP- AND DOWNGRADING

When assessing conflict intensities the HIIK differentiates between violent and non-violent conflicts. If violence occurred, we assess the region-month intensity (RMI, see above). RMIs are the first pillar for determining the yearly intensity for a specific conflict region (region-year intensity) as well as the overall area-year intensity of a conflict (area-year intensity). A conflict area is the sum of all subnational units affected by the violent conflict in question. In the standard case, the area-year intensity is equal to the highest RMI in a given area-year. Like this, intensities of a certain spatiotemporal unit directly translate into a certain conflict intensity level. However, methodological issues such as a considerable variance in the size of administrative regions might threaten the comparability between different conflicts on the same intensity level. Up- and downgrading becomes relevant in the following example: two conflicts have an area-year intensity of a violent crisis according to the assessment based on the first pillar. The first conflict accounted for 30 casualties in three RMIs with ten fatalities each, while the second conflict accounted for more than 370 casualties in 37 RMI. In this case, it might be out of proportion to assign the same conflict intensity to both conflicts. Therefore, we apply up- and downgrading rules, the second pillar of our conflict intensity assessment, fine-tuning conflict intensities in order to ensure a better comparability.

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

CONFLICT TYPES

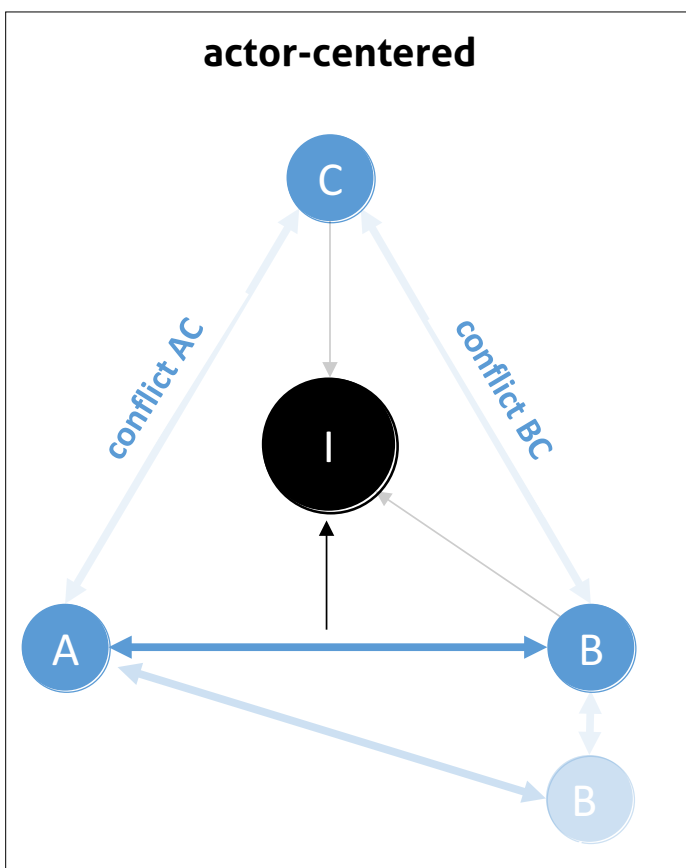
The methodology of HIIK distinguishes between interstate, intrastate, substate, and transstate conflicts. Whereas interstate conflicts only involve internationally recognized state actors, intrastate conflicts involve both state actors and non-state actors. Substate conflicts are carried out solely among non-state actors. Transstate conflicts involve both state and non-state actors and meet the criteria of political conflict for at least two sovereign states.

FRAMING

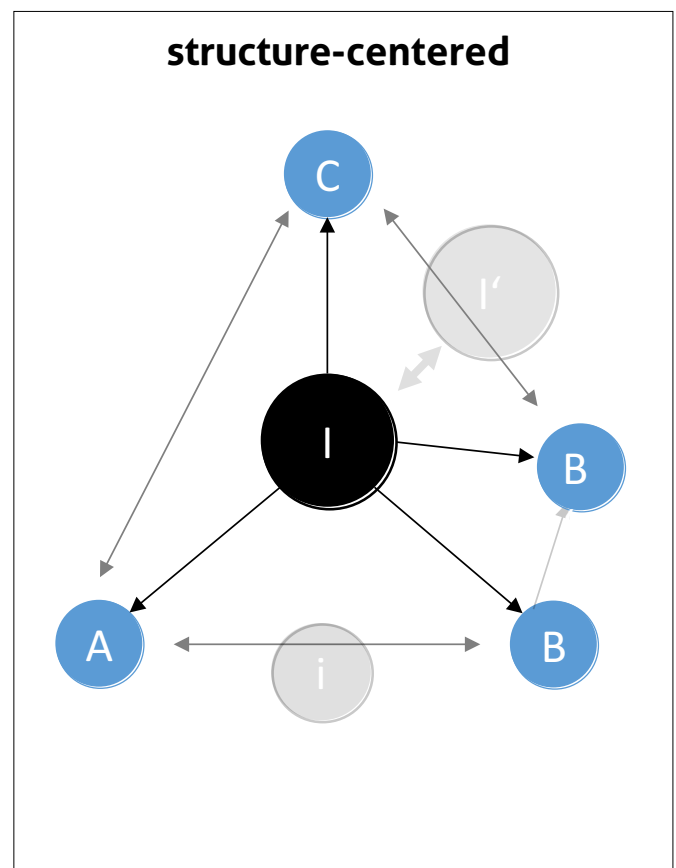
With the term 'framing' we refer to the HIIK's approach to assess a certain political conflict. Conflict frames are based on the three basic elements of a political conflict: its relevant actors, items, and measures. On the one hand, we capture conflicts as narrow and precise as possible. On the other, we aim at creating conflict frames that are time-stable without ignoring annual changes in the three basic elements of a political conflict.

In the majority of the cases, we apply one of the following two framing approaches. First, we frame conflicts actor-centered. This means we mainly focus on specific actors within a certain conflict, while conflict items might change. This frame is useful in order to observe actors over longer time periods. However, this frame bears the risk of ignoring actor changes or other actors that might become relevant for this conflict (see graph 1). Here, the conflict actors structure the conflict observation.

Second, we frame conflicts structure-centered. Examples are opposition conflicts in which actor constellations frequently change, but their political dimensions are inherent to the structure of their social environments. Structure-centered frames are useful to capture the conflictive relations that evolve from certain conflict items over longer time periods. In comparison to the actor-centered frame, the structure-centered frame bears the risk of becoming too broad, incorporating too many actors and measures so that the conflict frame lacks analytical focus. Also, this frame bears the risk of ignoring item changes or other items that are relevant for a certain conflict (see graph 2). Therefore, the HIIK frequently examines structure-centered frames regarding their appropriateness for observing certain conflicts. Within these frames, the conflict items structure the process of conflict observation.



Graph 1: actor-centered framing



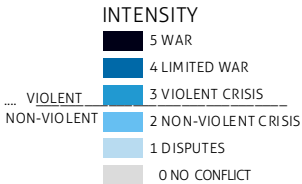
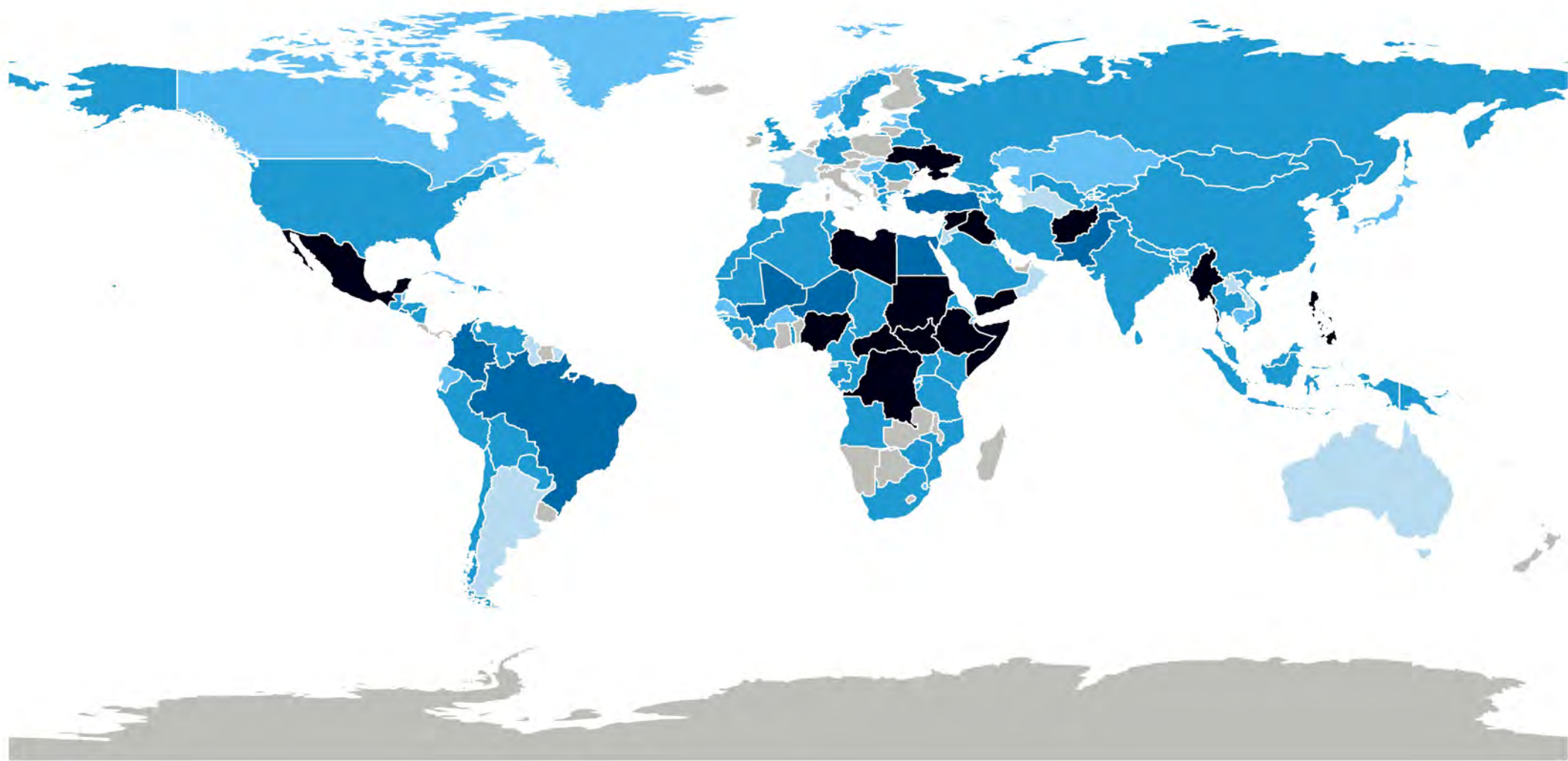
Graph 2: structure-centered framing

actor   item

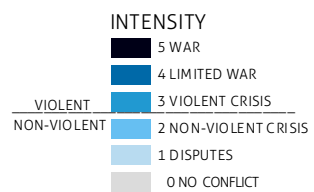
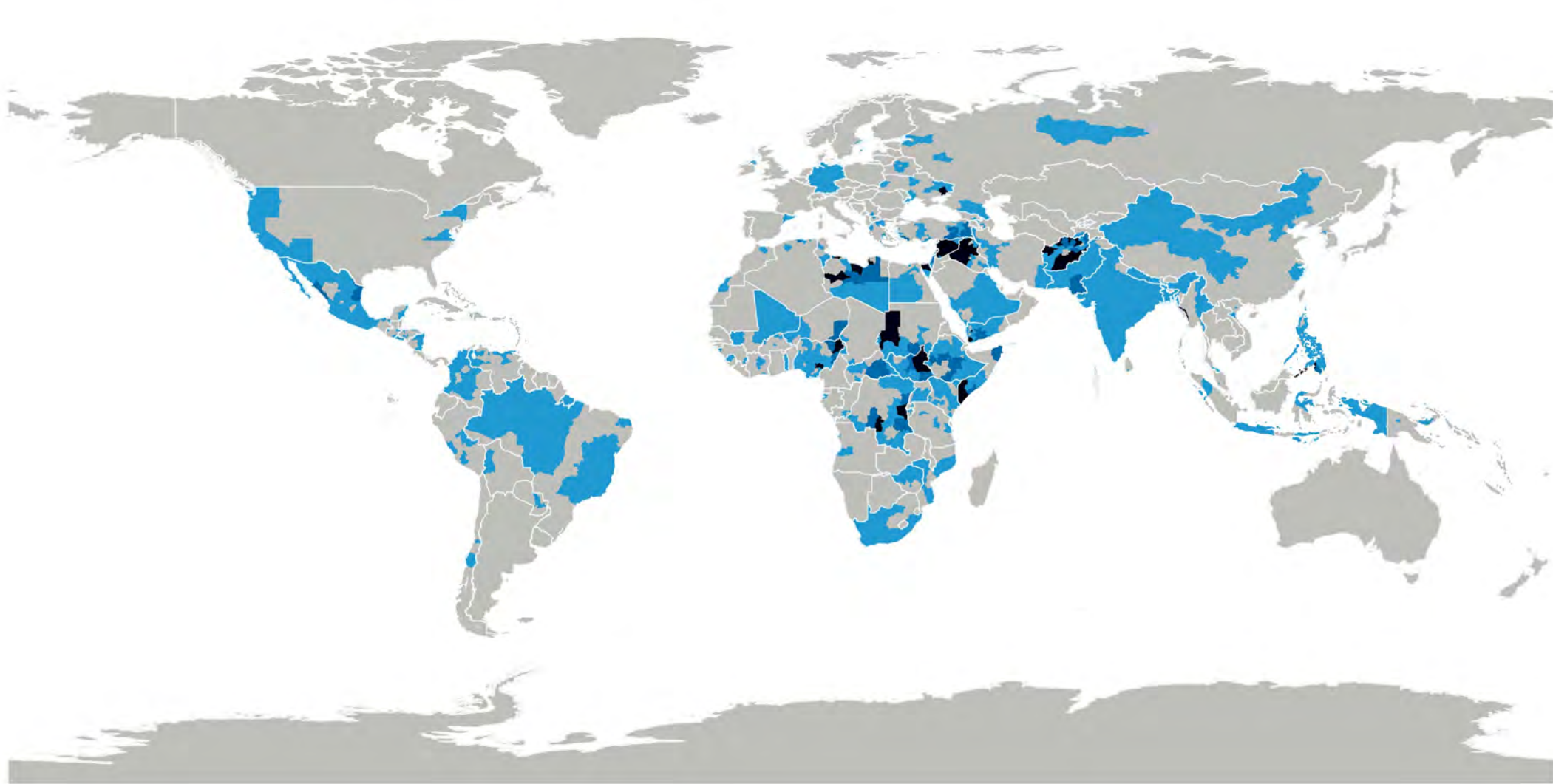
If you are interested in an extended version of our methodology, please contact us via info@hiik.de.

Global Conflict Panorama

CONFLICTS IN 2017
(NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEVEL)



VIOLENT CONFLICTS IN 2017 (SUBNATIONAL LEVEL)



HIGHLY VIOLENT CONFLICTS IN 2017

LIMITED WARS (16)

WARS (20)

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Algeria, Mali et al. (AQIM et al.)
 DR Congo (Bantu – Batwa)
 DR Congo, Rwanda (FDLR)
 Sudan (inter-communal rivalry)

Central African Republic (Anti-Balaka – ex-Séléka)
 DR Congo (KN)
 DR Congo (Mayi-Mayi et al.)
 Ethiopia (inter-ethnic rivalry)
 Nigeria (farmers – pastoralists)
 Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, Niger (Boko Haram)
 Somalia, Kenya (al-Shabaab)
 South Sudan (inter-communal rivalry)
 South Sudan (SPLM/A-in-Opposition)
 Sudan (Darfur)

MIDDLE EAST AND MAGHREB

Algeria, Mali et al. (AQIM et al.)
 Egypt (militant groups / Sinai Peninsula)
 Lebanon (Sunni militant groups)
 Turkey (PKK, TAK)
 Yemen (AQAP, Ansar al-Sharia)

Afghanistan (Taliban et al.)
 Syria, Iraq et al. (IS)
 Libya (opposition)
 Syria (inter-opposition rivalry)
 Syria (opposition)
 Yemen, Saudi Arabia (al-Houthi)

ASIA AND OCEANIA

Pakistan (Islamist militant groups)
 Philippines (BIFM, BIFF – MILF, government)

Myanmar (Rohingya)
 Philippines (Islamist militant groups)

THE AMERICAS

Brazil (drug-trafficking organizations)
 Colombia (ELN)
 Colombia (inter-cartel rivalry, neo-paramilitary groups, left-wing militants)
 Colombia (neo-paramilitary groups, drug cartels)
 El Salvador (Maras)
 Mexico (inter-cartel rivalry, paramilitary groups)

Mexico (drug cartels)

EUROPE

Ukraine (Donbas)

GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT

In 2017, HIIK observed a total of 385 conflicts worldwide. More than half, 222, were fought violently, while the other 163 remained non-violent. In comparison to the previous year, the number of full-scale wars increased from 18 to 20, whereas the number of limited wars decreased by four to a total of 16. Overall, HIIK counted 187 violent crises as well as 81 non-violent crises and 75 disputes. In 2017, HIIK ended the observation of seven conflicts due to either active settlement by the conflict actors or years-long inactivity. At the same time, the emergences of six new conflicts were recorded. Not involved in these numbers are an additional 22 conflicts which are currently observed as inactive.

WARS

In the course of the year, six conflicts escalated to wars. Four of these new wars were located in Sub-Saharan Africa, the remaining two in Asia and Oceania. On the other hand, three wars de-escalated to limited wars and one war even receded to a violent conflict. These changes of intensity, especially of highly-violent conflicts, were more frequent than in the previous year. 14 wars continued with the same intensity as in 2016.

In the Central African Republic (CAR), fighting between Anti-Balaka and ex-Séléka groups intensified in 2017, leaving more than 1,000 people killed and at least 1.1 million displaced, a record high since the beginning of the conflict in 2012 [→ Central African Republic (Anti-Balaka – ex-Séléka)]. In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DR Congo), two conflicts escalated to wars, forcing 1.9 million people to flee their homes: the conflict between the Kamuina Nsapu militias and the government over subnational predominance [→ DR Congo (KN)] as well as the fight over subnational predominance and resources between more than 100 armed groups and the government supported by MONUSCO [→ DR Congo (Mayi-Mayi et al.)]. In Ethiopia's Oromia and Somali regional states, fights between ethnic Oromo and Amhara, on the one hand, and ethnic Somali, on the other hand, erupted and escalated to a war in September, after security forces conducted raids during the state of emergency declared in October 2016 [→ Ethiopia (inter-ethnic rivalry)]. The 'Liyu police', a paramilitary unit set up by the Somali regional state, killed hundreds of Oromo and Amhara in the respective regions. More than 700,000 people had to flee their homes this year, with a significant spike after September. In contrast to these newly emerged African wars, the escalation of the conflict between the mostly Muslim Rohingya minority, on the one hand, and the mostly Buddhist majority and the Burmese government, on the other, to a full-scale war was well covered by media worldwide [→ Myanmar (Rohingya)]. Attacks on Rohingya villages and numerous reported human rights violations led to one of the largest refugee movements of 2017: by the end of the year, 620,000 people had reportedly left the country. In the Philippines, the conflict over system and ideology between various Islamist militant groups such as Abu Sayyaf and Maute groups and the Philippine government escalated to a war [→ Philippines (Islamist militant groups)]. Abu Sayyaf and Maute had been represented by separate HIIK conflicts but were merged in 2017 when cooperation between the two groups was reported. The war in the Philippines peaked with

the occupation of the city Marawi by Islamist militants which lasted from May until October and left a total of 1,174 people dead.

Counting nine full-scale wars in 2017, Sub-Saharan Africa superseded Middle East and Maghreb as the region most affected by wars. In Sudan, the war in Darfur Region between the Sudan Revolutionary Front and the government continued into its 15th consecutive year [→ Sudan (Darfur)]. Conflict items were, among others, water and land rights as well as control over gold mines. A remarkable development, however, was observed in Sudan's South Kordofan and Blue Nile regions: the war between SPLM/A-North and the government de-escalated significantly to a violent crisis due to peace negotiations between the two conflict parties and the split of SPLM/A-N in March [→ Sudan (SPLM/A-North / South Kordofan, Blue Nile)]. In South Sudan, two wars continued: the fighting between various ethnic groups over subnational predominance and resources, especially cattle and arable land [→ South Sudan (inter-communal rivalry)], as well as the war between the armed opposition faction SPLM/A-in Opposition and the government [→ South Sudan (SPLM/A-IO)]. Cattle raids as the most common form of inter-communal violence in South Sudan were especially fanned by a famine in the northern-central part of the country. Moreover, rivaling clans started to abduct one another's children, reportedly using them as domestic labor. Also abductions of Ethiopian children living close to the border were reported. The war between Boko Haram aiming to establish an Islamic caliphate in the region and the governments of Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, and Niger entered its seventh year [→ Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, Niger (Boko Haram)]. Although the conflict's death toll decreased to 2,150 compared to 3,000 in 2016 and 12,000 in 2015, a major part of the region's water infrastructure was destroyed, leaving 3.6 million people with no access to clean water. Moreover, 1.8 million people were displaced and 5 million people in the northeast of Nigeria have faced severe food insecurity. The war over arable land in Nigeria's Middle Belt between the predominantly Christian farmers of Berom and Tiv tribes and the mainly Muslim Fulani nomads continued into its sixth consecutive year [→ Nigeria (farmers – pastoralists)]. However, compared to the previous year, the total number of fatalities nearly halved to 600. In the Horn of Africa, the war between the Islamist group al-Shabaab and the Somali and Kenyan governments continued [→ Somalia, Kenya (al-Shabaab)]. In October, a major dyadic suicide bombing in the Somali capital Mogadishu killed more than 500 people.

Six wars were observed in Middle East and Maghreb region, which represents a decrease of two when compared to 2016. No new war erupted, while last year's war between the Kurdistan Workers' Party PKK and its splinter group TAK and the Turkish government [→ Turkey (PKK, TAK)] as well as last year's war in Yemen between al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and the UAE- and US-backed Yemeni government [→ Yemen (AQAP, Ansar al-Sharia)] de-escalated to limited wars. With three, Syria remained the country with the most full-scale wars worldwide. The war between so-called Islamic State (IS), on the one hand, and the governments of Syria and Iraq as well as other governments continued and had the biggest impact on the region's conflict landscape [→ Syria, Iraq et al. (IS)]. However, IS had to face major territorial losses

to Kurdish groups as well as to the Iraqi army, such as their de-facto capital Raqqa in Syria and Mossul in Iraq. The government of President Bashar al-Assad, backed by Russia, Iran, and Shiite militias, continued to make territorial gains in the war against various opposition groups [→ Syria (opposition)]. The war between several opposition groups, such as the al-Nusra Front successor Hay'at Tharir al-Sham, mainly affected East Ghouta region and Idlib Governorate [→ Syria (inter-opposition rivalry)]. In Afghanistan, the war between the Taliban and various other Islamist militant groups such as the Haqqani Network, on the one hand, and the government, supported by the NATO-led Resolute Support Mission (RSM) and additional US forces, on the other, continued [→ Afghanistan (Taliban et al.)]. The Taliban continued to conduct attacks on security personnel as well as civilians, and succeeded in extending its territorial control, for example seizing major parts of Sangin district, including its capital. The country's capital Kabul continued to be heavily affected by violence, which peaked on May 31 when at least 150 people were killed by a truck bomb. The wars in Libya [→ Libya (opposition)], where the conflict over Libya's political future could not be settled, and in Yemen and Saudi Arabia [→ Yemen, Saudi Arabia (al-Houthi forces)] also continued. In Yemen, the humanitarian situation deteriorated due to the ongoing conflict and the restriction of humanitarian access by both parties. Additionally to UN officials' warning of a famine, the country experienced the largest cholera crisis ever recorded in one country in a single year. Wars in Asia and Oceania were affected by remarkable change in 2017. While last year's war in Pakistan between several Is-lamist militant groups, especially Tehrik-e-Taliban, and the government de-escalated to a limited war [→ Pakistan (Is-lamist militant groups)], the conflicts concerning the Rohingya minority in Myanmar and the fight against Islamist militants in the Philippines both escalated to wars (see above). In the Americas, the war between increasingly splintered drug cartels, vigilante groups, and the Mexican government continued and remained America's only war [→ Mexico (drug cartels)]. In 2017, the conflict's death toll reached a record high since its beginning eleven years ago. Moreover, according to Reporters Without Borders, 2017 was the deadliest year for journalists reporting on drug-related violence in Mexico since 2010. As in previous years, the only highly violent conflict in Europe took place in Ukraine's Donbas region, where - despite an official ceasefire agreement - no break in tension between the Russia-affiliated militant groups and the Ukrainian government was to be observed.

LIMITED WARS

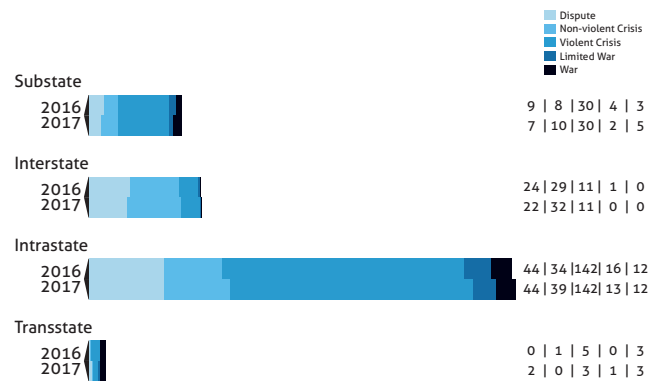
HIK observed 16 limited wars in 2017, which marks a decrease compared to last year's 20 limited wars. Four of the 16 limited wars escalated from a violent crisis and another three de-escalated from war level, while the remaining nine remained on the same intensity level from last year. The Americas counted six limited wars. In Mexico, the government's strategy to target drug cartels' leading figures led to further fragmentation of drug cartels and heavy fighting over local predominance [→ Mexico (inter-cartel rivalry, paramilitary groups)]. In Colombia, despite the demobilization of FARC, violence remained high as other armed groups,

such as the largest guerrilla group National Liberation Army (ELN), intensified their turf wars over subnational predominance and resources, particularly in areas that had previously been dominated by FARC [→ Colombia (ELN); Colombia (neo-paramilitary groups, drug cartels); Colombia (inter-cartel rivalry, neo-paramilitary groups, left-wing militants)]. The limited war in El Salvador between Barrio 18, Mara Salvatrucha, and the government, continued, but its intensity slightly decreased compared to the previous year [→ El Salvador (Maras)]. The government continued its hardline security policies to fight gang violence. In Brazil, the limited war between several drug trafficking organizations and security forces continued [→ Brazil (drug trafficking organizations)]. The favelas of Rio de Janeiro remained a particular hotspot of violence.

Sub-Saharan Africa counted four limited wars, which constitutes a decrease by two compared to 2016, of which two took place in DR Congo. At least 95 people were killed and 224,000 displaced due to fighting between Batwa and Bantu groups in Tanganyika province [→ DR Congo (Bantu – Batwa)]. The limited war over subnational predominance and resources between the Islamist armed group Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) and the governments of the DR Congo (DRC), supported by MONUSCO, as well as Uganda, also continued and took mainly place in Beni territory, North Kivu province [→ DR Congo, Uganda (ADF)]. In Sudan, various tribes continued their limited war over subnational predominance and resources, especially cattle and arable land, but also over water rights and access to gold mines [→ Sudan (inter-communal rivalry)]. Fighting mainly took place along ethnic lines, but also between farmers and cattle herders, whose interests clashed. Moreover, Mali, Côte d'Ivoire, and Burkina Faso were affected by the transstate conflict concerning al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), its affiliates, and the so-called Islamic State in the Greater Sahara [→ Algeria, Mali et al. (AQIM et al.)]. In March 2017, AQIM's al-Mourabitoun and Sahara branches, Ansar al-Din, and Mecina Liberation Front announced they would join forces, creating a new group under the name of Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM). The governments of Algeria and Tunisia in Middle East and Maghreb also engaged in fighting these Islamist militant groups. In Algeria, increasing numbers of AQIM members and subgroups aligned with the so-called Islamic State (IS) in 2017 while in Tunisia, violence took mainly place between the AQIM-affiliated Uqba ibn Nafi Brigade and the government. As well as this conflict, a further four limited wars took place in Middle East and Maghreb. In Lebanon, the conflict between various Sunni militant groups, on the one hand, and the government and Shiite Hezbollah, on the other, escalated from a violent conflict to a limited war [→ Lebanon (Sunni militant groups)]. The heaviest fighting took place in the border region with Syria, especially in Baalbek-Hermel governorate, where the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) conducted several operations in cooperation with Hezbollah as well as the Syrian Armed Forces. In Egypt, the Sinai Peninsula remained a hotspot for violence, due to, among other factors, the limited war between several militant groups and the government [→ Egypt (militant groups / Sinai Peninsula)]. In Yemen, the fight against al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and its arm Ansar al-Sharia de-escalated to a limited war in 2017, although US airstrikes against AQAP continued

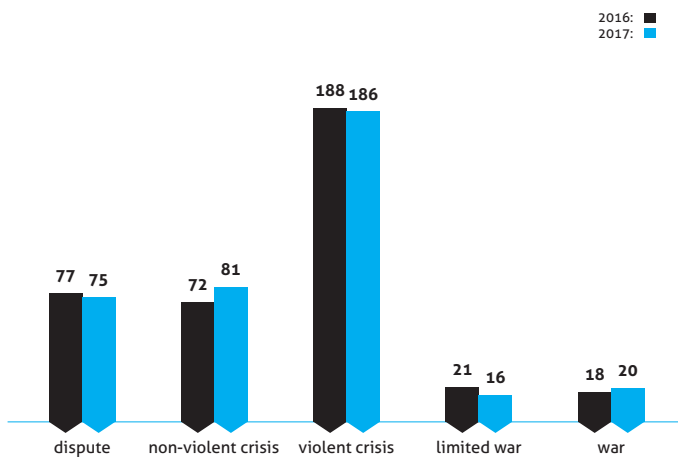
on a larger scale under the Trump administration [→ Yemen (AQAP, Ansar al-Sharia)]. Last year's war in Turkey between the government and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) de-escalated to a limited war in 2017 [→ Turkey (PKK, TAK)]. The government claimed that it could not lift the post-coup state of emergency due to PKK activities in the southeast. Throughout the year, at least 2,455 people were arrested nationwide due to alleged PKK-links - at least 472 in December alone. While no limited war was observed in Europe, Asia and Oceania counted two in 2017. The war in Pakistan between Islamist militant groups and the government de-escalated to a limited war for the first time in ten years [→ Pakistan (Islamist militant groups)]. In the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao of the Philippines, the limited war between the government and several Moro Muslim armed groups over secession and subnational predominance continued, leaving at least 33,000 people displaced [→ Philippines (BIFM, BIFF – MILF, government)]. (mag)

FREQUENCY OF CONFLICT INTENSITIES BY CONFLICT TYPE IN 2017 AND 2016

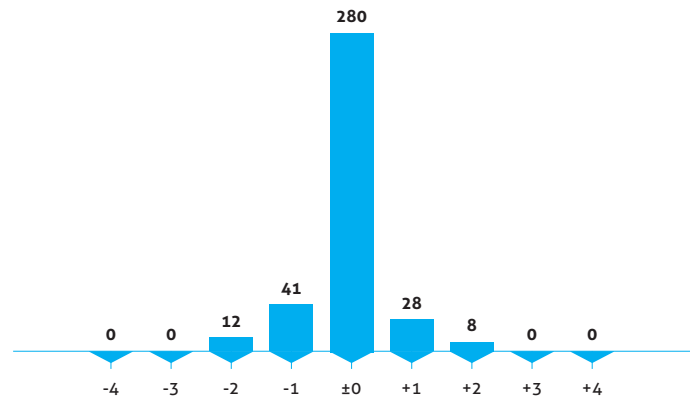


GLOBAL CONFLICT STATISTICS 2017

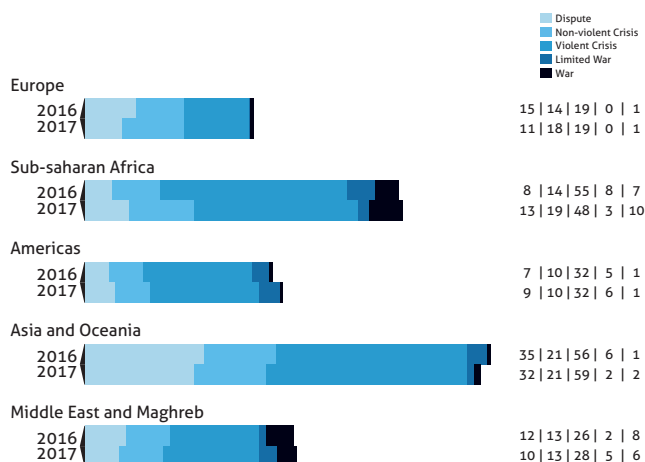
GLOBAL CONFLICT INTENSITIES IN 2017 COMPARED TO 2016



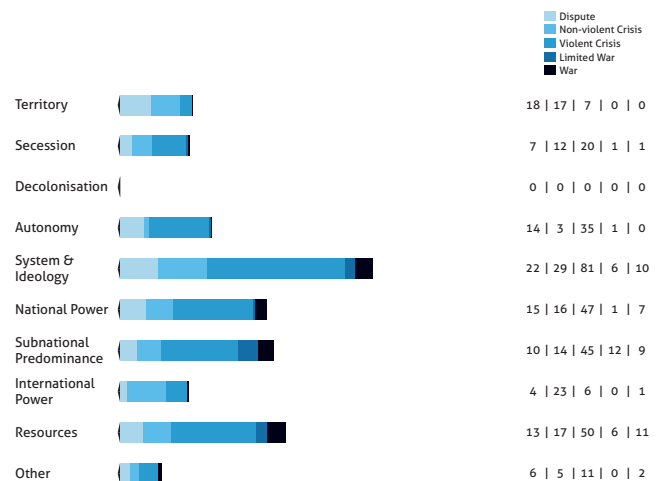
GLOBAL CONFLICT INTENSITY CHANGES IN 2017



FREQUENCY OF REGIONAL CONFLICT INTENSITIES IN 2017 AND 2016



FREQUENCY OF CONFLICT INTENSITIES BY CONFLICT ITEM IN 2017

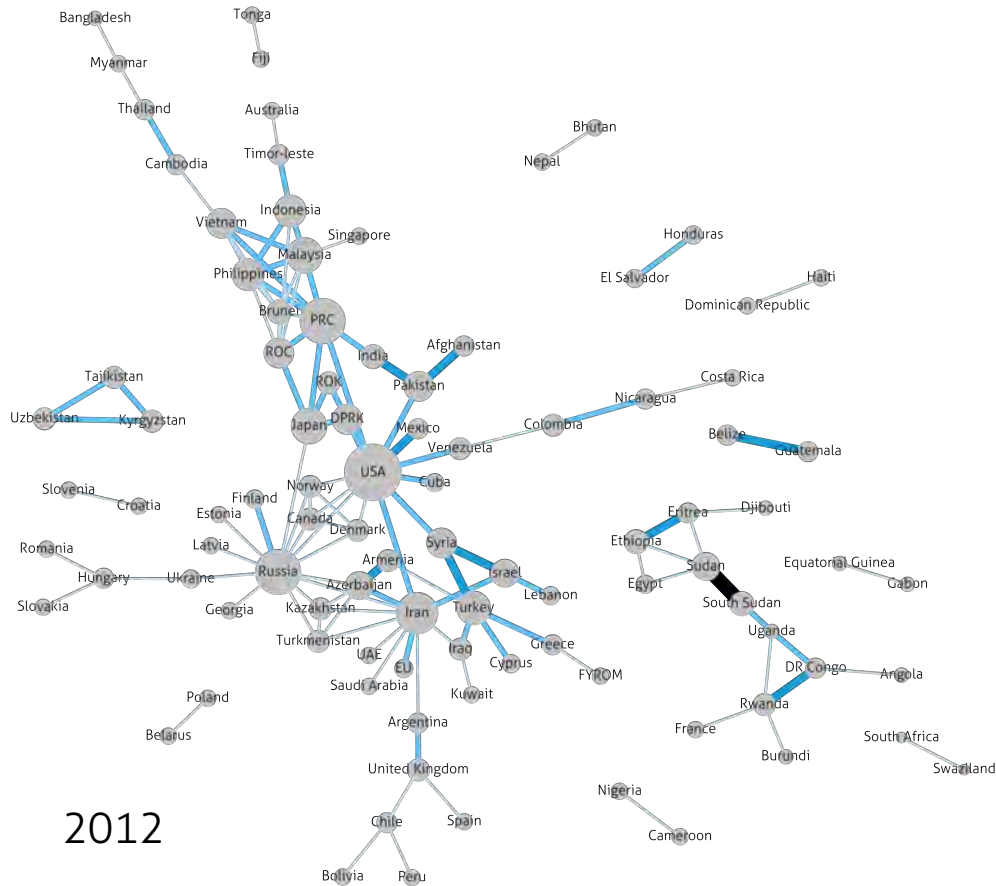


CORRELATION OF CONFLICT ITEMS IN 2017

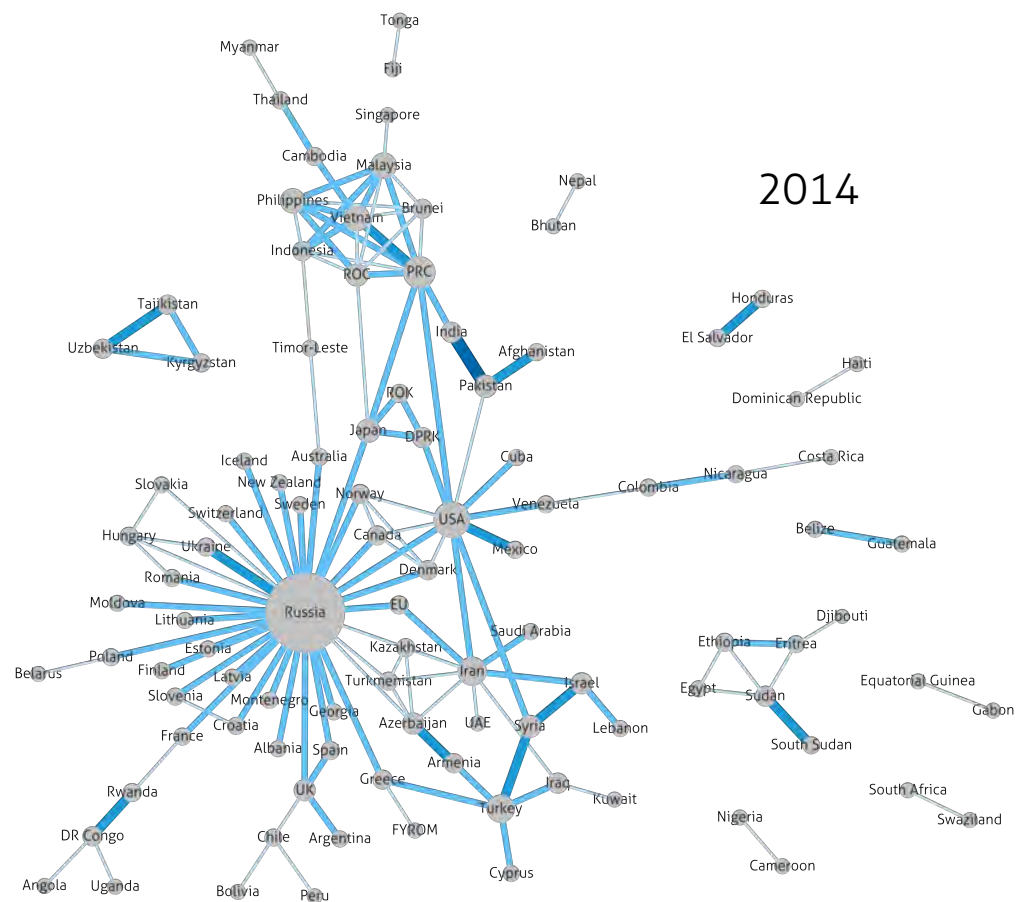
Given conflict item A Relative occurrence of conflict item B	Territory	Secession	Decolonisation*	Autonomy	System & Ideology	National Power	Subnational Predominance	International Power	Resources	Other
Territory	■	0	0	0	0.01	0	0	0.47	0.15	0.17
Secession	0	■	0	0.11	0.03	0.01	0.03	0	0.08	0
Decolonisation*	0	0	■	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Autonomy	0	0.15	0	■	0.06	0	0.06	0.03	0.18	0.04
System & Ideology	0.05	0.12	0	0.17	■	0.66	0.20	0.32	0.24	0.21
National Power	0	0.02	0	0	0.39	■	0.02	0	0.09	0
Subnational Predominance	0	0.07	0	0.09	0.12	0.02	■	0	0.36	0.13
International Power	0.38	0	0	0.02	0.07	0	0	■	0.10	0.17
Resources	0.36	0.20	0	0.32	0.16	0.10	0.39	0.29	■	0.21
Other	0.10	0	0	0.02	0.03	0	0.03	0.12	0.05	■

*No decolonisation conflict was observed in 2017.

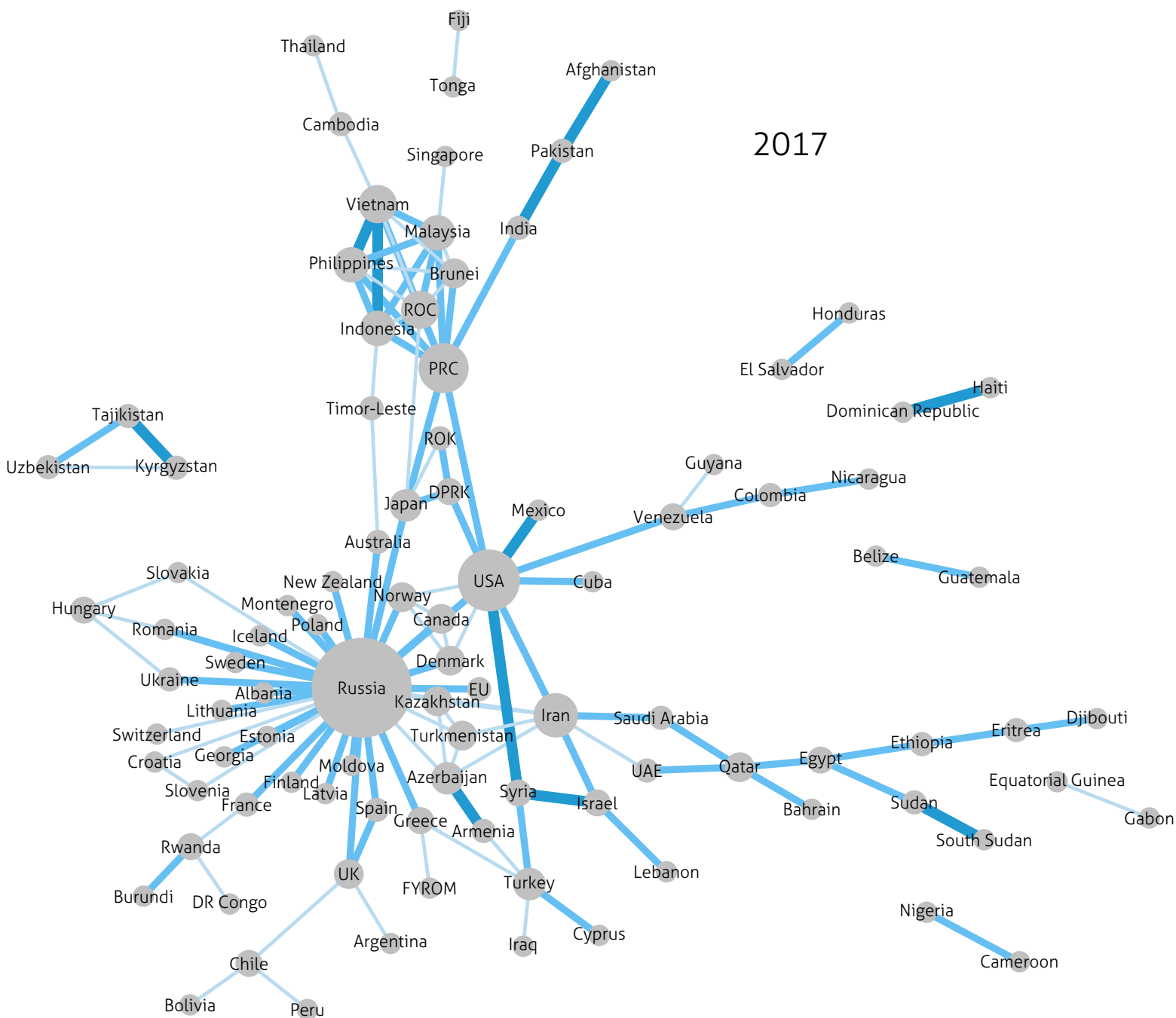
INTERSTATE CONFLICT CONSTELLATIONS 2012, 2014, AND 2017



2012



2014



This networks shows all conflictive bilateral relationships monitored in 2012, 2014, and 2017. The size of the nodes is determined by the number and intensity of the adversarial bilateral relationships the state was involved in. Edges are sized and coloured by conflict intensity. The layout is force determined. Independent components were placed adjacent to their regional affiliates. The EU is treated as an independent actor. Member states who take conflict positions that are not sufficiently covered by the position of the EU, or who take part in conflicts in which the EU is not a party, are depicted in independent nodes. Visualizations and statistics were created with Gephi. (jfr)

MEASURES OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION

NEGOTIATIONS AND TREATIES

As in previous years, numerous conflicts saw mitigation efforts of different kinds, aimed at solving the conflict as such, tackling specific issues, or, most prominently, establishing ceasefires between warring conflict parties. One of the few significant peace processes was continued in Colombia with the implementation process of the 2016 agreement between the FARC and Colombia's government. The following text provides a selective overview of various negotiations and treaties observed throughout 2017, highlighting different dynamics and outcomes in varying regional contexts.

EUROPE

In Europe's only war, fought in the Donbas region between several militant anti-government groups, supported by Russia, and the Ukrainian government supported by Western countries, several negotiations took place without leading to significant progress in order to advance a peaceful conflict settlement (→ Ukraine (Donbas)). As in previous years, minor agreements were reached that focused on ceasefires, regulations of combat, and exchange of prisoners. However, several ceasefires the conflict parties agreed upon during the year were violated by both sides. International efforts to contribute to a reduction of violence also continued. The OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to the Ukraine monitored the compliance with the Minsk II agreement on a frequent basis, inspecting weapon storages on both sides. However, access to the storages as well as to prisons was neglected on various occasions and security could not be guaranteed. The Trilateral Contact Group, consisting of Russia, Ukraine, and the OSCE agreed upon restrictions to the deployment areas of heavy weapons in mid-February. They met again in Minsk in mid-July and made progress regarding the conditions for prisoner exchanges. In February, during the Munich Security Conference, the Normandy format, a quadrilateral forum consisting of France, Germany, Ukraine, and Russia, held a ministerial meeting, discussing – inter alia – the present security situation and troop deployment at the line of contact. This was the only Normandy format with all four nations participating in 2017. In late August, the OSCE and the self-proclaimed Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics met in Minsk for talks, without results being reported. In September, Russian President Vladimir Putin announced his proposal of a UN peacekeeping mission in eastern Ukraine. According to Putin, the mission should guarantee the protection of the OSCE mission and of civilians. While Putin declared his intention to limit the mission to the line of contact, Ukraine's government and Western countries demanded to extend the mission's operational zone to other disputed areas. Later, on November 13, representatives of Russia and Ukraine discussed a possible scenario for the mission in Belgrade. In the last days of December, the self-proclaimed republics and Ukraine conducted an exchange of 380 prisoners.

Talks over the consequences of the 2008 highly-violent conflicts in Georgia, involving several conflicts until today, continued (→ Georgia – Russia; Georgia (South Ossetia); Georgia (Abkhazia)). The Geneva International Discussions, an international forum for the discussion of the aforementioned con-

flicts, continued in 2017. As in previous years, the talks were chaired by the OSCE, the EU, the UN, with the conflict parties and the US participating. In November, the European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia considered the security situation in the contested regions as relatively stable. However, the conflict parties did not succeed in various attempts to reach a non-use of force agreement. In other conflict-related formats, like the Karasin-Abashidze format and the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism, disputed aspects such as "borderization", cross-border trade monitoring, and detentions were discussed without progress. The US articulated its objection regarding the closure of crossing points between the disputed areas and the progressive "borderization", while the South Ossetian side multiply criticized Georgia's cooperation with NATO. Peace talks on a reunification of Cyprus continued (→ Cyprus – Turkey; Cyprus (TRNC / Northern Cyprus)). However, the talks restarted in 2015 by the President of the Republic of Cyprus, Nicos Anastasiades, and the President of Northern Cyprus, Mustafa Akinci, and accompanied by the UN, broke down in the beginning of July. One major obstacle to progress were irreconcilable demands regarding Turkish troop deployment. Further meetings, for instance between the Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras in December, did not lead to advancement.

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

In the Central African Republic (CAR), two ceasefires were signed within the conflict between Anti-Balaka and ex-Séléka groups (→ Central African Republic (Anti-Balaka – ex-Séléka)). On June 19, several armed groups involved in heavy fighting signed the so-called Rome Agreement in the Italian capital Rome. The agreement aimed at immediately establishing a ceasefire and was supposed to provide a basis for political representation of armed groups as well as their integration into CAR's armed forces. However, the ceasefire proved to be ineffective and by the next day, up to 100 people had been killed in clashes between the ex-Séléka FPRC and anti-Balaka fighters. Furthermore, on December 15, Anti-Balaka and 3R, a militia aiming to protect members of the Fulani ethnic group, signed a ceasefire, after several people were killed in clashes between the groups throughout 2017.

In the DR Congo's Tanganyika provinces, Bantu and Batwa leaders signed a peace deal during a Peace Forum on February 25 (→ DR Congo (Bantu – Batwa)). However, the deal did not result in an end of violent clashes between the groups, and by the end of the year several peace dialogues organized by local authorities, civil society actors, and MONUSCO officials did not lead to a stable ceasefire. In the war between the Kamuina Nsapu (KN) militia and the Congolese government, which took place in the Kasai region, a government-organized peace forum resulted in the signing of an agreement by traditional chiefs (→ DR Congo (KN)). While the forum was attended by various local officials, traditional chiefs, and several high ranking politicians, including President Joseph Kabila, many opposition politicians boycotted the event. The agreement did not result in an end of violence between KN and governmental forces, but clashes only occurred in parts of two provinces after the signing.

In Mozambique, the leader of the main opposition party RENAMO announced to sign a peace deal with the government, af-

ter repeatedly prolonging a ceasefire agreement agreed upon in 2016 [→ Mozambique (RENAMO)]. However, no agreement was reached by the end of the year, and occasional violence between both conflict parties continued.

Within the war between several ethnic groups revolving around cattle and arable land in South Sudan, the ethnic Dinka Bor and Murle signed a cessation of hostilities agreement on May 23 [→ South Sudan (inter-communal rivalry)]. Although they pledged to end the months-long fighting, violence between the groups continued in throughout the rest of the year.

In the conflict between various opposition groups and the South Sudanese government of President Salvar Kiir, the latter initiated the so-called National Dialogue, after he had already announced in 2016 [→ South Sudan (opposition)]. However, several important oppositional figures and groups refused to participate in the National Dialogue. International stakeholders, most notably the Intergovernmental Authority of Development (IGAD) and the Troika, consisting of Norway, the UK, and the US, called for all parties to participate in the so-called Revitalization Forum initiated by IGAD, which aimed at restoring a ceasefire to end hostilities. Although a new ceasefire was signed on December 21, clashes erupted shortly after, prompting IGAD to threaten punitive measures against further violations of the peace process.

In Sudan, members of the Gimir and Rizeigat tribes signed an agreement to hold reconciliation conference, after several people died in cattle-related clashes between the two tribes [→ Sudan (inter-communal rivalry)]. Furthermore, after over hundred people had been killed in clashes between Habaniya and Salamat tribesmen, the tribes signed an agreement pledging peaceful coexistence with one another. Prior to the agreement, the Sudanese Armed Forces had to intervene in the fightings between the tribes in order to prevent them from escalating further.

In Gambia, former president Yahya Jammeh tried to reverse the outcome of the 2016 presidential elections, threatening legal action against president-elect Adama Barrow's win [→ Gambia (opposition)]. After Jammeh declared a 90-day state of emergency on January 17, several ministers and government officials resigned from their positions. Two days later, Barrow was sworn in as president in the Senegalese capital Dakar and the UNSC passed a resolution supporting ECOWAS against Jammeh. Subsequently, a 7,000-strong multinational ECOWAS force was sent into Gambia. On January 21, mediation attempts by the Mauritanian government and the UN resulted in Jammeh stepping down and going into exile in Equatorial Guinea, while Barrow returned to Gambia on January 26.

In Somalia, on October 21, the Somaliland administration, represented by then president Ahmed Mohamed Mohamoud, and the Khatumo administration, represented by self-declared president of Khatumo Ali Khalif Galaydh, signed a peace and power sharing deal. The so-called Ainaba agreement stipulates the inclusion of Khatumo militias into Somaliland security forces, a revision of the Somaliland constitution regarding the possible integration of Khatumo's interests and the re-opening of the contested Sool region for international aid agencies. Already in July, the two administrations were able to reach a ceasefire agreement, thereby legally ending three years of violent confrontations. The adminis-

tration of the semi-autonomous region of Puntland, whose security forces were involved in the violent clashes as well, did not participate in the peace talks held since 2015.

ASIA

In Myanmar, three conflicts were affected by developments regarding the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) [→ Myanmar (TNLA / Shan State); Myanmar (UNFC et al.); Myanmar (UWSA, NDAA / Shan State)]. While the TNLA sought subnational predominance and control over resources in the Pa Laung Self-Administered Zone of Shan State, both UNFC and USWA et al. directed their efforts at gaining autonomy in the respective regions. Despite continuous violence between government and TNLA forces, the latter repeatedly announced its willingness to participate in future peace talks. In February, the USWA and five other non-signatories called for a restructuring of the peace talks with the government. However, in May, both TNLA and USWA representatives participated as observers in the Panglong Conference, which was organized by the government and featured several non-signatories to the NCA. Although both groups left the conference without achieving significant progress, the government and USWA continued bilateral talks in November and TNLA representatives reiterated their readiness for future talks. Members of the umbrella organization UNFC were split on the issue of signing the NCA. Although the UNFC repeatedly expressed its willingness to sign the NCA, the UNFC members KIO and SSPP participated in the talks held by UWSA in February, thereby counteracting the official UNFC position. Nonetheless, government and UNFC officials agreed on signing parts of the NCA in November, although notably omitting security issues.

Australia and Timor Leste ended their dispute over hydrocarbon resources and maritime borders in the Timor Sea, ending a 15-year conflict between both countries [→ Australia – Timor Leste]. In January, both governments agreed to abandon the CMATS agreement concerning control over the Greater Sunrise Field, which Timor Leste had repeatedly criticized as unfair. In return, Timor Leste withdrew from international legal proceedings against Australia, which it had accused of espionage. On September 1, the countries reached an agreement over maritime boundaries, after several rounds of confidential negotiations mediated by the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) in the Danish capital Copenhagen. In late December, the PCA announced that both parties would sign an agreement in early March of 2018.

Within the international conflict over territorial claims and resources in the South China Sea (SCS), several agreements between various countries were reached in 2017 [→ China – Vietnam et al. (South China Sea)]. In April, the Philippines reached an agreement with the People's Republic of China (PRC) concerning fishing activities in the disputed Scarborough Shoal close to the Philippine Luzon Island. Furthermore, the governments of the Philippines and Brunei reached a solution regarding mutually overlapping claims. In early November, the PRC and Vietnam agreed on holding talks to resolve their bilateral dispute, after the PRC had conducted military training exercises around the contested Paracel Islands. Most notably, in November, ASEAN announced to start negotiations with the PRC over a Code of Conduct regarding proceedings related to the SCS, after a preliminary draft version had been

agreed on in May.

In India, several agreements were reached within the violent crisis between militant Naga groups, seeking either autonomy or secession of different Naga-inhabited areas in the states of Nagaland, Manipur, Assam, and Arunachal Pradesh, and the government [→ India (Nagaland)]. In April, the government extended the ceasefire with NSCN-IM and NSCN-NK until 04/27/18. Continuing the peace process started in 2015, the government and NSCN-IM held various rounds of talks throughout the year. On May 10, NSCN-IM announced to share sovereignty in the disputed areas with the government in order to facilitate a peaceful coexistence between India and the Nagas. However, the government refused to give in to NSCN-IM demands for a separated Nagaland constitution. On November 17, the Naga political groups NNC, NNC-NA, and NSCN-IM, and Federal Government of Nagaland signed an agreement with the central government, codifying the Naga's right to political self-determination and establishing a foundation for further peace talks.

MIDDLE EAST AND MAGHREB

In the realm of inter-tribal tensions in Libya, the Awlad Suleiman, Tebu, and Tuareg tribes reached a new agreement aimed at ending mutual hostilities on March 30 after negotiations in the Italian capital Rome [→ Libya (inter-tribal tensions)]. One week later, the National Tebu Assembly refused to accept the agreement, claiming the Tebu delegation would not represent the whole Tebu community. During the rest of the year, fighting between Tebu and Awlad Suleiman tribal groups continued.

The Libyan war over national power between several rivaling state institutions also saw several agreements throughout the year [→ Libya (opposition)]. On July 25, the PM of the UN-backed Government of National Accord (GNA), and the leader of the Libyan National Army (LNA), which supported the Tobruk-based House of Representatives (HoR), agreed on a ceasefire during negotiations in the French capital Paris. Additionally, they declared to hold elections in 2018. However, the July-ceasefire did not end violent clashes between the conflict parties. In October, UN-mediated negotiations between HoR and GNA-allied High State Council representatives did not result in an agreement over the amendment of the 2015 Libyan Political Agreement or the possible subordination of the LNA to the GNA. After Haftar had met with the French Minister for Foreign Affairs, Haftar announced his support of elections in 2018. Additionally, he stated that he would assume the role of president if the plan were to fail.

In Lebanon, two agreements were reached between Hezbollah and Sunni militant groups after several days of heavy fighting in July [→ Lebanon (Sunni militant groups)]. First, on July 23, Hezbollah and Saraya Ahl al-Sham agreed on a ceasefire, allowing 350 Sunni militants and their families and an additional 2,000 Syrian refugees to be moved from the Lebanese Wadi Hmeid Valley to al-Rahiba in the Syrian Rif Dimashq Governorate. Four days later, Hezbollah and Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham reached a similar agreement, which stipulated the transfer of around 7,800 people, including about 1,000 fighters, to the Syrian Idlib Governorate.

On October 12, the Palestinian militant group Hamas and the main party of the PLO, Fatah, signed a deal regarding civilian control in the Gaza Strip, where Hamas ruled since 2007

[→ Israel (al-Fatah – Hamas)]. The deal, brokered by Egypt, sparked widespread international attention and stipulated that the PNA should take civilian control over Gaza by December 1. On November 29, both parties agreed to delay the final implementation by ten days, in order to "complete arrangements". However, also the new deadline was not met by the parties, and by the end of the year, the agreement was not yet implemented.

With regard to the war in Syria between opposition groups and the government of Bashar al-Assad, no breakthrough was reached during the UN-brokered Geneva IV peace talks held between February 23 and March 3 [→ Syria (opposition)]. During that period, oppositional groups and government forces heavily clashed in Homs, prompting the UN to condemn the attacks and call them "deliberate" attempts to stalling the negotiations. Throughout the year, Russia, Iran, and Turkey hold several rounds of negotiations in the Kazakh capital Astana, aimed at establishing a peace agreement between opposition groups and the government. The last round of talks was held in late December and was attended by delegations from the three supervisory states, the Syrian government, Syrian opposition groups, and UN Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura. While no agreement could be reached, Turkey, Iran, and Russia agreed on a new round of talks to be held in the Russian town of Sochi in January 2018.

THE AMERICAS

In Colombia, the ongoing implementation process with the FARC and peace negotiations with the ELN significantly shaped conflict developments within the country. In 12/2016, Congress had approved a modified peace agreement between the government and the FARC in order to end the decade-long conflict [→ Colombia (FARC)]. A first agreement had been rejected by a small margin in a plebiscite on 10/02/16. One major pillar of the agreement, the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) of FARC members into civil society was conducted in 2017, with several delays and insufficient provision of infrastructure by the government. The conflict ended in the first days of September, when the FARC transformed into a political party with the same acronym called Common Alternative Revolutionary Force. However, the implementation of other core aspects of the agreement saw major backlashes. While some important cornerstones such as the Special Justice System (JEP) were approved by Congress and the Constitutional Court, other legislative projects central to the peace agreement did not pass the legislative branch, since the alliance that advocated the peace process had lost its majority facing the upcoming elections in 2018. While the advancement in the DDR of former FARC members led to a further reduction of violence between the FARC and the government, other conflicts in the country intensified. Even though the peace accord had foreseen the government to institutionalize state structures in former FARC territories, armed non-state actors expanded their presence in these regions [→ Colombia (inter-cartel rivalry, neo-paramilitary groups, left-wing militants); Colombia (neo-paramilitary groups, drug cartels); Colombia (ELN)]. In reaction to continued violence against demobilized FARC members, social activists, and the civil population in general, President Santos announced in December to deploy more than 60,000 military and police personnel in these regions

in order to restore the state's monopoly of violence. Also, a significant share of former FARC militants refused to participate in the DDR process, claiming to be "the real FARC" [→ Colombia (FARC dissidents)]. As the UNSG Antonio Guterres and the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies concluded, progress in the implementation of the agreement were mainly short-term stipulations, while long-term reforms related to land distribution, rural reform, economic development, and the eradication and substitution of illicit crops had not significantly advanced yet.

After conditions that had been set by the government in 2016 had been met in February by the ELN, both begun formal peace negotiations in Ecuador's capital Quito on February 7. While violence between both continued, the negotiations related to some aspects of the agenda proceeded. Notably, the conflict parties agreed on a three-month ceasefire, starting on October 1. In spite of several violations of the ceasefire, it was largely upheld until December 31. Similar to other non-state armed groups, the ELN expanded its presence in areas affected by the withdrawal of the FARC in the context of the implementation of the peace agreement.

An agreement was reached in the conflict over mining rights in two municipalities in the Antioquia department between local artisanal miners and the government as well as the Canadian mining company Gran Colombia Gold [→ Colombia (artisanal miners / Antioquia)]. After several negotiations did not result in progress, an agreement consisting of several approaches to reduce incompatibilities and the end of the strike was eventually announced by both conflict parties on September 1. However, the Mesa Minera accused the government of not having fulfilled their part of the agreement in October.

Aside from Colombia, Venezuela also witnessed several negotiations between the government by President Nicolás Maduro and the opposition, led by the alliance MUD [→ Venezuela (opposition)]. In late January, the MUD left dialogues mediated by the Vatican, accusing the government of not fulfilling its commitments. Another initiative was started by the President of the Dominican Republic, Danilo Medina, in September. These talks were resumed in December after the MUD had abandoned them, criticizing the government for not implementing measures the conflict parties had agreed upon. All in all, negotiations did not result in advancing a peaceful settlement to the violent crisis. (twf, vs)

UNITED NATIONS PEACEKEEPING MISSIONS

Peacekeeping missions, observer missions, and peace enforcement are tools of conflict resolution, established within the UN system and supposed to end conflict as well as to support democratic transition on national and subnational level. Since 1947, a total of 71 operations have been conducted with 17 being active in 2017. Throughout the year, two missions came to an end, namely the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) and United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH). The latter was replaced by the United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH) on October 16, resulting in 15 active missions at the end of the year. This year, all missions accounted for 110,000 deployed uniformed and other personnel. Throughout the year, 134 personnel died in ongoing missions (3693 in total

since 1948) due to combat, disease or other mission-related causes. The overall budget is estimated USD 6.80 billion from July 1 to 06/30/18, and is renewed and approved annually by the UNSC in mid-June. All operations are mandated by UNSC resolutions and supervised by the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (UNDPKO). Apart from UN-led efforts, the UN recognizes regional measures for conflict resolution, such as by the EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia in 2008, EULEX in Kosovo/Serbia, as well as the African Union's AMISOM in Somalia since 2007 and the UNAMID hybrid mission in Darfur/Sudan [→ Georgia – Russia; Serbia (Kosovo); Somalia, Kenya (Al-Shabab); Sudan (Darfur)]. Since the first mission in 1948 (UNTSO Middle East), the mandate of peacekeeping missions has gradually advanced to better respond to political changes. Missions provide assistance in disarmament, demobilization of ex-combatants, mine action, security sector reform, rule of law-related activities, protection and promotion of human rights, electoral assistance, and economic and social development. By doing so, each mission is based on three principles: the consent of the parties, impartiality, and the non-use of force except in self-defence and in defence of the mandate. As of 2017, the year was marked by significant cuts of USD 600 million in the UN peacekeeping budget resulting from the decision to reduce its financial support to the UN. In reaction to the widespread criticism towards peacekeeping in the past years, the UN initiated a series of strategic reviews of its major peacekeeping operations in 2017 to further develop a strategy for reforming the current peacekeeping system embedded in the new UN Secretary General (UNSG) plans of a management reform.

MIDDLE EAST AND MAGHREB

The United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO), an observer mission with an annual budget of USD 52,5 million, continued in 2017 [→ Morocco (POLISARIO / Western Sahara)]. Since its establishment on 04/29/91 upon recommendation by the UNSG, 16 MINURSO personnel died. The mission is located in El Aaiun, Laâyoune-Sakia El Hamra region, Morocco, and employs 245 uniformed personnel, 227 civilian personnel, and 14 UN volunteers. MINURSO was mandated to supervise the ceasefire between the Moroccan government and Frente POLISARIO over contentious territorial claims, involving resource-rich parts of Western Sahara. Originally established to ensure the disarmament of both parties and the peaceful exchange of POWs, the mission failed to accomplish the registration of voters in the run for a general referendum deemed at determining the status of Western Sahara as part of Morocco or an independent state. As in previous years, the proposed referendum over Western Saharan independence, which is part of MINURSO's mandate, was not implemented. The Mission frequently comes under criticism for being the only mission without a human rights observation mandating transparency. United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), a peacekeeping mission located in Naqoura, South Governorate, Lebanon, employing 11,317 personnel in total, continued. The current annual budget is USD 483 million. Established on 03/19/78 to oversee the decampment of Israeli troops and to restore peace and state authority in Southern Lebanon, UNIFIL's mandate today is based on Chapter VII of the UN Charter [→ Israel – Lebanon; Israel (Hezbollah)]. Following

the Lebanon war in 2006, UNIFIL was also tasked to monitor the 225 km long coastline to prevent illicit arms trading. On August 30, the UNSC approved the renewal of UNIFIL at the border between Israel and Lebanon, after dealing with Israeli and American complaints that the mission's forces would ignore arms transfers to Hezbollah.

United Nations Disengagement Observer Force in Syria (UNDOF), a peacekeeping mission established on 05/31/74, also continued. The Mission is located at Camp Faouar, Quneitra governorate, Syria, employing 1,117 personnel in total. The current annual budget is USD 57,6 million. Originally, UNDOF's mandate was to monitor the ceasefire between Israel and Syria on the Golan Heights, a territory annexed by Israel [→ Syria – Israel]. Due to the conflicts in Syria, the current area of UNDOF operations became contested. On December 21, the UNSC unanimously adopted resolution 2361, renewing UNDOF's mandate until 30/06/18, strongly condemning the use of heavy weapons in the area of separation and urging to stop military activity in that area. United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO), a peacekeeping mission established in the Middle East on 05/29/48, continued. Staffed with a total personnel of 374, UNTSO is headquartered in Jerusalem, from where it maintains liaison offices in Beirut, Lebanon as well as Damascus, Syria, and Ismailia, Egypt. UNTSO has a annual budget of USD 69 million. During the mission, 51 fatalities were counted. UNTSO is mandated to monitor and enforce the General Armistice Agreements of 1949 between Israel and its Arab neighbors.

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) continued in 2017. The peacekeeping mission was established on 04/10/14 under Chapter VII authorization of the UNSC to account for the aggravated human rights situation. With an annual budget of USD 882 million, the mission employs 14,076 personnel in total. Since its onset, the Mission counted 59 fatalities. Originally established under AU supervision, the mission transformed into a UN mission as of 09/15/14. MINUSCA's mandate was renewed, including "arms embargo, asset freeze, and travel ban on designated individuals" in the Central African Republic. In 2017, at least 13 humanitarian workers and 34 peacekeepers were killed during attacks by armed groups such as Anti-Balaka fighters. In reaction, UNSC decided to deploy 900 additional military personnel with the extension of the mandate for another year [→ Central African Republic (Anti-Balaka – ex-Séléka)].

United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), a Peacekeeping mission established on 04/25/13 after the Tuareg rebellion in 2012, also continued [→ Mali (CMA et al. / Azawad); Mali (opposition)]. With an annual budget of USD 1,05 billion, the Mission employs 14,926 personnel in total. Since its onset, the total number of fatalities during the mission accounts for 155 deaths. As of 06/25/14, the mandate's objective includes tasks to support the political stabilization and reconciliation of conflict parties, the implementation of the security sector reform, the promotion and protection of human rights, as well as the protection and safety of civilians.

United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), the MONUC

follow-up mission, continued in 2017 [→ DR Congo (Mayi-Mayi et al.); DR Congo, Rwanda (FDLR); DR Congo (ADF); Central African Republic, DR Congo, South Sudan, Uganda (LRA); DR Congo (ex-M23); DR Congo (Kata Katanga); DR Congo (Bantu - Batwa); DR Congo (Ituri militias)]. Acting under Chapter VII authorization, the Mission employs 20,688 personnel in total and operates on an annual budget of USD 1.14 billion. Acting from its headquarters in Kinshasa, the capital of DR Congo, the Mission was reinforced by the United Nations Force Intervention Brigade on 03/28/13, consisting of three infantry battalions, one artillery, one special force, and one reconnaissance company. The Brigade was authorized to use force against armed groups posing an imminent threat to state authority and civilian security. By the end of 2017, 144 MONUSCO personnel had died during the course of the Mission. The current mandate includes inter alia the protection of civilians, the neutralizing of armed groups by the Intervention Brigade, the promotion of peace consolidation, and the provision of support to national and international judicial processes. In a resolution following the mandate extension of March 30, the figures for authorized troops and police forces were reduced by 3,700 to 16,875.

African Union – United Nations Mission in Darfur (UNAMID), a hybrid peacekeeping mission established on 07/31/07, continued in 2017 [→ Sudan (Darfur); Sudan (inter-communal violence)]. It currently employs 17,174 personnel and works on an annual budget of USD 486 million. Since its onset, 260 UNAMID personnel died. Acting from its headquarters in al-Faschir, Schamal Darfur state, UNAMID's mandate is to protect civilians from conflict, to provide humanitarian assistance, and to ensure compliance with agreements of the conflict parties. It is also tasked with supporting efforts for the promotion of human rights and the rule of law, and to oversee the situation along the borders of Chad and Central African Republic. In 2017, UNSC extended UNAMID's mandate while adopting resolution 2363 (2017) providing for UNAMID's restructuring in two six-months phases. As suggested in the 18 May special report, the size of the authorized military and police forces should be reduced to 8,735 and 2,500 respectively by the end of the second phase.

United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), a peacekeeping mission established on 01/19/03 continued. It currently employs 1,481 personnel in total and acts on an annual budget of USD 110 million. Since its onset, the mission resulted in the death of 201 personnel. Acting from its headquarters in Monrovia, UNMIL's mandate encompassed the protection of civilians, humanitarian assistance, as well as the promotion of human rights. The mandate will be terminated by the end of March 2018. UNMIL was based on an ECOWAS mandate, which had overseen peace and reconciliation efforts between the former civil war parties. After the arrest of former President Charles Taylor in 2006, UNMIL's primary objective was the restoration of state power, the repatriation of refugees in Liberia, and the disarmament of armed groups. An estimated 14,541 UN-mandated personnel operated in Liberia in 2004. Since then, the UNSC has gradually adapted UNMIL's mandate and decreased the amount of personnel. In 2016, the UN adopted three resolutions on six meetings with regards to UNMIL, emphasizing the need to focus on anti-corruption, economic reconstruction, the prevention of gender-based violence, and the preparatory work for the 2017 presidential

elections.

United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI), a peacekeeping mission established on 04/04/04, with its headquarters located in Abidjan, ended on June 30 after 13 years [→ Côte d'Ivoire (militant groups); Côte d'Ivoire (opposition)]. Originally mandated to ensure the implementation of the 2003 peace accord, the Mission, acting under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, was lately tasked to "protect civilians, provide good offices, support the Ivorian Government in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) of former combatants as well as on security sector reform, and monitor and promote human rights." The completion of the Mission was a result of positive developments in the past years.

United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS), a peacekeeping mission established on 07/08/11, continued in 2017 [→ South Sudan (SPLM/A-in-Opposition)]. It currently employs 17,140 personnel and runs on a USD 1.07 billion budget annually. Since its onset, the mission resulted in the death of 51 people. Headquartered in South Sudan's capital Juba, the Mission's mandate is to restore peace and security in South Sudan and to help establish conditions for development. After the 2013 crisis, the UNSC reinforced the Mission's troop strength in order to better protect civilians, monitor human rights, and implement the ceasefire agreement. United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA), a peacekeeping mission established on 06/27/11 in order to de-escalate tensions along the Sudanese-South Sudanese border and to ensure the repatriation of IDPs continued in 2017 [→ Sudan, South Sudan (Abyei); Sudan – South Sudan]. Headquartered in Abyei Town, Abyei Area, and employing 4,802 personnel in total, UNISFA is run on a budget of USD 267 million annually. Since its onset, 24 personnel have died. In 2017, the UNSC twice extended UNISFA's mandate for six months each time.

The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), an AU-led regional mission established in 01/19/07, continued in 2017 [→ Somalia, Kenya (al-Shabaab)]. The Mission was later approved by UNSC resolution 1744. Currently, approx 22,000 personnel are employed to serve AMISOM's mandate to build up and strengthen Somali state authority. Headquartered in Mogadishu, the scope of tasks changed from peacekeeping to a robust enforcement mandate in order to fight al-Shabaab. No official public record of fatalities was published so far. In 2017, the UNSC discussed the political situation in Somalia during seven meetings, published two Secretary-General reports, and adopted three resolutions.

EUROPE

United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), established on 06/10/99 and based in Pristina, the capital of Kosovo, continued in 2017 [→ Serbia (Kosovo)]. Currently, the Mission employs 352 personnel in total and operates on an annual budget of USD 38 million. Since its onset, the mission resulted in the death of 55 personnel. UNMIK was established to support self-government of Kosovo after the 1998-1999 Kosovo War. In contrast to other missions, UNMIK was authorized to use "all legislative and executive powers and administration of the judiciary" to fulfill its mandate until full independence is achieved. UNMIK's activities include promoting security, human rights as well as the monitoring of compliance with the 2013 Agreement of Principles

Governing the Normalization of Relations between Pristina and Belgrade.

United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) continued in 2017 [→ Cyprus (TRNC / Northern Cyprus)]. It was established on 03/04/64 in order to "prevent the recurrence of fighting, contribute to the maintenance and restoration of law and order, as well as to contribute to return to normal conditions." After hostilities in 1974, UNFICYP's mandate was altered to include monitoring functions of the de-facto ceasefire and the buffer zone between the lines of the Cyprus National Guard and of the Turkish and Turkish Cypriot forces. Currently, 1,106 personnel are employed in Cyprus, operating on an annual budget of USD 57.65 million. Over the course of the Mission, 183 UNFICYP personnel died. In June 2017, the yearly conference on Cyprus held in Crans-Montana, Switzerland, ended without an agreement reached. The participants were urged to renew their political will and commitment towards a UN mediated settlement. In November, a team of the United Nations headquarters visited Cyprus in the beginning of November to strategically reviewing UNFICYP. Their findings were presented in a report submitted in the end of November, promoting a reform of the mission.

THE AMERICAS

The United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), a peacekeeping mission established in 06/01/04, ended in 2017 and was replaced by a smaller follow-on mission, the United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH), on April 13 [→ Haiti (opposition)]. Headquartered in Port-au-Prince, the capital of Haiti, MINUJUSTH's mandate includes to assist the government in the development of the Haitian National Police Force, strengthening Haiti's rule of law institutions as well as human rights promotion and protection. MINUJUSTH employs 1,200 personnel in total, mainly police.

ASIA AND OCEANIA

The United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP), a peacekeeping mission established in 01/20/49, employing 115 personnel in total, continued in 2017 [→ Pakistan – India]. The Mission operates on a USD 21 million budget biennially and is one of the few operations which is funded directly by the general UN budget. The Mission's budget has been cut by 11 percent for 2018-2019 due to an overall cut in the UN budget. Since its onset, 11 UNMOGIP personnel have died. UNMOGIP's mandate is to monitor the ceasefire between India and Pakistan in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. As determined by the Secretary-General, no official termination date of UNMOGIP is given. Moreover, the UN is adamant that UNMOGIP can only be terminated by a UNSC resolution.

By the end of 2017, the United Nations Department of Political Affairs (UNDPA) also operated 13 field-based political missions or peace-building offices worldwide in order to support actions of conflict prevention, peacemaking, and post-conflict peacebuilding. As in previous years, the mandate of political missions was supplemented by assistance in preventive diplomacy. The majority of missions was located in Sub-Saharan Africa (Gabon, Guinea-Bissau, Ethiopia, Somalia, Senegal). Five missions operate within countries of

the Middle East and Maghreb (Afghanistan, Iraq, Israel, Libya, Lebanon) and one mission each in Asia (Turkmenistan) and the Americas (Colombia). After the UN Mission in Colombia was concluded on September 26 with FARC-EP's laying down of weapons, the Mission was followed up with the UN Verification Mission in Colombia monitoring the peace process. Along with its field-based missions, DPA also super-

vises and guides traveling envoys and special advisers of the UNSG supporting UN's work in conflict resolution and mandate implementation. These include personal envoys, special adviser, special envoys working on Western Sahara, Cyprus, the Burundi dialogue, Sudan, South Sudan, Syria, Yemen and Great Lakes Region. (fli, ska, Elena Allendörfer)

Overview: Current UN Missions led or supported by DPKO

Mission Acronym	Name of Mission	Start	Country
Europe			
UNFICYP	United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus	1964	Cyprus
UNMIK	United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo	1999	Serbia
Sub-Saharan Africa			
MINUSCA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic	2012	Central African Republic
MONUSCO	United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission to the Democratic Republic of the Congo	1999	Congo (Kinshasa)
UNOCI	United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire – ENDED	2004	Côte d'Ivoire
UNMIL	United Nations Mission in Liberia	2003	Liberia
MINUSMA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali	2013	Mali
UNMISS	United Nations Mission in South Sudan	2011	South Sudan
UNAMID	African Union/United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur	2007	Sudan
UNISFA	United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei	2011	Sudan, South Sudan
The Americas			
MINUSTAH	United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti	2004	Haiti
MINUJUSTH	United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti – ENDED	2017	Haiti
Asia and Oceania			
UNMOGIP	United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan	1949	India, Pakistan
The Middle East and Maghreb			
UNTSO	United Nations Truce Supervision Organization	1948	Israel
UNIFIL	United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon	1978	Lebanon, Israel
MINURSO	United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara	1991	Morocco
UNDOF	United Nations Disengagement Observer Force	1974	Syria

AUTHORITATIVE DECISIONS BY THE ICJ

In 2017, the ICJ handed out 13 orders and one judgment. The only judgment of the year was rendered in the case *Maritime Delimitation in the Indian Ocean (Somalia v. Kenya)* on February 2. On 2/8/2014, Somalia had instituted proceedings against Kenya, requesting the Court to determine the complete course of the single maritime boundary dividing all the maritime areas appertaining to Somalia and to Kenya in the Indian Ocean, including the continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles. The Court held that it had jurisdiction to entertain the dispute.

Five new cases were submitted to the Court. First, on January 16, Costa Rica instituted proceedings against Nicaragua in the case of *Land Boundary in the Northern Part of Isla Portillos*. The conflict concerned the precise location of the land boundary separating the Los Portillos/Harbor Head Lagoon sandbar from Isla Portillos and the establishment of a military camp by Nicaragua on the beach of Isla Portillos. The applicant requested the Court to join the new proceedings with the 2014 application in the case of *Maritime Delimita-*

tion in the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific Ocean (Costa Rica v. Nicaragua), which was granted on February 2. Second, on January 17, Ukraine requested the Court to examine whether the Russian Federation had violated the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism (ICSFT) and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD) [→ *Ukraine (Donbas)*]. Ukraine alleged that Russia had “escalated its interference in Ukrainian affairs to dangerous new levels, intervening militarily in Ukraine, financing acts of terrorism, and violating the human rights of millions of Ukraine's citizens, including, for all too many, their right to life. It states that in eastern Ukraine, the Russian Federation has instigated and sustained an armed insurrection against the authority of the Ukrainian State.” It also requested the ICJ to indicate provisional measures. This request was granted on April 19, when the Court held that Russia had to refrain from maintaining or imposing limitations on the ability of the Crimean Tatar community to conserve its representative institutions, including the Mejlis, and ensure the availability of education in the Ukrainian language under the CERD convention. However,

the request concerning the situation in eastern Ukraine under the ICSTF was denied, as Ukraine had not provided sufficient evidence to determine whether intention and knowledge, as well as the element of purpose, can be attributed to Russia. Third, on February 3, Malaysia applied for the revision of the Judgment of 05/23/2008 in the case concerning Sovereignty over Pedra Branca/Pulau Batu Puteh, Middle Rocks and South Ledge. In this previous judgment the Court had found that the sovereignty of the island of Pedra Branca/Pulau Batu Puteh belongs to Singapore. Malaysia based its application for revision on the discovery of new historical documents issued by British colonial and Singaporean administrations. According to Malaysia these documents establish that the territory did not form part of Singapore's sovereign territory. Fourth, and closely related to the previous case, on June 30, Malaysia also requested an interpretation of the aforementioned 2008 judgment, in particular the notion of sovereignty with respect to the territorial waters of Pedra Branca/Pulau Batu Puteh and South Ledge. Fifth, on May 9, India instituted proceedings against the Islamic Republic of Pakistan concerning the detention and trial of the Indian national Kulbhushan Sudhir Jadhav, who had been sentenced to death by a military court in Pakistan [→ India – Pakistan]. India alleged that it had not been informed about Jadhav's detention and that Pakistan had failed to inform the accused of his rights, in particular consular assistance. On May 18, the Court indicated to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan that it must take all measures at its disposal to prevent the execution of Jadhav, pending the final judgment.

Moreover, on June 22, the UN GA requested an advisory opinion from the Court on the legal consequences of the separation of the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius in 1965. The resolution posed two questions to the Court: On the one hand, the Assembly asked whether the process of decolonization of Mauritius was lawfully completed when Mauritius was granted independence in 1968, following the separation of the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius. On the other hand, the Assembly requested information on the consequences under international law, arising from the continued British administration of the Chagos Archipelago.

Three cases were being heard or under deliberation, all concerning territorial disputes between Costa Rica and Nicaragua (Certain Activities carried out by Nicaragua in the Border Area; Maritime Delimitation in the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific Ocean; Land Boundary in the in the Northern Part of Isla Portillos). 17 cases were pending at the Court, among others the case concerning the Gabčíkovo-Nagymaros Project (Hungary v. Slovakia). After the first judgment in the case in 1997, Slovakia had requested an additional judgment on 3/9/1998. On June 30 this year, the Court placed on record the discontinuance of the case following a request by the applicant.

International attention also centered on the election of five new judges to the ICJ for a term of office of nine years, beginning on 02/06/2018. On November 9, the UN GA and the UNSC re-elected Judges Ronny Abraham (France), Abdulqawi Ahmed Yusuf (Somalia), and Antônio Augusto Cançado Trindade (Brazil) as well as the new member Nawaf Salam (Lebanon). The election of a fifth Member of the Court could not be concluded on November 9 and 13, since neither of the two remaining candidates, Judges Christopher Greenwood (United Kingdom) and Dalveer Bhandari (India),

obtained an absolute majority in both bodies. On November 20, Greenwood withdrew his candidacy and Bhandari was approved. This caused significant debate as it marked the first time in the history of the Court that a British judge was not elected to the 15 judges of the ICJ. (sst)

INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT

In 2017, the Court undertook eight preliminary examinations, namely in Afghanistan, Colombia, Gabon, Guinea, Iraq/UK, Nigeria, Palestine, and Ukraine. On November 20, the Prosecutor requested judicial authorization to commence an investigation into the situation in the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, which had been under preliminary examination since 2006 [→ Afghanistan (Taliban et al.)]. The Prosecutor argued that there was reasonable basis to believe that the following crimes within the jurisdiction of the ICC had been committed since 2002: crimes against humanity and war crimes by the Taliban, war crimes by the Afghan National Security Forces, as well as war crimes by members of US armed forces on the territory of Afghanistan and by members of the US Central Intelligence Agency in secret detention facilities in Afghanistan and on the territory of other states party to the Rome Statute, principally in the period of 2003-2004. In the context of the on-going preliminary examination of the situation in Colombia, the Office of the Prosecutor visited Colombia from September 10 to 13 to discuss the implementation of the peace agreement [→ Colombia (FARC)].

Moreover, the ICC also examined eleven situations: Uganda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Darfur/Sudan, the Central African Republic, the Republic of Kenya, Libya, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, the Central African Republic II, Georgia, and Burundi. Throughout the year, the Court pushed for the arrest of alleged war criminals concerning the situation in Libya [→ Libya (opposition)]. For instance, on April 24, Pre-Trial Chamber I unsealed a warrant of arrest for Al-Tuhamy Mohamed Khaled, former head of the Libyan Internal Security Agency. On June 14, the Prosecutor reiterated her call for the immediate arrest and surrender of the suspects Saif Al-Islam Gaddafi and Al-Tuhamy Mohamed Khaled to the Court. Moreover, on August 15, Pre-Trial Chamber I issued an arrest warrant for Mahmoud Mustafa Busayf Al-Werfalli, commander of the Libyan Special Forces Al-Saiqa, for war crimes committed around Benghazi. On November 9, Pre-Trial Chamber III issued a public redacted version of its decision authorizing the Prosecutor to open an investigation into crimes allegedly committed in Burundi or by nationals of Burundi outside Burundi from 26/4/2015 to 26/10/2017 [→ Burundi (opposition)]. At this date, Burundi notified the ICC of its intent to withdraw from the Rome Statute. However, the Pre-Trial Chamber found that the Court had jurisdiction over crimes allegedly committed while Burundi was a state party to the Rome Statute.

18 individual cases were pending at the ICC. While no final verdicts were handed out this year, the Court ruled on orders for reparation in several cases. In the case concerning The Prosecutor v. Germain Katanga, Trial Chamber II awarded 297 victims with a symbolic compensation of USD 250 per victim as well as collective reparations in the form of support for housing, support for income-generating activities, education aid, and psychological support on March 24. On August 17, Trial Chamber VIII concluded in the case The Prosecutor

v. Ahmad Al Faqi Al Mahdi that the latter was liable for 2.7 million euros in expenses for individual and collective reparations for the community of Timbuktu for intentionally directing attacks against religious and historic buildings in that city. In the case concerning *The Prosecutor v. Thomas Lubanga Dyilo*, Trial Chamber II issued a decision on reparations on December 5, setting the amount of Dyilo's liability for collective reparations at USD 10 million. The Chamber had identified more than 400 direct and indirect victims of the Congolese military leader.

Moreover, Trial Chamber VII delivered its decision on sentencing in the case of *The Prosecutor v. Jean-Pierre Bemba Gombo, Aimé Kilolo Musamba, Jean-Jacques Mangenda Kabongo, Fidèle Babala Wandu, and Narcisse Arido* on March 22. The Chamber imposed prison sentences ranging from six months to two years upon the six defendants convicted of various offences against the administration of justice, in particular false testimonies of defence witnesses in another case against Bemba before the ICC.

The execution of an arrest warrant in the case *The Prosecutor v. Omar Hassan Ahmad Al-Bashir* remained contentious. Pre-Trial Chamber II announced on July 6 that South Africa had failed to comply with its obligation when it had not arrested Omar Al-Bashir while he was on South African territory in June 2015. However, the Chamber decided that the referral of South Africa's non-compliance to the ASP and/or the UNSC was not warranted as South Africa was the first state to seek a final legal determination regarding the execution of arrest warrants and was sufficiently cooperating with the Court. The Chamber also found on December 11 that

the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan violated its obligation as a state party when it had not executed the arrest warrant of Omar Al-Bashir while he was on Jordanian territory on March 29. In contrast to the South African case, the Jordanian non-cooperation was conferred to the Assembly of States Parties to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ASP) and the UNSC.

While 2016 was characterized by several states withdrawing from the ICC, this year showed a reversal effect. First, the Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of the Gambia to the UN notified the annulment of its decision to withdraw from the Rome Statute with immediate effect on February 10, following the election of a new president. Similarly, on March 7, the Permanent Mission of the Republic of South Africa notified the UN Secretary-General to revoke with immediate effect the instrument of withdrawal from the Rome Statute after it had been deposited on 19/10/2016.

However, the ICC faced a crisis when several international newspapers leaked 40,000 ICC-related documents in early October. In particular the role of former Prosecutor Luis Moreno Ocampo raised major criticism as the documents revealed severe cases of conflict of interest during or shortly after his time as a Prosecutor.

The ASP held its sixteenth session from December 4 to 14 at the UN headquarters in New York. During the session, the ASP elected six new judges to the 18-member Court, which hailed from Italy, Japan, Benin, Uganda, Peru, and Canada. Moreover, the ASP adopted six resolutions by consensus, most importantly on the activation of the jurisdiction of the Court over the crime of aggression. (sst)

Spotlights

FUELLING JIHAD: HOW OPIUM KEEPS THE AFGHAN WAR RUNNING

The year 2016 established the unfortunate record of being the most fatal year for civilians in Afghanistan since the beginning of the international intervention. Meanwhile, 2017 saw a slight decrease in civilian casualties. Still, it was another record-breaking year for Afghanistan. Never before has a higher amount of opium poppy been cultivated and never has more opium been produced on Afghan soil. The latest Afghanistan Opium Survey conducted by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), estimates that the total area under opium cultivation increased by 63 percent to 328,000 hectares compared to 2016. The estimated opium production saw an even higher increase by 87 percent amounting to about 9,000 tons (UNODC 2017).

Opium is often described as a major driving factor behind the Taliban's armed battle against the Afghan government. President Ashraf Ghani recently called it "the main source of financing violence and terror" promising to "tackle criminal economy and narcotics trafficking with full force" (The Washington Post, Nov. 21 2017). In November, the US Air Force conducted a series of airstrikes targeting Taliban narcotic labs to hit them where it hurts as part of the Trump administration's new Afghanistan strategy. General John Nicholson, commander of the U.S. Forces Afghanistan, labelled the Taliban a criminal organization, comparing them to drug cartels (ibid.). This narrative has become more prevalent in the last years and sometimes even implies that the incentive to make financial gains from narco-trafficking outweighs the ideological motives behind the Taliban's armed struggle (Draeger 2011). The nexus between drugs and militant groups is not a unique feature of Afghanistan. It has been observed and analysed extensively in other highly violent conflicts, as for instance the FARC conflict in Colombia. With regard to the MENA region, the term "Narco-Jihad" has been coined to describe drug trafficking networks linked to Islamist militant groups such as Hezbollah (ibid.). Whether it is perceived as an end or a means of the ongoing conflict, the role of opium and its connection to violence and insecurity are key to understanding conflict dynamics in Afghanistan.

The use of opium as a source for funding military activities is not a recent phenomenon in Afghanistan. Opium cultivation started to flourish during the Soviet invasion when the level of government control was low and warlords needed financial resources to pay for fighters and weapons. The unstable conditions after the Soviet withdrawal in 1989 further fuelled illicit poppy cultivation and allowed Mujahideen fighters struggling for power to resort to opium in order to cover military expenses. When the Taliban seized power, the cultivation of opium power fell into disrepute and was eventually declared un-Islamic by the Taliban regime in 2000. In an unprecedented campaign, opium poppy was virtually eliminated in the areas under Taliban control.

After the fall of the Taliban in 2001, the deteriorating economic and security situation in Afghanistan resulted in the reinvigoration of opium cultivation. The Taliban's objections against opium dispersed with the necessity to survive as a militant organization. The use of opium cultivation was justified as a means to finance their armed struggle and the damage done by heroin was gladly accepted as long as it hurt

consumers in the West. Today, estimations suggest, opium accounts for up to 60 percent of the Taliban's income. The reality of currently more than 1.3 million addicts in Afghanistan is widely disregarded by the group (The Guardian, Nov. 16 2017).

For many Afghan civilians opium poppy is a vital source of income. The lucrative crop is very easy to cultivate, even under adverse natural conditions, and can be harvested and stored without a need for expensive equipment. Advances in agriculture and genetically modified seeds continue to enhance this effect. Afghanistan's weak overall performance regarding economic growth and employment as well as the lack of a functioning market for agricultural products leaves little profitable alternatives for a large share of the country's farmers. The Taliban benefit by collecting *ushr*, an Islamic tax imposed on harvest that can amount to up to 10 percent of the revenues, and protection money for providing security for opium cultivation and trafficking. Recently, the group has been increasingly involved in processing opium to heroin, thereby facilitating smuggling and increasing their profit. Strategic advances in the regions where opium poppy farming is most prevalent enables the group to build an increasing number of labs close to the areas under cultivation. Throughout the year, the Taliban continued to extend their territorial control and strengthen their position in strategically important areas in the south where about 60 percent of the opium poppy cultivation took place. In mid-March, they took control of the town of Sangin and major parts of the eponymous district, Helmand province. Helmand province accounts for 44 percent of the country's opium poppy cultivation and for about half of the increase in national cultivation in 2017. The opium business has naturally been strong in the remote and insecure southwestern provinces of Afghanistan such as Helmand, Kandahar or Farah. However, increased instability in the North caused farmers to return to planting poppy in provinces that were formerly poppy-free. Balkh province, for instance, saw a hike of almost five times compared to the amount of cultivated hectares in 2016. Eradicating opium poppy plants and bombing opium factories as recently done by the US are neither new strategies, nor have they been effective in the past. Campaigns conducted by Afghan and international security forces to eradicate the plant hurt the civilian population more than they hurt the Taliban. Labs are easily replaced and destroying the opium poppy farmers' livelihood is likely to stir anger and push them into the arms of the militants whom they perceived as their patrons. Further and most importantly, those strategies fail to tackle the structural root causes of the thriving opium business. It is not a secret that the Afghan drug cartels are reaching way beyond militant organizations. Up until today, former warlords who now hold government position are among the biggest profiteers of Afghanistan's opium business. The latest UNODC report suggests that corruption among government officials serves as one of the main drivers behind illicit opium poppy cultivation. Failure to hold official beneficiaries of Afghanistan's war economy accountable and to provide viable alternatives to farmers will keep the violence going. If the opium cultivation and production continues to flourish, so will militant's activities and insecurity. As a senior Afghan official quoted by the

New York Times put it: "If an illiterate local Taliban commander in Helmand makes a million dollars a month now, what does he gain in time of peace?" (The New York Times, Oct. 29 2017).

CHARLOTTE FELBINGER

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INTERNAL UNREST IN ETHIOPIA: A SITUATION ASSESSMENT

According to GDP growth data from 2011 to 2015, Ethiopia counted as one of the world's five fastest growing economies. Capital-intensive major infrastructural projects such as the Gibe I-III dams on the Omo River in Ethiopia's Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region and the expansion of the national sugar processing industry boosted the country's economic productivity to a record high. The latest promising but heavily disputed mega project is the ostensibly community-financed Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), Africa's biggest hydroelectric power plant when completed next year. Located on the Blue Nile River in western Ethiopia's Benishangul-Gumuz Region near the Sudanese border, the dam will process the water downstream before it reaches Egyptian territory. As most of Egypt's water supply stems from the Nile and the demand for water continuously increased, the country fears water scarcity after the construction of the dam is completed. Regional endeavors to resolve the temporarily even violent dispute between the three riparian states led to a tripartite agreement in December 2015, proclaiming a peaceful resolution and determining the commission of scientific studies about the dam's empirical impact on the Nile downstream. This year, these studies were still overdue. As a result, diplomatic tensions between the riparian states intensified. Nevertheless, Ethiopian state owned media outlets frequently use the "rising Ethiopia" developmental-state narrative in order to legitimize the government's approach towards economic development. Not only abroad, the ambitious Ethiopian redevelopment plans are seen with skepticism. Riots were conducted after the announcement of the so-called 'master plan' in April 2014, foreseeing the expansion of the city boundaries of Addis Ababa into surrounding farmland of Oromia Regional

State. The Oromia region, one of the country's nine politically autonomous regional states, is mostly inhabited by ethnic Oromo, which make up the largest ethnic group of the country. On 04/25/14, Oromo students took to the streets accusing the government of unjustifiably planning to encroach into the surrounding farmland and leaving it vulnerable to economic redevelopment. Security forces violently intervened inter alia in Ambo, Nekemte, and Jimma, killing several protesters. This marked the start of a wave of violent and sometimes deadly protests spreading through Oromia and Amhara region, leaving hundreds dead and thousands arrested. Clashes between protesters and security forces smoldered throughout 2014, intensified in 2015 after it had become clear that the government resumed its "master plan" and finally culminated in a region-wide protest movement in 2016.

Besides that, the spurs of 'El Niño' hit parts of Ethiopia and its neighboring countries in late 2015, therefore facing one of the worst droughts in decades. Food and water shortage as well as an outbreak of diseases shook parts of the countries' population and caused a widespread humanitarian crisis. In addition, the countries' economies were affected. Ethiopia's GDP declined from an annual ten percent growth rate to eight percent.

When in October 2016 tens of thousands ethnic Oromo attended the annually celebrated Irreecha festival in Bishoftu, Oromia region, celebrating the rains lessening as well as the upcoming harvesting season, possibly hundreds of people died in a stampede fueled by security forces' use of firearms and a scarce safety plan for handling a big restive crowd on the run. The following anti-government protests did not only condemn Addis' economic redevelopment plans but also called for an end of the experienced structural marginalization of the Oromo people and the excessive force used by security forces during peacefully staged protests or celebrations. The protests quickly spread through Oromia and Amhara regional states, bringing together tens of thousands of people. Subsequently, the Ethiopian government declared a six-month state of emergency on October 9, thereby restricting freedom of speech and access to information. The federal government set up the so-called 'Command Post' comprising military and regional security forces under the control of the army in order to prevent large-scale gatherings and demonstrations. Human rights organizations and witnesses reported that these security forces carried out massacres as well as kidnappings and tortured dissidents and political oppositional figures during the state of emergency. In this respect, one name comes up regularly: the 'Liyu police'. Originally set up in 2007 by the administration of the Somali regional state in order to combat the rebel group Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF), the 'Liyu police', due to its high level of operational ability, quickly expanded in size and scope. The paramilitary unit also supported the regular Ethiopian army in counter-operations fighting al-Shabaab in Somalia, all together following the US call for 'war on terrorism'. International organizations have repeatedly denounced the human rights violations committed by the 'Liyu police'. Mostly, the unit compromises ethnic Somali, recruits in the Somali region, and is further highly valued and allegedly financed by the Ethiopian government. The mastermind behind the group's set up is Abdi Mohamoud Omar, better

known as Abdi Illey and currently Somali regional state's president. Albeit the untransparent and biased media coverage of conflict events in the Oromia, Amhara, and Somali regional states it became clear that the 'Liyu police' is acting with impunity. Throughout 2017, hundreds of people were killed, thousands of alleged oppositionists were arrested and according to UNOCHA more than 700,000 people displaced. When the state of emergency was eventually lifted in August 2017, protests in the region resumed, this time calling for an end of the 'Liyu police' violence and the displacement of Oromo and Amhara. A brutal security forces crackdown in Awadaya, Oromia region, on September 11 left approx. 30 people dead. At this time, violence spilled over to the protesters. Oromo and Amhara allegedly attacked Somali and vice versa. Amongst them, the members of the security forces tried to get control of the situation using gunfire and force. The two ethnic groups, Oromo and Somali, faced dissonances over arable and grazing land as well as political participation in the past, at times resulting in violent confrontations. A 2004 border referendum legally decided the issue, firstly pacifying the dispute. However, in December 2017 alone, over 60 people of both ethnic groups were killed in clashes. In addition, other regions such as Amhara and Tigray regions experienced ethnic unrest in 2017. At the latest since the 2015 general elections Ethiopia, when the EPRDF won every parliamentary seat, the political system faced strong representation discrepancies and unclear power distribution. The coalition government as well as the regional powers engross a part of the country's economic dividend. Therefore, given the fact that access to political participation and representation is highly exclusive, internal unrest in the past years was able to persist.

ANNA FEIEREISEN

INTERRELATED CONFLICTS IN DR CONGO: AN OVERVIEW

The security situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DR Congo) further deteriorated in the context of the postponed presidential elections. In 2016, elections scheduled for November were placed on hold, allowing President Joseph Kabila to stay in office despite the end of his second term in December. As per the Congolese constitution, presidents were barred from running for a third term and amid growing public protests, the National Episcopal Commission (CENCO) had facilitated talks between the government and the opposition, leading to the December 31 agreement. This deal included the formation of a transitional government by March 2017 and provided for elections before the end of the year. In turn, it allowed Kabila to stay in office until the elections. After the death of Étienne Tshisekedi, leader of the main opposition party Union for Democracy and Social Progress (UDPS) on February 1, his son Felix was appointed leader of the oppositional alliance "Rassemblement". However, the decision led to the partial disintegration of the alliance and disagreements of the parties concerning the leader of the transitional government resulted in the withdrawal of CENCO from its role as mediator on March 28. Subsequently, Ka-

bila appointed Bruno Tshibala, a former member of the opposition, as Prime Minister in April, sparking protests from Rassemblement.

In the meantime, violence further escalated in the Kasai region, spreading to formerly peaceful provinces [→ DR Congo (KN)]. In August 2016, a traditional chief in Kasai Central province who held the title Kamuina Nsapu (KN), had been killed by security forces, marking the beginning of violence in the Kasai region. He had reportedly been critical of the government and had urged security forces to leave Kasai Central. Following his death, local militias calling themselves KN had emerged, repeatedly attacking security forces as well as civilians. After several reports of human rights abuses allegedly committed by KN militias as well as by security forces had emerged in early 2017, two members of the UN Group of Experts were sent to the region to investigate the claims. On March 12, they were abducted, allegedly by KN members. Fifteen days later, their bodies were found by MONUSCO soldiers in Kasai Central and although Congolese authorities as well as the UN launched investigations, the circumstances of their death remained unclear. In April, ethnic tensions in the Kasai region increased following the emergence of a new militia called Bana Mura. The militia was allegedly backed by the government and recruited its fighters among the ethnic groups Tshokwe, Pende, and Tetela, opposed to KN that mostly consisted of ethnic Luba fighters. According to the UN, between March 12 and June 19, at least 251 people were killed in mostly ethnic-based violence in Kamonia territory, Kasai province, alone. Throughout 2017, the conflict left at least 4,000 people dead and 605,000 internally displaced.

The EU and the US imposed sanctions on several Congolese officials for alleged involvement in human rights abuses in the context of the electoral process as well as in the Kasai region. Among the sanctioned was the former leader of the Mayi-Mayi Kata Katanga militias Kyungu Mutanga, also known as Gédéon [→ DR Congo (Kata Katanga)]. He had surrendered in November 2016, wearing a t-shirt in support of Kabila. Allegedly, his militia was involved in human rights abuses in Kasai in 2017. The Independent National Electoral Commission postponed election to 12/23/2018 on November 5, stating that the violence in Central Kasai province had impeded voter registration. Furthermore, on June 30, the national Independence Day, the National People's Coalition for the Sovereignty of the Congo (CNPSC), started an offensive to "liberate the Congo" in South Kivu province [→ DR Congo (Mayi-Mayi et al.)]. The coalition consisted of several armed groups and was led by former military commander William Amuri Yakotumba and his forces. In late 2016, CNPSC had announced to take up arms should Kabila not step down after the end of his second term. Following disagreements over the implementation of the December 31 agreement, CNPSC began to attack in June. On September 27, after an offensive in Uvira territory, the CNPSC tried to take Uvira town. However, joint operations by the Congolese Armed Forces (FARDC) and MONUSCO repulsed the attack and pushed them back into Fizi territory.

Throughout the year, Uvira territory was further affected by increased violence between members of the ethnic groups Banyamulenge and Bafuliiruan. In Tanganyika province, at least 95 people were killed and 224,000 displaced due to ethnic tensions between Bantu groups, mostly ethnic Luba,

and Batwa militias [→ DR Congo (Bantu – Batwa)]. In addition, after Ex-M23 fighters had fled demobilisation camps in Uganda, the group tried to reunite and revive the M23 in the DRC in early 2017. The attempt failed and FARDC forces moved against the group, killing at least twelve fighters in January and February. Many fighters fled to Uganda, where they were arrested by local authorities. In late 2017, HRW published a report, accusing the government of having recruited around 200 ex-M23 fighters in December 2016 to crack down on protests following Kabila's refusal to step down as President. By the end of 2017, the number of IDPs in the country increased to 4.3 million with more than 1.7 million people newly displaced throughout the year. Since 2015, the number of IDPs had more than doubled in the country and in October, the UN declared the humanitarian situation a level three emergency, the highest level possible and on par with the crisis in Syria, Iraq, and Yemen.

EMANUEL HERMANN

STRUGGLING DEMOCRATIC PROCESS IN PAKISTAN

As in previous years, political developments in Pakistan were influenced greatly by the ongoing conflicts between the ruling and the opposition parties as well as the evolving civil-military relations. The government and other elected institutions have been directly and indirectly pressurized to terms by non-elected institutions as well as non-state actors such as religious groups. In several cases throughout the year, the government and the military did not seem to act as one state institution.

Dismissal of Pakistan's Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif

Reflecting a long standing conflict between the elected and non-elected institutions of the country, the Supreme Court disqualified the Prime Minister (PM) of Pakistan, Nawaz Sharif, in a controversial decision on July 28. Sharif's elected government, as well as his party Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N) that had won the General Elections 2013, had long been facing opposition from state and non-state actors. One year after the elections, on 08/14/2014, the opposition parties Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and Pakistan Awami Tehreek (PAT) had marched to the capital Islamabad and had held a more than three months lasting sit-in ending on December 17. The opposition, accusing PML-N of having rigged the elections, had demanded the resignation of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, the dissolution of the parliament, and re-elections. The sit-in had ended when the opposition and the government agreed to an independent probe by an inquiry commission under the Supreme Court. In its final report in July 2015, the commission had rejected the rigging allegations and had found the General Elections 2013 free and fair. Starting in April 2016, the demands for Sharif's resignation revived after the Panama Papers uncovered that Sharif and his family owned offshore companies. In its initial judgement in response to a petition filed by the leaders of opposition parties, the Supreme Court on April 20, 2017 acquitted Sharif

while ordering a further probe into the alleged misconduct of the latter. On July 28, following the findings of a six member Joint Investigation Team (JIT), a larger bench of the Supreme Court held Sharif guilty of financial misconduct and unfit for the position of PM. Sharif resigned as PM the same day. The Supreme Court judgement further ordered the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) to file corruption and money laundering references against the Sharif family and the Financial Minister Ishaq Dar. A review petition by Sharif remained unsuccessful and the guilty verdict was upheld on November 7. The disqualification of Sharif has been criticized by various sections of the country. The leading newspaper Dawn in its editorial on July 30, reflecting "the consensus in expert and independent circles", called the judgement based on "troublingly narrow legal grounds" with "the undesirable potential to upend the democratic process in the country". The opinion by Dawn should be understood in the context of a long history of military and judicial intervention in the democratic process. A direct manifestation of such intervention was given by the Pakistan Rangers on October 2, when they blocked the Interior Minister Ahsan Iqbal from entering an accountability court that was hearing a corruption case against the ousted PM. This is remarkable because the Rangers as a paramilitary force are by law under the Interior Ministry.

Missing activists

The year 2017 witnessed a widening sphere of enforced disappearances in Pakistan. In the first week of January, five social media activists were reported missing from the capital Islamabad and parts of Punjab province. Waqas Goraya and Asim Saeed, both IT professionals and residents of the Netherlands and Singapore respectively, were abducted from Lahore on January 4 during a family visit in Pakistan. On January 6, Salman Haider, a university professor and poet known for his outspoken views on enforced disappearances, went missing while traveling in his car on the Islamabad expressway. Goraya, Saeed, and Haider ran various online campaigns critical of the role of military and extremist religious groups. Ahmed Raza Naseer was abducted from his family's shop in a city near Lahore on January 7. The fifth activist Samar Abbas, resident of Karachi, went missing in Islamabad.

Although enforced disappearances are a common phenomenon in Pakistan, before these cases it had been mostly restricted to the troubled province of Balochistan and to the cases of religious militants. The disappearance of the five activists sparked protests in major cities across the country as well as abroad. As the campaign for the recovery of the activists gained momentum, various counter-campaigns were launched on social media as well as mainstream electronic media accusing the missing activists of blasphemy. Amnesty International reported that four of the activists returned to their homes between January 27 and 29 and that two of the activists said that they had been threatened, intimidated and tortured by people they believed to belong to military intelligence. On December 22, the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) told the Islamabad High Court it could find no evidence against the five activists, hence absolving them of any blasphemy charges.

On December 2, Raza Mahmood Khan, a peace activist from Lahore, was reported missing after he had attended a crit-

ical talk on the army's role in ending the protests staged by TLY in Islamabad [→ Pakistan (opposition)]. Khan is the Pakistan convener of Aghaz-e-Dosti, a Pakistan-India citizen peace initiative which brings together Pakistani and Indian children through letter exchange and peace art. The case again sparked protests by civil society in Lahore and was being heard in the Lahore High Court, by the end of the year, however, without any result.

Human rights groups state that Pakistani activists and journalists often find themselves caught between the country's powerful security establishment and Islamist militant groups like the Taliban. Pakistan is ranked among the world's most dangerous countries for journalists, especially in terms of critical reporting on the military. In the past, journalists and activists were abducted, detained, tortured and even killed, while the military denied any involvement in these cases. Human rights groups further stated their concern about the misuse of blasphemy laws on critical online content posted by activists on social media. The situation is further aggravated by the Pakistani government's public demand and encouragement to report blasphemous online content to state authorities.

According to the latest data by the government instituted Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances, 1,532 persons are still missing from different parts of the country at the end of 2017: 867 from Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, 270 from Punjab, 138 from Sindh, 125 from Balochistan, 61 from the FATA, 50 from Islamabad Capital Territory, 16 from Azad Jammu & Kashmir and five from Gilgit-Baltistan. Throughout the year, the commission received 868 new cases of missing persons, while it disposed of 555 pending cases. Baloch activists claim that the number of missing persons from Balochistan lies between 12,000 and 14,000. Human rights organizations continued to demand the release of missing persons, fair trials for those accused of crime and that those responsible for enforced disappearances must be held to account.

Tehreek-i-Labaik Ya Rasool Allah (TLY) protests in Islamabad

On October 2, the government proposed an amendment to the Elections Act, changing the MPs' mandatory oath of office confirming their belief in the finality of Prophethood to a declaration [→ Pakistan (opposition)]. Protests led by the religious parties TLY, Tehreek-e-Khatme-Nabuwwat, and Sunni Tehreek Pakistan started, accusing the Law Minister Zahid Hamid of blasphemy. A two-week long sit-in in Islamabad eventually turned violent, when the government deployed police forces to disperse the protesters on November 25, leaving several dead and hundreds injured. After the government had called for the army to bring the situation under control, on November 27, an agreement brokered by Army Chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa was reached with the protesters. The government gave in to all of the protesters' demands, among them Hamid's resignation. It was further agreed that those responsible for the change in the election oath will be acted against under the law, possibly for blasphemy, and that all detained protesters would be released. Dawn reported that Punjab Rangers DG Major General Azhar Naveed Hayat oversaw the release of protesters and gave 1,000 rupees to each released protester as fare for their travel home.

The above developments, including the disqualification of PM Sharif, missing activists, and the protests led by TLY in the capital that brought the government to a crisis reveal that Pakistan's non-elected institutions, especially the military, play an increasingly important role in the political affairs leading up to the next General Elections scheduled to be held in July 2018. (rgo)

NATO IN EUROPE 2017: A REVIEW

2017 saw the continuation of growing public and governmental focus on NATO by its member states. The organisation's return to its established function as a military alliance focussing on collective defence had started in 2014 and was advanced further throughout 2017. NATO leaders argued that this move was necessitated by the volatile international situation caused by global terrorism, the challenge to the current status quo posed by expanding regional and global powers, and especially the aggressive behavior of the Russian Federation (RF). The latter's occupation of Crimea and the war in Eastern Ukraine [→ Ukraine (Donbas); Russia - Ukraine] had prompted NATO to refocus its efforts to defence vis-à-vis the RF. This report delineates the main factors influencing NATO's capabilities in 2017 as well as political developments affecting the alliance throughout the year in the European theater.

Nuclear Capabilities

Foremost to NATO's defensive abilities lies the "nuclear umbrella", which officially remains the centerpiece of NATO's defensive abilities. New technological, strategic and political developments, however, have put the once during the Cold War and in disarmament treaties established balance of power into question.

Against this backdrop, the US and NATO on the one hand, and the RF on the other, repeatedly accused each other of violating the Intermediate Range Nuclear Force Treaty (INF, 1987), which prohibits testing and deployment of any conventional or nuclear ground-launched ballistic- and cruise missiles (GLBM and GLCM respectively) between a range of 500 and 5,500 km. In November 2017, the US officially disclosed its program to develop a road mobile GLCM, which had been authorized by US-Congress in summer. Both the US and the RF disagreed whether this would violate the treaty and if so, which side started first, therefore legitimating the other's reaction. According to the US, the RF had been testing and deploying GLCMs, namely the "Novator 9M729" and probably "Rubezh" (NATO code SSC-8, and RS-26), as early as 2008. Allegedly, the SSC-8 system had already been stationed in Kapustin Yar, Astrakhan Oblast and another undisclosed place in the country. Allegations against the US included the development of a missile defense target similar to a GLBM, and the use of armed UAV's. The RF also repeatedly claimed that the planned US anti-missile system in Poland as well as the operational system in Romania violate the INF treaty. The US denied this allegation.

The overall capacity of nuclear arsenals reached a historical low number, largely due to efforts by the US and the RF. In January 2017, the US stockpiled around 6,800 nuclear warheads in terms of New START counting rules. Of these,

1,367 were deployed on ballistic missiles and air force bases. Russia in turn had a total of around 7,000, of which 1,950 were deployed. Under NATO's nuclear sharing policy, an estimated 150 to 200 US nuclear weapons were stationed at air bases throughout Europe, namely in Belgium, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, and Turkey. The US government decided to upgrade the B61-4 tactical bombs to B61-12's and to replace all carriers and carrier systems, land-, sea- and air-based. The United Kingdom had a total of around 215 warheads, of which 120 were deployed on sea via Trident submarines. In 2017, Britain's nuclear deterrent submarine force was troubled by security and maintenance problems. At the same time, the first ship of the Dreadnought-class submarines is poised to replace the current Trident fleet. France had a total of around 290 nuclear weapons, of which 280 were deployed on sea and in its air force bases. Regardless of the reduction of warheads, the commitment for new disarmament treaties by NATO members seemed to be low. On September 20, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons was signed by 56 countries in the UN. All NATO members, except the Netherlands, had abstained from the treaty negotiations that had been concluded on July 7.

Conventional Capabilities

On the conventional side, NATO strengthened its readiness by increasing troop size and interoperability in Europe. Overall, 1.79 million personnel was enlisted in Europe, and 1.38 million in North America. The US sent one armoured brigade of 3,500 soldiers, including 87 main battle-tanks (MBT), and a combat aviation brigade of 2,200 soldiers, including 86 helicopters, to their European-based forces. These were part of Operation "Atlantic Resolve", a bilateral US operation, intended to train and support armed forces in the East-European NATO states of Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Poland, Bulgaria, and Romania. Its forces are planned to rotate in nine-month cycles.

Each of the other biggest European NATO members, namely the UK, France, and Germany, would presumably find it difficult to muster a single heavy brigade on short notice. Especially the German Bundeswehr continued to be hampered by a lack of equipment and maintenance, symbolised by a crash of a Tiger helicopter in Mali on July 26. Problems were also reported for several types of heavy weapons. For example none of the German submarines and only 95 MBTs were operational. Nonetheless NATO's so-called Readiness Action Plan of 2014 led to changes to its Response Force, which tripled in size and grew to 40,000 land-, air-, sea-, and Special Forces. In 2015, a Very High Readiness Joint Task Force composed of a rotational, multinational brigade with around 5,000 troops, ready for action in two to seven days, was incorporated.

The mission "Enhanced Forward Presence" (EFP), including forces from 14 countries, was established in 2017. From February 6 onwards, four battlegroups, each consisting of around 1,000 soldiers, were deployed in Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, and Poland. Additionally, a multinational brigade led by Romania was stationed in Craiova, Dolj County, Romania. This "Tailored Forward Presence" also included naval exercises and an increase in air capabilities was planned.

To improve interoperability and effectiveness, NATO exer-

cises on land, sea, and in the air were conducted vis-à-vis exercises by the RF. According to German daily FAZ, between 2015 and summer 2017, Russia trained 124 times at brigade-sized levels (1,500-5,000 soldiers), whereas NATO only did so 38 times. Throughout the year, NATO held around 100 exercises, accompanied by 149 national member drills, which represents a slight increase to 2016. Both NATO members and the RF held exercises close to each other's borders. A particularly high rate of exercises was conducted with units marked for rapid response and forward presence, air mobile units, and units currently stationed along the Eastern flank of NATO to show the alliance's capabilities and solidarity with its new members. The largest exercises were called "Baltops", conducted in the Baltic sea from June 5 to 24 including 4,000 sailors, 50 vessels, and 50 aircrafts from twelve member states plus its partners Finland and Sweden, as well as "Saber Strike", an EFP-exercise of US- and German-led battle groups from June 6 to 23. Around 9,000 troops from 19 NATO and Scandinavian states took part in exercises in Finland, the Baltic States, and Poland.

Various exercises were held by the RF. The "Zapad 17" operation in Belarus and the RF was the biggest of these and stood in continuation of RF's annual strategic exercises. It encompassed 12,700 soldiers with regards to official accounting rules by the OSCE. The Royal United Services Institute, however, put the number at 48,000 soldiers who took part all over Russia, and 23,000 who participated in the officially reserved Zapad 17 areas. Polish and German government sources claimed the numbers to be around 100,000 troops and that simultaneous drills were also part of Zapad 17, but did not disclose the source of their intelligence. Several defense ministers from NATO members insisted greater transparency, stating that OSCE regulations would demand a greater access of observers to exercises.

Political and Strategic Developments

Despite a renewed focus on the two percent mark of the GDP for defence spending, especially on the part of the new US administration, readiness and size of NATO member forces varied greatly. Only six countries, namely the US, Greece, Estonia, the UK, Romania, and Poland, fulfilled the agreement. However, overall spending on defence continued to rise in 2017 across NATO members. Overall spending in 2017, according to NATO numbers, amounted to 945.962 million USD, including its new member Montenegro. European members spend 242.234 million USD, whereas the North-American members spend 703.729 million USD.

NATO planned to reorganize its command structure by setting up new logistics and Atlantic commands. On November 9, the Russian envoy to NATO claimed that this would amount to former "Cold War defenses" and that it was inspired by similar strategies. A further improvement to operational readiness in Europe was achieved through the Permanent Structured Cooperation agreement (PESCO) signed by 23 EU members on November 13. The agreement aims to improve military logistics and reduce bureaucratic hurdles. It was lauded by NATO as a complementary measure to the alliances military actions.

The withdrawal of US-troops, ongoing since the end of the Cold War, has been reversed. The U.S. European Command

set a re-evaluated strategy for 2017, focusing on deterrence. The Pentagon supplemented the so-called European Reassurance Initiative by quadrupling US-spending in Europe to 3.4 billion USD.

In 2017, a vital point of contention were the fraught relations between Turkey and other members. Since the failed coup d'état in Turkey on 06/15/2016 and the following political upheaval, most members have been critical of the country's behavior, both domestically and externally. This was signified in the ongoing diplomatic fight over asylum-seeking Turkish officers and NATO staff in other member states, the withdrawal of Turkish troops from a NATO exercise in Norway, and the debate over weapon exports to Turkey from both the RF and other NATO members. The offensive against Kurdish forces in northern Syria and Iraq was openly rejected by other NATO members [→ Turkey (PKK, TAK); Syria (FSA, Islamist groups – KSC / Kurdish regions)]. Due to these tensions, NATO started to remove some of its personnel out of Incirlik air force base, Adana province, and even publicly questioned the future of US nuclear warheads deployed there. On November 13, the Turkish government in turn questioned the future of US and German troops in Incirlik.

Enlargement and Partnerships

On June 5, Montenegro joined NATO as 29th member state. Montenegro had made NATO membership a priority since its independence in 2006 and participated in the Partnership for Peace (PfP) and in NATO-led operations like in Afghanistan from 2010 onwards. Serbia and the RF viewed the accession as an aggressive act threatening the established balance of power.

In 2017, four countries officially aspired to NATO membership. Two of them, Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, outlined a NATO Membership Action Plan (MAP). While Macedonia's accession is put on hold by a Greek veto because of the name-dispute [→ Greece - FYROM], Bosnia does not fulfil a main NATO requirement. It lacks federal control of all military bases, with the Republika Srpska (RS) contesting the official control of 63 bases inside its territory [→ Bosnia (Republic of Srpska)]. Furthermore, a compromise was prevented by the troubled NATO-Serbia relations. Serbia had declared itself neutral in the past, but has close relationships with the RF and the RS. Ukraine and Georgia, in contrast, aspired to membership but did not outline a MAP. Ukraine had chosen to stop its accession to NATO in 2010, but following the Maidan protests, the government made NATO accession a priority and has since abandoned its official non-alignment line. To this end, Ukrainian forces regularly trained with NATO troops and NATO established funds for the modernization of the Ukrainian forces. Following a cyber-attack on June 27, which subsequently spread globally, NATO provided new equipment to Ukraine. The conflicts of Crimea and Eastern Ukraine make membership legally impossible due to MAP prerequisites. Georgian membership is legally prevented by the presence of Russian troops on internationally recognised Georgian territory [→ Georgia (Abkhazia); Georgia - Russia]. A growing focus on international security and especially on the RF has resulted in a strengthening of ties between NATO and both Sweden and Finland. While neither country has a majority favouring membership, popular support has increased

significantly since the 1990s. Moreover, major political figures endorsed NATO membership to protect Sweden and Finland from a more assertive neighboring Russia. PfP states like Ukraine or Finland regularly joined NATO members in exercises.

Besides the issues in Turkey, the overall commitment of political elites to NATO remained high. This was exemplified by recurring statements of state leaders, among them US President Donald Trump. Complementary, surveys by the Pew Research Center indicated a rise in approval ratings for NATO in the largest member states like the US, France, Germany, Italy, and Poland since 2015. Only in the UK and Spain approval levels remained steady. The willingness to defend an ally against a Russian attack was highest in the Netherlands, Poland and the US, whereas in Germany, a majority would refuse to send armed forces. Similarly, around two thirds of citizens of the largest members believed the US would defend them in case of a Russian attack.

EMIL UNRATH, SEBASTIAN PETER

UNCHARTED TERRITORY: THE LINKS BETWEEN CONFLICTS ON- AND OFFLINE

The internet has become an integral part of everyday life. From checking the weather forecast to running the power grid, almost everything in a modern society seems to rely on functioning information and communications technology. But the net has not only helped to facilitate economic growth or cultural exchange. It has also opened new ways to threaten or harm individuals and collective actors. In recent years, cyberspace has become a new domain for conflict.

In the early phase of internet development cyber attacks were mostly conducted in order to gain prestige in a relatively small group of hackers. But within the last 20 years, cyber risks have evolved rapidly. Criminals have increasingly made use of cyber attacks to achieve financial gains, Hacktivists rely on digital strikes to further their political goals and states have started to employ cyber attacks to accomplish their security policies. But why have cyber attacks become so attractive? Cyberspace offers unique features that make it an especially appealing domain for attackers. Three aspects feature prominently in this debate: the problem of attribution, the irrelevance of geographical distance and the relatively low costs.

When the basic internet protocols were established, security was of no concern since the community of users was very restricted. The goal of internet development was to build a resilient communication network that could deliver information to its destination even when parts of the network were not functioning. So there was no need to reliably authenticate the sender of a message or to track the route data has taken. Because of that, it is technically difficult to identify where an attack came from, especially when attackers use multiple stepping stones (proxies) in different jurisdictions. Furthermore, even if there is reasonable evidence that an attack came from a specific location/country, there is almost no way of knowing who conducted it (an individual hacker, criminals or a state agent). There always remains some room for

deniability. Since the technical attribution of cyber attacks remains uncertain, it is often supplemented with non-technical reasoning (e.g. in which circumstances did the attack occur and who would benefit from it).

The internet's global reach has facilitated cultural exchange across geographical distances. But this comes with a downside as well. If a device is connected to the internet it can also be attacked from anywhere in the net. This enables attackers to target objects, that they would not be able to reach physically. Because of this, some of the most critical processes are not connected to the internet (air gap). Only a resourceful attacker can also reach objectives secured that way (see Stuxnet below). Nevertheless, the possibility to strike anywhere in the connected world makes cyber space a unique domain.

It is sometimes argued, that cyber attacks can be conducted by almost anyone with a basic set of technical skills. This arguments depict cyberspace as a domain made for asymmetric conflict, often raising fears of devastating cyber terrorist attacks on critical infrastructures like power plants. While it is true, that basic forms of cyber attacks can be achieved easily (e.g. crime as a service), it is nevertheless wrong to assume that sophisticated attacks on critical infrastructures can be executed by anyone. Tailor-made attacks against professionally protected targets are very demanding. This leaves the question aside, whether terrorists actually consider cyber attacks to be suitable measures to achieve their goals. Until now terrorists use the internet mostly to spread propaganda (recruitment) and for financial gains not for political violence. There is an enduring debate among cybersecurity scholars, whether the often invoked cyberwar is actually a real threat or whether cyber attacks can amount to no more than weapons of mass annoyance. Most scholars seem to assume that a standalone cyberwar, given its limitations, is very unlikely, but that almost every conflict in the future will have some degree of resonance online and that future wars will most often be accompanied by cyber attacks. Because of that, it is in order to conceptually think about different impacts cyber attacks have and illustrate them with empirical cases, that are/were also featured in HIIK's conflict barometer(s).

Cyber attacks violate one or more of the core principles of IT-security (confidentiality, integrity and availability of data/data processing systems). Most cyber attacks feature one or more of the following effects: information theft, disruption or hijacking. Information theft is probably discussed the most when it comes to criminal activity or espionage. The internet offers many ways to gain access to personal or otherwise sensitive information. One of the most prominent cases in 2016/7 has been the hack of the Democratic National Committee (DNC) and the following leaks of internal information via DCLeaks and Wikileaks. The hack of the DNC shows not only the risks for data theft but also the net's potential to spread this sensitive information widely (doxing) American officials have attributed the attacks to Russian state-sponsored groups (cozy bear and fancy bear) and claimed that Russia has interfered with US-elections. This incident is part of an ongoing conflict between Russia and the USA/EU HIIK is tracking since 2007 [→ EU, USA et al. – Russia].

Another instructive example and also a critical precedent have been cyber attacks against Estonian websites in 2007. In April Estonians planned on relocating a Russian war memo-

rial from World War II, this led Russian activists to not only take to the streets but also mobilize the bytes. In a wave of massive DDoS-attacks lots of Estonian websites (political and commercial) were no longer accessible for regular users. DDoS-attacks are perhaps best to showcase disruptive effects of cyber attacks. DDoS-attacks rely on overwhelming targets by generating as much load as possible. While these kind of attacks are often equated to virtual sit ins and usually don't cause long term damage, the social effects were lasting. After a short-lived discussion on whether the attacks would warrant to invoke Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, NATO established its Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence in Tallinn one year after the attacks. Although the incidents were thoroughly investigated, it was impossible to clarify whether the attack was orchestrated or at least tolerated by Russian government officials. The conflict between Estonia and Russia centred around questions of autonomy and was assigned a score of 3 in intensity by HIIK (2007) [→ Russia - Estonia; Estonia (Russian-speaking minority)].

The most prominent and sophisticated cyber attack to date became public in 2010. The now infamous Stuxnet worm was designed to sabotage centrifuges used in enriching uranium and was tailor-made for a specific enrichment facility in Natanz (Iran). In order to function in a very specific environment substantial intelligence and exceptional levels of technical knowledge were needed. The malware took control over critical parts of the facility's IT-systems (hijacking) and while it manipulated the drives controlling the rotation speed of the gas centrifuges, in order to damage the components physically, Stuxnet deceived the operators by delivering regular data. Stuxnet was the first indication that states had made use of cyberspace to offensively achieve foreign policy goals - in this case non-proliferation. Extensive analysis suggested that Stuxnet was programmed by the US and Israel in order to undermine the Iranian nuclear program. The conflict between the US and Iran in 2010 was rated a 2 on the 5 step intensity scale and evolved around questions of international power [→ Iran – USA].

These examples show that conventional means and cyber attacks have become more and more intermingled and that cyber attacks are employed by conflict parties to further their interests. Looking into respective conflict barometers, it becomes obvious that all incidents mentioned above evolved around conventional conflicts captured by the HIIK. 2008 even saw the first war that saw the complementary use of digital strikes [→ Russia – Georgia].

The scientific community has only recently reacted to this new trend. While the study of conventional conflicts has led to extensive projects capturing measures, actors, issues and consequences of conflicts based on empirical data, the study of cyber conflicts is still in its infants and remains only loosely connected to established conflict research. We still do not know much about the emerging nexus between on- and offline conflicts. For example we do not know, which conflict issues (territorial, ideological, etc.) or which conflict intensities (violent or non-violent) are prone to resonate in cyberspace. Given the growing number of cyber incidents further research and collaboration of different scholars is absolutely fundamental.

STEFAN STEIGER

THE HEIDELBERG APPROACH: STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES

The Conflict Barometer combines quantitative data with a case-oriented approach to conflict processes. It integrates a large part of the multifaceted diversity of conflicts into a comprehensive conceptual and operational framework. This editorial article seeks to highlight the strengths of this framework and discusses the challenges posed by data availability, illustrated by the political conflicts in Colombia. The methodological approach used in the Conflict Barometer and other publications of conflict research from Heidelberg features two main differences in comparison with other conflict data projects (Trinn & Wencker, 2016). It provides a broad definition of conflict and a multi-dimensional conceptualization of conflict intensity. While conflict data projects such as Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP), Correlates of War (COW), Political Instability Task Force (PITF) or the dataset provided by Fearon and Laitin (2003) are restricted to violent conflicts, the Heidelberg approach also includes non-violent conflicts and conflict phases ("disputes") as well as episodes where physical violence against people is threatened ('non-violent crises'). For example, the conflict between Colombia and Venezuela that had erupted over border security in 2015 was classified as a "non-violent crisis" in 2017. Even though no violence between the countries occurred, the conflict was of high political relevance. It was particularly salient due to the ongoing opposition conflict in Venezuela, as the Colombian president was a vocal opponent of the Venezuelan government, and a large number of Venezuelan citizens fled their country and crossed the border to Colombia. Other projects covering non-violent conflicts are limited in other ways: The Minorities at Risk Project, for instance, is limited to ethno-political conflicts, the Militarized Interstate Disputes (MID) dataset covers interstate conflicts, the Social Conflict Analysis Database (SCAD) registers intra- and substate conflicts, and Nonviolent and Violent Campaigns and Outcomes (NAVCO) focuses on non-state campaigns. As we can see, specifications abound in conflict research. Distinctions such as between violent and non-violent, inter- and intrastate, ethnic and non-ethnic, bilateral and unilateral as well as state-based and non-state forms of violence structure our understanding of conflict. At the same time, there is a danger of disintegrating the phenomenon of conflict and shutting the pieces into conceptual 'bins'. For instance, one might detach an ostensible phenomenon of 'terrorism' from the larger concept of conflict. Data projects such as Global Terrorism Database (GTD) are helpful in covering "terrorist" incidents in great detail and apparent completeness, but they also remove them from their greater contexts. The Conflict Barometer, in contrast, seeks to integrate varying types of conflict under a common framework. Political conflicts in Colombia are characterized by a large variety of conflict measures. For instance, the National Liberation Army (ELN) organized armed strikes and imposed curfews between 02/10/18 and 02/13/18, paralyzing public order. In addition, the ELN frequently conducted bomb attacks, for example on three police stations in different locations between 01/27/18 and 01/28/18. The bombings led to the suspension of the peace talks between the government and the ELN that had started in the beginning of 2017.

We argue that conflicts, whether highly, marginally, or non-violent; inter-, intra-, sub-, or transnational; 'ethnic', civil, or 'terrorist' in nature, short- or long-term; organized or 'unorganized', one-, two-, or many-sided, and involving any relevant issue, share enough common characteristics to be subsumed under the common term 'political conflict'. In doing so, the Heidelberg approach faces another challenge: the concept of conflict might be so broad it could be in danger of degenerating into a kind of 'rubber concept'. Certain phenomena such as interpersonal strife, certain forms of crime, trade wars, institutionalized forms of civil protest or the routine competition between government and opposition should be excluded in order to sharpen the concept. Conflict research in Heidelberg therefore identifies episodes where the goings-on of 'normal' politics come under stress or break down. By focusing on 'political conflicts', we try to cut away all forms of conflictive behavior, which are not political at their core. Such a conceptualization links back to older conflict studies distinguishing between regulated, institutionalized competition, on the one hand, and unregulated, non-institutionalized conflict, on the other (Dahrendorf, 1959; Mack 1965). As the conflicts in Colombia illustrate, organized crime can, under certain conditions, be defined as part of a political conflict. Although organized crime might be exercised with the sole goal of profit-maximizing, this can become politically relevant. Referring to the debate about how the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia's (FARC) involvement in the drug trade possibly undermined its peasant origins (Weinstein, 2007), Duncan (2015: 3) argues that it "was hard to discern, when they accumulated wealth to fight war and when they fought war to accumulate wealth." In this line, scholars such as Echandía (2013) or Espitia Cueva (2017) perceive some of the currently active non-state conflict actors such as the Gaitanist Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AGC) as a continuation of the paramilitary groups that had formally demobilized under former president Uribe. The government, in contrast, describes them as 'criminal gangs' (BACRIM), denying their political character. While their political intentions might be called into question, the consequences of their actions are politically relevant. The presence of the cartels and the neo-paramilitary groups clearly undermines core state functions, since the state cannot guarantee for the safety of its citizens. Most notably, these groups threaten the security of the local population. In many parts of the country, the state's already limited ability to exercise those functions is hereby further limited. In many rural areas, socio-economic development is significantly restricted due to the ongoing violence. In political conflicts, institutions of social coexistence and distributing power are contested. Political conflicts are situations where the established institutions, the 'rules of the game' of societal organization which were formerly perceived as acceptable and generally taken for granted, are no longer universally accepted, and where new, yet-to-be-established institutions are fiercely contested. In the case of Colombia, the emergence of the political conflicts can be traced back to a multitude of interacting causes. Gutiérrez Sanin (2015) emphasizes the heritage of the so-called 'la Violencia' episode between 1948 and 1958, agrarian inequality, selective distribution of land rights, institutional exclusion of large parts of the society, and the failure of the state to fulfill parts of its core functions, such as the provision of basic services

and security. These rather structural reasons in combination with trigger events such as the "Operation Marquetalia", a large-scale military operation with the aim of restoring state control in the so-called "Repúblicas Independientes", eventually led to the formation of the FARC in 1964/66. A second guerrilla group, the National Liberation Army (ELN), formed in 1964 as well. After decades of negligence, the FARC saw themselves as representatives of the rural population whose needs were ignored by the central government. The guerrilla groups linked their existence to the state's continued failure to provide basic services in those regions. This absence of state institutions in large parts of the country led to the formation of quasi-state structures administered by non-state armed actors (NSA). Some scholars refer to this phenomenon as "rebel governance" (Mampilly, 2011). In the following decades, the conflict landscape changed and diversified. Gutiérrez Sanin (2015) and Moncayo (2015) underline the importance of, for instance, the 'coca boom', which is essential to understand the conflicts' persistence until today. Subsequently, the emergence of drug cartels and paramilitary groups led to an increase of violence and a transformation of actor relations. Hence, the Colombian conflicts show that while structural causes still may possess explanatory power, conflicts frequently disengage from their origins. On several occasions before the current peace process, the FARC made steps towards subordinating to existent state structures. For instance, they demobilized under then-president Betancur (1982-1986) and formed the political party "Patriotic Union" in 1985 together with the Communist party. However, after some successes in elections, up to 4,000 party members were systematically killed (Taylor, 2009). This "unprecedented tragedy", sometimes referred to as politicide, was followed by the FARC's return to violent action (Pecáut, 2015). After this episode, the FARC's willingness to accept the state's monopoly on violence was severely restricted. The second distinctive feature of the Heidelberg approach to conflict is a broader, multi-dimensional conceptualization of conflict intensity. While the usual operationalization of intensity solely takes into account the number of fatalities, these do not capture all essential attributes of the intensity of a political conflict. There are further dimensions to the severity, intensity, size, or impact which need to be considered. Death is but only one aspect of violence and war. Other conflict consequences besides battle-related deaths are the number of refugees and displaced persons (which reflect the level of fear and despair in a population) and the amount of destruction (recall the aerial attacks in the Second World War). Other aspects of the 'size' of a conflict have to do with the means, rather than the consequences, of violence, such as the type and reach of the weapons used or the number participants in violent activities. The HIIK therefore argues that a valid conceptualization of violent conflict intensity necessitates a multi-dimensional approach covering both the means and consequences of violence (Wencker, Trinn, and Croissant, 2015). While the focus on a single indicator (such as fatalities) might be parsimonious (Lacina and Gleditsch, 2005), its reliability is often questioned (Obermeyer, Murray, and Gakidou, 2008). However, in situations where we have only little information, it is probable that this lack of information not only affects one indicator (for instance, casualties), but other indicators, as well (such as refugees).

Conflicts and conflict framings in Colombia 2017

For Colombia, the HIIK observed one substate, eight intrastate, and three interstate conflicts in 2017 (cf. table at the end of this article). Conflict dynamics within the country were highly influenced by the implementation process of the peace agreement between the government and the FARC that had been approved at the end of 2016. Between the FARC and the government, a reduction of violence and the termination of the conflict, marked by the transformation of the armed group into a political party, could be observed. Taking into consideration a broader perspective, which also includes conflicts that are interrelated with the FARC conflict, levels of conflictivity did not decrease. In the following, some examples of how to assess conflict intensities of these interrelated conflicts will be discussed, thereby showing how conflict framings were approached and also discussing coding problems.

First, actor-centered conflict frames were applied to the FARC conflict, to the newly opened FARC dissidents conflict, and to the conflict with the second-largest guerrilla, the ELN. Concerning the dissidents, we decided against continuing the existing FARC conflict because we could not ascertain sufficient continuity regarding actors and items. While the majority of the FARC members participated in the peace process, an uncertain number defected. The dissidents are a heterogeneous group with some claiming to be the "real FARC", while others have joined or formed organized crime groups without any links to the ideology of the FARC. Both continued to fight for subnational predominance and resources, while system-related claims are put forward mainly by certain dissidents such as the FARC's former First Front.

A different conflict frame was applied to the substate "inter-cartel rivalry" conflict. Here, several NSA such as cartels, neo-paramilitary groups, the ELN, and FARC dissidents fought over subnational predominance and resources, especially the production, trade, and trafficking of drugs, related transport routes as well as mining. This conflict frame is rather structure-centered, implying that we put more emphasis on the relation of conflict measures to conflict items than on specific actors. There are good reasons to do so: The actor constellation changes as every year, groups can appear and disappear, yet the items and the conflict dynamics remain stable. We are thus able to observe annual changes in the actor constellation while maintaining the conflict's identity. However, since the groups within this conflict share similarities regarding their origins, the selection of the actors also possesses an actor-focused framing approach.

In addition to the substate conflict, we observed one intrastate conflict, comprising all measures between drug cartels and neo-paramilitary groups, on the one hand, and the government, on the other. The main reason for this framing is to observe those actors who have similar goals and whose origins can be traced back to paramilitarism or drug cartels in one single conflict. This frame serves the same purpose of stable frames, while not ignoring annual changes regarding actors or items.

Within these frames the HIIK observes different conflict patterns. All conflict measures that are conducted between NSA and evolve around 'turf wars' are coded within the substate conflict called Colombia (inter-cartel rivalry, neo-paramilitary groups, left-wing militants). The intrastate conflict, in con-

trast, observes the conflictive relationship and measures between non-state actors and the government. Frequent measures include attacks on government security personnel, such as the police or the military, as well as on civilians, including social leaders or human rights activists, whose security the state fails to guarantee. Also, military operations against those non-state conflict actors are observed within this conflict called Colombia (neo-paramilitary groups, drug cartels). The differentiation between substate and intrastate conflict is useful because both conflict types follow distinct logics. However, this also means that conflict measures which are important for the development of both conflicts cannot be coded in both. In consequence, we have to make use of cross-references.

Determination of conflict intensities in Colombia in 2017

In the majority of RMI in the Colombian conflicts, the indicator for personnel was on low or medium level. Medium level was reached for instance in the ELN conflict in April in the violence-prone Norte de Santander department when the Colombian army launched an operation against the militant group, also conducting airstrikes. We coded these a restrictive use of heavy weapons, as the operation was limited in time, space, and target. We are aware, however, that this evaluation can vary from region to region and from observer to observer. Necessitated by the qualitative character of this evaluation, we harmonize interpretations of the weapons indicator in the editorial process. In all RMI observed, the number of casualties did not surpass the threshold of 20, remaining on a low level. Also, in only one of the RMI the indicator for refugees/IDPs exceeded a low level of 1,000 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). Finally, the Colombian conflicts were not marked by a high level of destruction. In 2017, none of the RMI of the discussed conflicts exceeded the intensity level 'violent crisis'. However, this does not implicate that violence in general decreased. Some data regarding indicators, such as the number of displaced persons or casualties, is often available on a macro-level, going beyond individual conflict measures. In this case, aggregated data serves as an empirical foundation for the upgrading of the conflicts' intensity. For example, the intensity of the substate conflict ('inter-cartel rivalry') was determined using overall casualty and displacement figures. Furthermore, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) linked the displacement of at least 38,000 people to neo-paramilitary groups, without specifying how many of these were displaced by clashes between neo-paramilitary groups, and how many were displaced by actions of a single group without relation to 'turf wars'. Since there was no breakdown available, 19,000 IDPs were counted for each of the two conflicts involving neo-paramilitary groups. Despite 'violent crisis' being the highest RMI in both conflicts, both were upgraded to a 'limited war' based on the overall displacement figures. In the case of the substate conflict, overall casualty figures were furthermore used to supplement the upgrade to a 'limited war'. In general, data availability represents an obstacle in assessing conflict intensity in Colombia. UNOCHA reported some 139,000 displaced people for 2017. For 39 percent of the displacements, the perpetrating actor was unknown.

These displacements could therefore not be used to assess conflict intensities, as they could not be attributed to an actor or a frame. These examples show that even if conflict frames try to capture conflict developments as narrowly as possible, external limitations complicate reliable handling of data. Finally, the Colombian case shows the strength of an intensity assessment for conflicts that is not solely based on one indicator such as casualties. In Colombia, out of the five intensity indicators, displacement probably has the strongest long-term societal impact, as it affects individuals as well as socio-economic and rural development. Using this indicator, on the basis of conflict measures and in the form of aggregated data, allows for a determination of the intensity of Colombia's conflicts that properly captures the actual impact of political violence in the country.

VINCENT STÜBER, CHRISTOPH TRINN, THOMAS WENCKER

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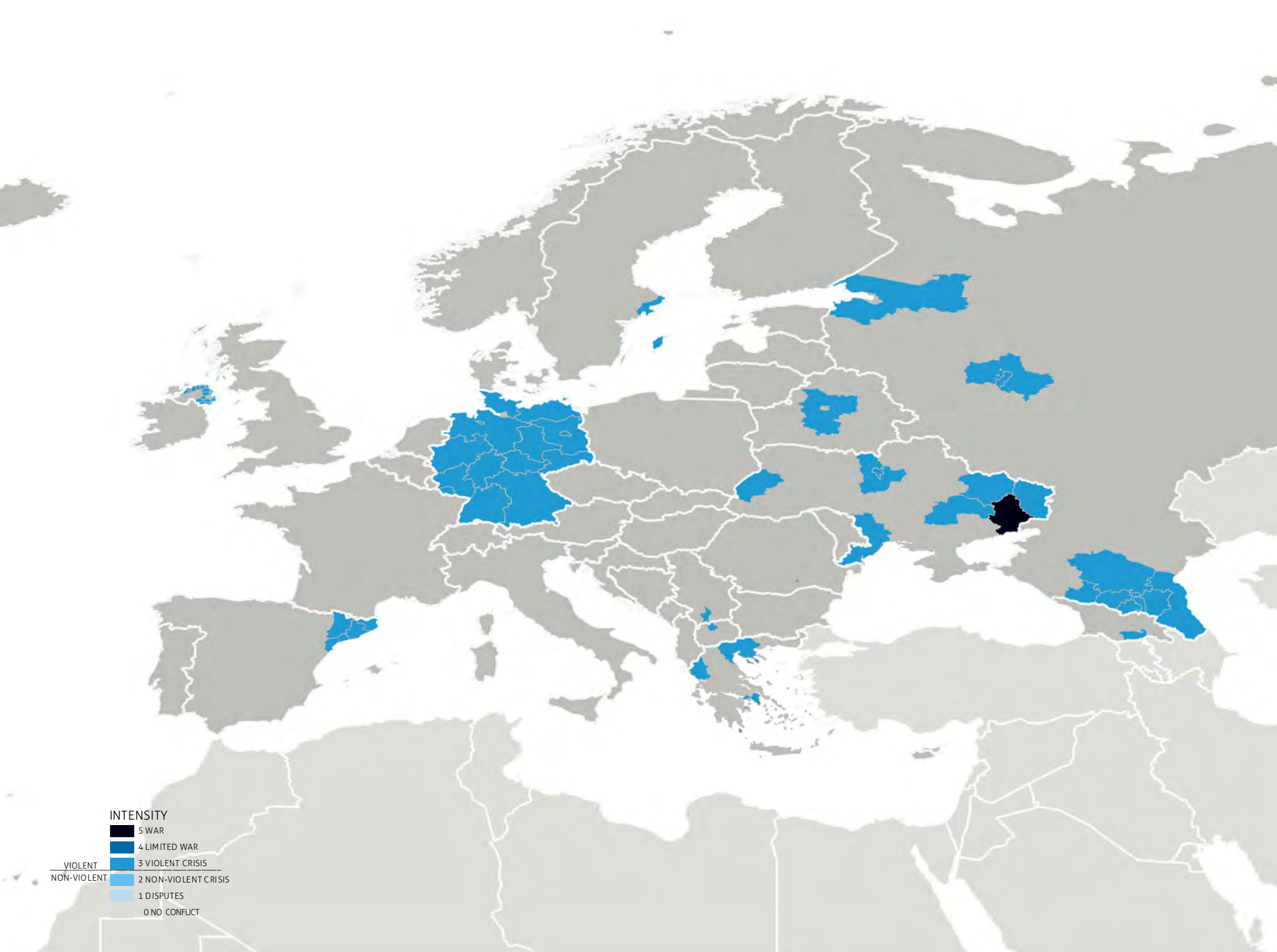
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Name	start date	intensity 2016	intensity 2017	conflict type	framing	actors	items
Colombia (ELN)	1964	4	4	intrastate	actor	NSA vs. gov	system; subnational predominance; resources
Colombia (FARC dissidents)	2017	0	3	intrastate	actor	NSA vs. gov	system; subnational predominance; resources
Colombia (FARC)	1964	3	2; END	intrastate	actor	NSA vs. gov	system; subnational predominance; resources
Colombia (inter-cartel rivalry, neo-paramilitary groups, left-wing militants)	2013	4	4	substate	structure	NSA vs. NSA	subnational predominance, resources
Colombia (neo-paramilitary groups, drug cartels)	1983	3	4	intrastate	structure, actor	NSA vs. gov	subnational predominance, resources

Europe



In 2017, Europe counted a total of 49 conflicts. As in previous years, only one highly violent conflict was observed. The majority of conflicts in Europe remained on a non-violent level.

The war between the Donetsk People's Republic and the Luhansk People's Republic, on the one hand, and the Ukrainian government, supported by several volunteer battalions, on the other, continued [→ Ukraine (Donbas)]. Both sides repeatedly blamed each other for violating the 2015 Minsk II agreement. Several rounds of renewed ceasefire negotiations did not lead to a lasting cessation of hostilities. Since the beginning of the conflict in 2014, more than 10,300 people have been killed. In Kiev, the opposition bloc lost popular support mainly due to government policies restricting its legislative actions and marginalizing its pro-Russian stance. Nationalist groups, such as Azov Battalion and Svoboda, and the newly established op-positional party Movement of New Forces gained significant leverage on the government, resulting in an actor-related shift of the conflict [→ Ukraine (opposition)]. In January, Ukraine filed a lawsuit against Russia at the International Court of Justice [→ Ukraine (Crimean Tatars)]. Russia intensified its military presence on Crimea throughout the first half of the year and started to build a fence between Crimea and the Ukrainian mainland in November [→ Russia – Ukraine].

In Russia, authorities repeatedly took actions against civil society organizations and government critics [→ Russia (opposition)]. Throughout the year, opposition movements and civil society groups organized rallies in cities throughout Russia to protest against corruption and President Putin. The criminal prosecution of Alexei Navalny, leader of the opposition Progress Party, on embezzlement charges continued. In December, over 15,000 people protested in several Russian cities for Navalny's candidacy in the presidential elections in 2018. The Central Electoral Commission announced that Navalny would be barred from running in the elections due to his criminal conviction. Also the violent crisis in Northern Caucasus between militant groups fighting under the umbrella of the Caucasian Emirate (CE) and the so-called Islamic State (IS), on the one hand, and the central as well as regional governments, on the other, continued [→ Russia – Islamist militants / Northern Caucasus]. Through-out the year, 108 people were killed, among them 82 militants. On April 3, 16 people were killed and over 50 injured in a suicide bombing at a metro station in Saint Petersburg. In the Arctic, the dispute between Russia, on the one hand, and Norway and the United States, on the other, escalated to a non-violent crisis [→ Russia – Norway et al.]. Tensions between Russia and the Baltic states Latvia and Estonia continued on a non-violent level [→ Russia – Latvia; Russia – Estonia]. However, tensions rose due to several military exercises on both sides of the borders. In Latvia, the dispute between the Latvian government and the Russian-speaking minority continued, with contested issues such as citizenship and language rights [→ Latvia (Russian-speaking minority)]. The conflict between Latvia and Russia [→ Russia – Latvia] also strained relations between the Latvian majority and the Russian-speaking minority. For example, Russia issued a diplomatic complaint in front of OSCE about Latvia systematically discriminating the minority's language rights. Tensions between Russia and Georgia over international power, including the contested authority over military and energy security in the Georgian breakaway regions Abkhazia and South Ossetia, also continued [→ Russia – Georgia]. In Belarus, the dispute between opposition parties, oppositional movements, and civil society activists, on the one hand, and the government, on the other, escalated to a violent crisis [→ Belarus (opposition)].

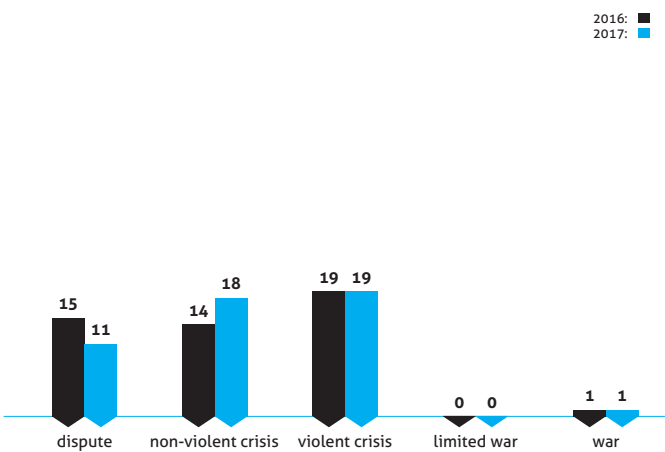
In the Balkans, the conflicts between the opposition and the government in FYROM and Kosovo remained violent. In FYROM, last year's EU-brokered agreement led to the resignation of Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski in January [→ FYROM (opposition)]. However, a legislative change, which resulted in the pardoning of several high officials suspected of electoral fraud, including Gruevski, triggered countrywide protests from April onwards. In Kosovo, one violent incident took place due to the arrest of Vetevendosje MPs, who were detained for using tear gas in the parliament in the last years [→ Serbia (Kosovo – opposition)]. Moreover, tensions rose in Bosnia and Herzegovina, when the Serbian entity decided to hold a referendum over its day of independence [→ Bosnia and Herzegovina (Bosnian Serbs / Republic of Srpska)]. On December 31, the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), which prosecuted grave crimes during the Yugoslav wars, officially closed. Of a total of 161 accused people, it convicted 84. The suicide of Slobodan Praljak and the conviction of Ratko Mladić in November led to nationalist responses in their respective countries and showed the prevalent and deep cleavages in south-eastern Europe. The ICTY was criticized for bias against Serbs and reluctance to persecute NATO forces. In South Caucasus, the violent crisis between Armenia and Azerbaijan continued with its dynamic closely related to the conflict over secession between the self-proclaimed government of Nagorno-Karabakh Republic (NKR) and the government of Azerbaijan [→ Armenia – Azerbaijan; Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh)]. Cross-border violence occurred on a monthly basis. OSCE-mediated talks between the conflict actors took place on several occasions, resulting in both parties voicing support of the peace process. However, violence continued throughout the year. The opposition conflict in Georgia was dominated by the municipal and mayoral elections in the country [→ Georgia (opposition)]. The leading party Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia, won the majority of the seats in every district and its candidate Kakha Kaladze was elected mayor of the capital Tbilisi. Although the elections were generally regarded as free and fair, some violent incident were reported. The dispute between Armenia and Turkey regarding Turkey's non-recognition of the Armenian genocide continued and was marked by the Turkish parliament's decision in July to ban the term Armenian genocide [→ Armenia – Turkey]. In Georgia's breakaway-region South Ossetia [→ (Georgia (South Ossetia))] the so-called borderization process, the setting up of border fences along the administrative borderline between Tbilisi-controlled territory and South Ossetia, continued. The security situation was repeatedly discussed at the Geneva Talks and the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM), also known as Ergneti talks. In Cyprus, the presence of Turkish troops remained an obstacle to the reunification process [→ (TRNC / Northern Cyprus vs. government)]. In Greece, social protests and violence between radical leftist groups and security forces remained on a high level [→ Greece (social protests, left-wing militants)]. Public life was marked by several 24-hour general strikes and partially violent demonstrations against austerity measures by the government.

EUROPE

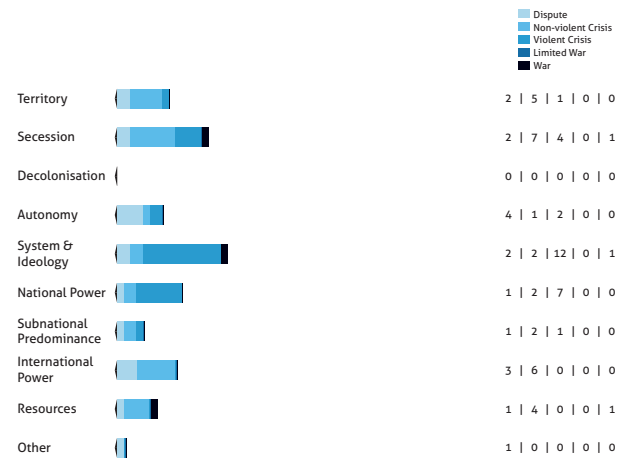
In Western Europe, the conflict over Catalonia's secession from Spain between the Catalan regional parliament led by Carles Puigdemont and the Spanish central government of Mariano Rajoy escalated to a violent crisis, effectively putting an end to the decades-long absence of violence in Catalonia [→ Spain (Catalonia / Catalan Nationalists)]. According to Catalan authorities, nearly 1,000 people were injured in clashes between police forces and civilists on October 1, the day of the unofficial referendum about Catalonia's independence. The British exit from the European Union remained an issue of contention in several conflicts: For instance, in Northern Ireland, the so-called Brexit threatened to bring a halt to the peace process surrounding the violent secession conflict between the British government and Nationalists [→ United Kingdom (Nationalists/Northern Ireland)].

In Germany, xenophobes and xenophobic groups continued their attacks on immigrants and asylum seeker accommodations, injuring at least 50 people [→ Germany (xenophobes)]. In Sweden, xenophobes conducted several bomb attacks on asylum seeker accommodations [→ Sweden (xenophobes)]. Furthermore, several right-wing militant groups, including Soldiers of Odin, staged protests against the current asylum policies of the Swedish government under PM Stefan Löfven.

CONFLICT INTENSITIES IN EUROPE IN 2017 COMPARED TO 2016



FREQUENCY OF CONFLICT INTENSITIES BY CONFLICT ITEM IN EUROPE IN 2017



FREQUENCY OF CONFLICT INTENSITIES BY CONFLICT TYPE IN EUROPE IN 2017



Overview: Conflicts in Europe in 2017

Name of conflict ¹	Conflict parties ²	Conflict items	Start	Change ³	Int. ⁴
Armenia (opposition)*	ANC, ARC, Heritage Party, PAP et al vs. government	national power	2003	↘	2
Armenia – Azerbaijan	Armenia vs. Azerbaijan	territory	1987	•	3
Armenia – Turkey	Armenia vs. Turkey	international power, other	1991	•	1
Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh)*	Nagorno-Karabakh regional government vs. government	secession	1988	•	3
Azerbaijan (opposition)*	opposition groups vs. government	system/ideology, national power	2003	↗	3
Belarus (opposition)	People's Referendum, UCP, Tell the Truth opposition movement vs. government	system/ideology, national power	1994	↑	3
Bosnia and Herzegovina (Bosnian Serbs / Republic of Srpska)	Republic of Srpska vs. Bosniak-Croat Federation, government	secession	1995	↗	2
Bosnia and Herzegovina (Islamist militant groups)*	Islamist militants vs. government	system/ideology, subnational predominance	2007	↘	1
Croatia (Croatian Serbs / Krajina, East, and West Slavonia)	Croatian Serbs vs. government	autonomy	1991	•	1
Croatia – Slovenia (border)	Croatia vs. Slovenia	territory	1991	•	1
Cyprus (TRNC / Northern Cyprus)	TRNC / Northern Cyprus vs. government	secession, national power, resources	1963	•	2
Cyprus – Turkey*	Cyprus, Turkey	territory, international power, resources	2005	•	2
Estonia (Russian-speaking minority)*	Russian speaking minority vs. Estonia	autonomy	1991	•	1
Estonia – Russia	Estonia vs. Russia	territory, international power	1994	•	2
EU, USA et al. – Russia	USA, EU, Estonia, Norway, Lithuania, Latvia vs. Russia	system/ideology, international power	2007	•	2
France (FLNC / Corsica)	FLNC, regional Corsican government vs. government	secession	1975	↓	1
FYROM (Albanian minority)*	Albanian minority vs. ethnic Macedonians	autonomy	1991	↑	3
FYROM (opposition)	opposition movement vs. government	system/ideology, national power	2014	•	3
Georgia (Abkhazia)*	Abkhazian regional government vs. government	secession	1989	↘	2
Georgia (opposition)	UNM, various opposition groups vs. government	national power	2007	•	3
Georgia (South Ossetia)	South Ossetian regional government vs. government	secession, subnational predominance	1989	•	2
Georgia – Russia	Georgia vs. Russia	international power	1992	•	2
Germany (xenophobes)	xenophobes, various right-wing groups, GIDA-movements et al. vs. pro-asylum activists, government	system/ideology	2014	•	3
Greece (left-wing militants – right-wing militants)*	left-wing militants vs. right-wing-militants, Golden Dawn	system/ideology	1976	•	3
Greece (right-wing militants)*	Golden Dawn, right-wing militants vs. government	system/ideology	1985	•	3
Greece (social protests, left-wing militants)	left-wing militants, social groups, workers unions vs. government	system/ideology	2010	•	3
Hungary (right-wings – minorities)	Jobbik, Fidesz, Force and Determination vs. Jewish community, LGBT groups, Roma community, Muslim community	system/ideology, subnational predominance	2008	•	2
Hungary – Romania, Slovakia, Ukraine (Hungarian minorities)*	Hungary, Hungarian minorities (Transylvania / southern Slovakia /Transcarpathia) vs. Romania, Slovakia, Ukraine	autonomy, international power	1989	•	1
Kazakhstan et al. – Russia (Caspian Sea)*	Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Iran vs. Russia	territory, international power, resources	1991	•	1

EUROPE

Name of conflict ¹	Conflict parties ²	Conflict items	Start	Change ³	Int. ⁴
Latvia (Russian-speaking minority)	Russian-speaking minority vs. government	autonomy	1991	•	1
Latvia – Russia*	Latvia vs. Russia	international power	1994	•	2
Moldova (opposition)	opposition parties vs. government	system/ideology, national power	2009	↓	1
Moldova (Transnistria)	Transnistrian regional government vs. government	secession	1989	•	2
Norway et al. – Russia (Arctic)	Norway, Denmark, Canada, United States vs. Russia	territory, resources	2001	↗	2
Romania (opposition)	opposition movement vs. government	national power	2012	↑	3
Russia (Islamist militants / Northern Caucasus)	Caucasus Emirate (CE) vs. government	secession, system/ideology	1989	•	3
Russia (opposition)	Progress Party, United Democrats Movement, Yabloko, opposition movements vs. government	system/ideology, national power	2001	•	3
Russia – Ukraine	Russia vs. Ukraine	territory, international power, resources	2003	•	2
Serbia (Kosovo – opposition)	Vetevendosje et al. vs. Kosovar government	system/ideology, subnational predominance	2015	•	3
Serbia (Kosovo)	Kosovar Government vs. Serbian Minority / northern Kosovo, government	secession	1989	↗	2
Spain (Basque Provinces)*	EH-Bildu, ETA, PNV, Civil Organizations (Gure Esku Dago et al.) vs. government	secession	1959	↓	1
Spain (Catalan Nationalists / Catalonia)	Catalan regional government, civil organizations (Catalan Civil Society et al.) vs. Spanish national government	secession, autonomy	1979	↗	3
Spain – United Kingdom (Gibraltar)	Spain vs. United Kingdom	territory	1954	↗	2
Sweden (xenophobes)	xenophobes, Nordic Resistance Movement, Nordic Youth, Soldiers of Odin, Sweden Democrats vs. pro-asylum activists, government	system/ideology	2015	•	3
Ukraine (Crimean Tatars)	Crimean Tatars vs. Crimean regional government, Russia	autonomy	1988	•	2
Ukraine (Donbas)	DPR, LPR vs. government	secession, system/ideology, resources	2014	•	5
Ukraine (opposition)	Svoboda, Right Sector, Azov Battalion et al., right-wing militants, Opposition Bloc, pro-Russian activists, Movement of New Forces, Government, left-wing activists	system/ideology, national power	2013	•	3
United Kingdom (Nationalists / Northern Ireland)	CIRA, ONH, RIRA, SDLP, SF vs. UUP, UDA, Orange Order, Government, DUP, Alliance Party, UVF	secession	1968	•	3
United Kingdom (SNP / Scotland)	SNP, regional Scottish government vs. government	secession	2007	↗	2

¹ Conflicts marked with * are without description

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

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

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

ARMENIA – AZERBAIJAN

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 1987

Conflict parties: Armenia vs. Azerbaijan

Conflict items: territory

The violent crisis between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh, a region in Azerbaijan mostly populated by ethnic Armenians, continued. The conflict's dynamic was

closely related to the conflict over secession between the self-proclaimed government of Nagorno-Karabakh Republic (NKR), its armed forces Nagorno Karabakh Defense Army (NKDA), on the one side, and the government of Azerbaijan, on the other [→ Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh)]. Azerbaijan treated the NKDA as part of the Armenian forces although the Armenian Defense Ministry denied the presence of Armenian soldiers in NKR.

The ministries of defense of Armenia and Azerbaijan occasionally accused one another of committing cross-border violence, violating the ceasefire agreement of 1994. In January,

the extradition of the body of an Azeri soldier, who had died in a confrontation in late December 2016, led to diplomatic tensions between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The dispute attracted international attention and was resolved when the body was handed over, facilitated by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). According to the Azeri Ministry of Defense, on June 21, Azeri forces captured an Armenian soldier who had entered Azeri territory along with a group of fellow soldiers. That same day, Azeri soldiers reportedly shelled residential areas in Tavush region, Armenia. On July 30, the Armenian and Azeri armed forces clashed. According to Azeri media, Armenian soldiers shelled the village of Kokhnegishlag, Agstafa and Garalar village, Tovuz region, Azerbaijan, destroying agricultural infrastructure and property of the villagers and killing a member of the Azeri forces. On August 7, Armenian armed forces injured an Azeri civilian with shots in Garalar village, Tovuz region, Azerbaijan.

On February 16, representatives of the OSCE Minsk Group met the Armenian and Azerbaijani foreign ministers in Munich, Germany. They discussed the current situation and how to advance the progress of the peace process based on decisions taken the previous year. In March, the Minsk Group's ambassador and co-chairs visited the region, in order to meet, respectively, the foreign ministers and presidents of Azerbaijan and Armenia, as well as the authorities of NKR. On April 28, the Russian foreign minister hosted a working meeting of his Armenian and Azeri counterparts in Moscow, Russia. Further bilateral meetings between representatives of the Minsk Group and representatives of Armenian, Azeri, and NKR authorities were held in the region in June. Further talks between representatives of the OSCE Minsk Group, Armenia and Azerbaijan took place in Brussels in July and in September on the margins of the UN General Assembly. Eventually, the presidents and foreign ministers as well as OSCE representatives met in Geneva, Switzerland, on October 16, where both parties committed to the peace process. ^{tap}

ARMENIA – TURKEY

Intensity: 1 | Change: • | Start: 1991

Conflict parties: Armenia vs. Turkey
Conflict items: international power, other

The dispute between Turkey and Armenia over international power and Turkey's refusal to recognize the Ottoman Empire's mass killings of members of the Armenian minority between 1915 and 1917 as genocide, continued.

On January 13, Garo Paylan, who is of Armenian descent and Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) member of the Turkish parliament, was temporarily banned from parliamentary plenum after referring to the Armenian Genocide.

Armenians worldwide commemorated the 102nd anniversary of Armenian Genocide on April 24.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan offered his condolences "to the grandchildren of the Ottoman Armenians who lost their lives in the harsh circumstances of World War I", while, at the same time, Turkish police in Istanbul banned a commemoration celebration of the HDP.

On July 21, the Turkish government banned using the term

"Armenian Genocide". In September, Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan announced in the 72nd session of the UN General Assembly that Armenia will declare the Zurich Protocols "null and void" if not ratified by spring 2018.

Ira

BELARUS (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: 3 | Change: ↑ | Start: 1994

Conflict parties: People's Referendum, UCP, Tell the Truth opposition movement vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology, national power

The dispute over the orientation of the political system and national power between opposition parties, oppositional movements, and civil society activists, on the one hand, and the government, on the other, escalated to a violent crisis.

In February and March, protests of up to 2,000 participants took place in the capital Minsk against the Presidential Decree "On the Prevention of Social Dependency", signed in 2015 by President Alexander Lukashenko, which came into force in mid-January and introduced increased taxation of unemployed and part-time workers. On March 10, three opposition leaders and ten protesters were temporarily detained following an unauthorized protest in Maladzyechna, Minsk Oblast. In early March, the government announced its decision to postpone the decree until 2019. However, protests continued.

From February onwards, police and security forces detained hundreds of people, including at least 100 journalists and 60 human rights activists. In late February, Vladimir Neklyayev, head of the opposition movement Tell the Truth, called for protests to commemorate the 99th anniversary of the annual anti-government "Freedom Day" on March 25, marking the independence of the Belarusian People's Republic. On the "Freedom Day" protest march on March 25 in Minsk, police arrested 400 out of 700 protesters, among them Neklyayev, journalists and activists. At least 120 people were fined or detained up to 25 days for hooliganism, resisting arrest, or participating in unsanctioned protests. Reportedly, many of the arrested were beaten and required medical treatment afterwards. For example, on March 23, police arrested Ales Lahvinets, opposition activist and member of the For Freedom Movement, who was afterwards hospitalized for three days with multiple injuries. On March 27, a district court in Minsk sentenced him to ten days of detention on hooliganism charges.

On April 28, Nikolai Statkevich, opposition leader and leader of the People's Assembly party, who called upon citizens to demonstrate on Labor Day, May 1, was arrested for five days. Three days later, opposition supporters rallied in central Minsk and other cities such as Brest, Brestskaja Oblast and Gomel, Gomelskaja Oblast, for better life and working conditions. They also demanded the release of several opposition figures as well as the dissolution of the Presidential Decree. On May 16, after seven years, the opposition movement "Tell the Truth" gained official status.

On July 3, the official Independence Day of the Republic of

Belarus, Statkevich organized a demonstration in Minsk at which 200 people protested a planned joint military exercise of Belarus and Russia. Subsequently, Statkevich was temporarily detained on August 27. The same issue was protested on September 8 at an unauthorized rally in Minsk for the group "For A Peaceful Belarus, encompassing more than 100 opposition politicians and activists. On September 22, Statkevich was again detained. On October 21, however, he organized another rally in Minsk called the "Angry Belarusian March", at which 200 participants demanded Lukashenko's resignation, carrying Belarusian and European flags.

In the aftermath, Statkevich was detained once again, for planning and organizing a further commemoration protest march in Minsk for November 5. On November 1, Neklyayev was sentenced to ten days in jail for calling upon supporters to join the very same protest, which commemorated thousands of Belarusians killed during the Stalin-era.

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BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA (BOSNIAN SERBS / REPUBLIC OF SRPSKA)

Intensity: 2 | Change: ↗ | Start: 1995

Conflict parties: Republic of Srpska vs. Bosniak-Croat Federation, government

Conflict items: secession

The dispute over secession between the Bosnian-Serb entity, the Republic of Srpska (RS), on the one hand, and the central government as well as the Croat-Bosniak federation, on the other, escalated to a non-violent crisis.

On January 9, RS held its independence day, which was ruled unconstitutional and discriminatory against non-Orthodox by the Bosnian Constitutional Court in 2015. The attendance of military personnel came under particular criticism from the Ministry of Defence and NATO. In response to these events the US Treasury sanctioned RS President Milorad Dodik by freezing his assets on January 17, arguing that he obstructed the Dayton Accords, as his actions had been a threat to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia. On June 29, Dodik stated that a referendum over secession would be postponed indefinitely, arguing that it lacked momentum. Bakir Izetbegovic, Bosniak member of the tripartite presidency, said in mid-November he would be prepared for an armed conflict to stop an RS-referendum on independence. Moreover, he also fueled tensions with Bosnian Serbs by voicing support for the official recognition of Kosovo. On November 20, Dodik announced that a referendum would be held even with a slim chance of success and that he was working towards an eventual unification with Serbia. However, he also emphasized a peaceful process. One day later, Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic reiterated that Serbia would not annex the territory of RS.

Another point of contention centered on a possible NATO-membership of Bosnia. For several years, the RS and the central government quarrelled over the possession of military estate inside the RS. On 11/23/2016 the Constitutional

Court decided that the central government must be in control of military property, which was appealed by the RS Attorney General. In mid-August, the Constitutional Court rejected the appeal. The RS criticized the decision as a violation of international law and the Dayton-Accords as the loss of military property would deprive RS of its guaranteed territory of 49 percent of Bosnian soil. On October 18, the Assembly of RS adopted a non-binding resolution, declaring itself militarily neutral, in a similar way to Serbia. However, critics noted that only the central government had the competence to do so.

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CROATIA (CROATIAN SERBS / KRAJINA, EAST, AND WEST SLAVONIA)

Intensity: 1 | Change: • | Start: 1991

Conflict parties: Croatian Serbs vs. government

Conflict items: autonomy

The dispute over autonomy between Croatian Serbs in former Krajina, West and East Slavonia, and the government continued. On July 3, the Serb National Council (SNV), an umbrella organization representing Croatian Serbs, called on Croatian authorities to take measures against the rising number of ethnically-motivated crimes against the Croatian Serb minority. On September 2, approx. 20 members of the extreme right-wing non-parliamentary Autochthonous Croatian Party of Rights (A-HSP) protested outside the SNV in the capital Zagreb. In the previous months, a public discussion about the removal of a plaque at the Jasenovac concentration camp, inscribed with a salute used by Croat forces during World War II, had taken place. The demonstrators threatened to remove all Cyrillic inscriptions from the memorial at the Jasenovac camp in case the measure would be implemented. On September 7, the controversial plaque was removed. A-HSP publicly burned copies of Novosti, the Serb minorities newspaper, in front of the newspaper's office on September 2 and 12, and threatened that they would employ violent measures against the newspaper. jra

CROATIA – SLOVENIA (BORDER)

Intensity: 1 | Change: • | Start: 1991

Conflict parties: Croatia vs. Slovenia

Conflict items: territory

The maritime and land border dispute between Slovenia and Croatia, continued. After Croatia had pulled out of the arbitration agreement in 2015, it repeatedly underlined that the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) was no longer competent. Nevertheless, the PCA announced a decision on June 29, granting Slovenia access to high seas via a junction area in Piran Bay, and decided that Sveta Gera mountain was Croatian territory. Croatia rejected the ruling, while Slovenia called for its implementation. The European Commission appealed

to the two countries to implement the decision on July 4 and 26, and on September 4, which Croatia rejected as outside the Commission's competence. A meeting between the prime ministers of both countries on December 19 ended without an agreement. On December 22, Slovenia announced that it would block Croatia's accession to the Schengen zone as long as Croatia would not implement the PCA ruling. The parties did not succeed in implementing the ruling in the six-month time period. Nonetheless, Slovenia announced to implement the ruling on December 29 and protested 1,400 Croatian maritime-border violations since June.

jra

CYPRUS (TRNC / NORTHERN CYPRUS)

Intensity: 2 | Change: • | Start: 1963

Conflict parties: TRNC / Northern Cyprus vs. government

Conflict items: secession, national power, resources

The non-violent crisis over secession and resources such as gas fields between the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), supported by the Turkish Army, and the government continued.

Nikos Anastasiadis, President of the Republic of Cyprus, and Mustafa Akinci, Turkish Cypriot leader, continued to negotiate the terms of a Cypriot reunification in UN-brokered peace talks on January 10. Key issues included governance, property and security.

On January 12, a conference in Geneva, in which the guarantor states Turkey, Greece and the UK participated, ended without an agreement on disputed security and guarantee issues. The Turkish government refused to withdraw Turkish troops, which was approved by Akinci, while Anastasiadis insisted on Turkey's withdrawal. On January 18 and 19, the conference held a second session without an agreement. On February 9 and 16, April 11 and 20, May 2, 9, and 17, the two leaders held discussions again, but on May 18, the talks ended without an agreement. The main unresolved issues included security, guarantor powers and Turkish troops on the island. On June 1 and 29 as well as July 4, Turkish representatives reiterated that a peace deal could not include Turkish troops pulling out of the island. On June 28, the two leaders reopened another round of talks, which ended without an agreement on July 7, with the main issue being the question of the withdrawal of Turkish troops.

On October 13, the Cypriot parliament demanded the complete withdrawal of Turkish troops from the island. On October 31, Akinci in turn announced that reunification talks should only resume when the Turkish Cypriots gained official recognition. Until the end of the year, no agreement could be reached, although Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras met in Athens on December 7.

jra

ESTONIA – RUSSIA

Intensity: 2 | Change: • | Start: 1994

Conflict parties: Estonia vs. Russia

Conflict items: territory, international power

The non-violent crisis between Russia and Estonia over territory along the joint Russian-Estonian border and international power continued.

NATO battlegroups had been established in Estonia in 2014 as part of NATO assurance and deterrence measures as well as the Baltic Air Policing mission. On three occasions between April and September, NATO military trainings took place in Baltic airspace and in Southern and Southeastern Estonia, close to the border. In response, Russia trained its military units regularly in the border region as well. For example, in late July, Russia and China conducted a joint naval exercise called Joint Sea 2017 in the Baltic Sea, close to the port of the Russian enclave city Kaliningrad, Kaliningradskaja Oblast. Additionally, Russian sea and air forces trespassed on Estonian territory on May 3 and August 1. While the military build-up on both sides was extensive compared to prior years, no directly related escalation took place.

In May, two Russian diplomats were expelled from Narva, Estonia, without explanation. In response, the Russian ministry of foreign affairs announced the expulsion of Estonian diplomats. On March 15, the Tartu County Court denied the convicted Russian spy Herman Simm the possibility of an early release. He had been convicted for treason and spying for Russia in 2008 while working for the Domestic Intelligence Service of Estonia. On May 8, the Harju County Court convicted a 30-year-old Russian living with a residence permit in Estonia to five years in prison of spying. On August 23, Russia stalled the case of Raivo Susi, an Estonian businessman, who was arrested in Moscow in February 2016 for alleged espionage. The trial was postponed due to language demands. As an EU member state, Estonia has taken part in the EU sanctions against Russia since 2014. Russia responded with counter-sanctions against Estonia. For instance, in February, Russia banned certain Estonian food companies from exporting produce to Russia. However, in December Russia lifted its two-year ban on the import of sprat fish products from Estonian company DGM Shipping AS. spe

EU, USA ET AL. – RUSSIA

Intensity: 2 | Change: • | Start: 2007

Conflict parties: USA, EU, Estonia, Norway, Lithuania, Latvia vs. Russia

Conflict items: system/ideology, international power

The non-violent crisis over ideology and international power between the USA, EU, and several countries, including Norway and the Baltic State, on the one hand, and Russia, on the other hand, continued.

Over the course of the year, both sides reaffirmed their inten-

tion to prevent any further escalation, yet they used rhetorical threats and deterring strategies. Several countries, among them the US, Germany, and Baltic States, repeatedly accused Russia of hybrid and cyber warfare. One major issue of contention was the alleged Russian attempt to influence the US presidential election.

Furthermore, Russia was accused of violating the Treaty on Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces by developing and deploying a new missile defense system to Kasputin Yar, near Volgograd in the eponymous oblast, on February 2. It was criticized for supposedly developing a new type of nuclear warhead capable cruise missile, called SSC-8, and deploying it near Volgograd on December 15. In addition, Russia was accused of aggressive military maneuvers. For instance, the largest Russian maneuver, "Zapad-2017", took place from September 14 to 20 with at least 12,700 troops simulating an attack on the western Russian border. Meanwhile, starting on September 11, Swedish and Finnish Armed Forces held the three-week exercise "Aurora 17" with their allies USA, France, Denmark, Norway, Estonia, and Lithuania, involving at least 21,000 troops, which simulated an attack on the eastern border of the NATO.

On several occasions, Russian fighter jets and surveillance planes violated NATO's airspace. For instance, a Russian Il-96 surveillance plane penetrated the Estonian airspace over the Gulf of Finland on May 3 [→ Estonia – Russia]. Six days later, a Russian SU-30 fighter jet intercepted a US P-8A spy plane that operated in international airspace. Two similar incidents took place on June 6, when a Russian Su-27 fighter jet intercepted a US B-52 bomber, and when a Russian MiG-31 intercepted a Norwegian P-3 anti-submarine aircraft, that was patrolling at NATO's eastern border. Both incidents happened in international airspace over the Baltic Sea.

Throughout the year, NATO stationed various defense systems and troops in Eastern Europe within the framework of their Enhanced Forward Presence (EFP) strategy, which agitated relations with Russia. NATO conducted a series of interlinked maneuvers intended to evaluate and permanently increase the combat-readiness of its troops.

The US special counsel investigation found evidence that Russia had interfered with the US election. Several US citizens, including former National Security Adviser Michael Flynn, were arrested, and on June 15, the US Senate imposed new sanctions on Russia. The sanctions included inter alia a ban on the business with and blacklisting of Russian energy companies. As a reaction, Russia reduced the number of the US diplomatic staff from 1200 to 455 persons and closed two US compounds in Russia on July 28. On October 10, Press Secretary of the Russian President Dmitry Peskov denounced the investigation against the alleged Russian meddling as "baseless" and "ludicrous."

Regarding the Russian annexation of Crimea, Ukraine, the EU continued sanctions, such as travel bans and financial account suspensions as well as sanctions on economic relations and trade [→ Russia – Ukraine]. On September 14, the European Council decided to expand and extend the sanctions for a period of six months until 18/15/03, while Russia responded with a continuation of its ban on EU agricultural products and other goods. tcr

FRANCE (FLNC / CORSICA)

Intensity: 1 | Change: ↓ | Start: 1975

Conflict parties: FLNC, regional Corsican government vs. government

Conflict items: secession

The violent crisis over secession between the Corsican National Liberation Front (FLNC), the local government, and the French government de-escalated to a dispute.

In March, political debates between the regional government and the opposition emerged after the director of the Académie de Corse stopped a questionnaire for elementary schools and high schools in Corsica by the Ministry of National Education. Students were asked to answer approx. 70 questions concerning their religious faiths, spoken languages, cultural practices and "feeling of belonging to Corsica and France".

On May 24, Pè a Corsica proposed a "regional Charta for employment", which would favor local inhabitants and elevate the Corsican language as a selection criterion in job offers.

Throughout the year, the conflict primarily revolved around the national and regional elections. In the French parliamentary elections in mid-June, the Corsican nationalist party Pè a Corsica won three out of five districts in Corsica, taking over three seats in the Assemblée Nationale.

Prior to the regional elections in early December, the FLNC du 22 Octobre, a FLNC-splinter group, recommended to vote for Corsican nationalist parties. Pè a Corsica won 41 out of 63 seats in the Corsican Assembly on December 10.

CSC

FYROM (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 2014

Conflict parties: opposition movement vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology, national power

The violent crisis over national power and the orientation of the political system between the Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (SDMS) and ethnic Albanian parties such as the Democratic Union for Integration (DUI), the Alliance for Albanians, and Besa, on the one hand, and the former ruling party VMRO DPMNE (VMRO) as well as affiliated groups, on the other, continued.

After VMRO had failed to form a new government following the EU-mediated parliamentary elections on 12/11/2016, the former opposition party SDMS nominated its leader Zoran Zaev as prime minister candidate on February 25. Beforehand, on January 7, the Albanian parties had jointly declared their support for a potential SDMS-led government, given, among others, the extension of the official status of the Albanian language in the whole country. On February 27, thousands of VMRO supporters protested in the capital

Skopje against the possible formation of a new government coalition between SDMS and the Albanian parties. They especially opposed the latter's demands concerning the Albanian language and claimed that these would endanger ethnic Macedonian interests [→ FYROM (Albanian minority)]. The next day, VMRO supporters again staged rallies in the cities of Skopje, Bitola, Prilep, Kicevo, Kumanovo, and Stip. During the protests in Skopje, two journalists were attacked and their cameras destroyed. On March 1, President Gjorge Ivanov refused to give Zaev the mandate to form a government. In these 40 days, daily rallies in Skopje continued, protesting Zaev's announced government and supporting Ivanov's decision. On March 27, after an almost three-month delay, parliament resumed its sessions. After the election of SDMS member Talat Xhafer as parliament speaker on April 27, around 200 VMRO supporters, demanding new elections, stormed the parliament and attacked MPs, journalists, police officers, and staff, injuring more than 100 people. Police used flash grenades to drive out the protesters. Authorities later filed criminal charges against at least 36 people, including MPs. On May 17, Ivanov relented his refusal and passed Zaev the mandate to form a new government. Two weeks later, a coalition between SDMS, DUI, and the Alliance for Albanians, headed by Zaev, was approved by parliament. On October 29, SDMS won local elections after two rounds of voting. VMRO first rejected the results because of alleged election fraud, but later declared that they would accept their elected mayoral seats. On December 23, after Nikola Gruevski's resignation earlier that month, VMRO congress elected Hristijan Mickoski as the new party leader.

dve

GEORGIA (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 2007

Conflict parties: UNM, various opposition groups vs. government

Conflict items: national power

The subnational conflict over national power between the governing party coalition Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia (GDDG) and the opposition party United National Movement (UNM), continued. Overall, GDDG consolidated its national power in 2017, through a constitutional (super-) majority in the course of the parliamentary elections in 2016. The disintegration of UNM since early December 2016 caused by the dispute over its founder, former president Mikheil Saakashvili, led to the division of UNM in January 2017. UNM split into the two factions UNM and European Georgia. In March 2017, the dispute over the ownership of the television broadcaster "Rustavi" came to an end. The constitutional court decided that "Rustavi" needs to be returned from UNM to its ultimate owner. In November 2017, constitutional amendments were approved in the third reading despite content-related dissents between the governing party and the opposition, and the veto of President Margvelashvili. Despite negotiation attempts by the Venice Commission between the conflicting parties, the entire process was accompanied by protests and a joint boycott of the opposition par-

ties. The amendments will come into force after the presidential elections in 2018.

During the local and mayoral elections in October 2017, GDDG obtained outright victories in 57 municipalities and its candidate, Kakha Kaladze, became the mayor of Tbilisi. Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) election observers called the elections generally free and fair. The elections were calm despite some incidents. Georgian citizens reported of politically motivated physical violence, intimidation, harassment and dismissal on alleged political grounds. For instance, on September 23 election-related violence erupted in Sadakhlo, Kvemo Kartli Region, when a candidate of European Georgia was attacked and slightly injured by a local GDDG candidate and an employee of the local self-government. fas

GEORGIA (SOUTH OSSETIA)

Intensity: 2 | Change: • | Start: 1989

Conflict parties: South Ossetian regional government vs. government

Conflict items: secession, subnational predominance

The non-violent crisis over secession and sociocultural predominance between the government of Georgia and the Russia-backed breakaway region South Ossetia, continued. In the village Eredvi, South Ossetia, authorities demolished houses of ethnic Georgians in September. Many Georgian politicians, including the president, called the act "genocide" and "ethnic cleansing" but mainly directed their criticism towards the Russian Federation [→ Russia – Georgia]. Moreover, the South Ossetian authorities announced to close eight Georgian schools and adopt the Russian curriculum in Russian language. The Reconciliation Minister of Georgia called the decision "extremely alarming", amounting to "ethnic-based discrimination".

The Georgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs repeatedly criticized the Russian Federation for the envisaged incorporation of South Ossetian troops into the Russian army as "another step towards annexation".

In February, South Ossetian courts sentenced the Georgian citizen Giorgi Giunashvili to 20 years imprisonment. On February 5, Georgia's State Security Service condemned the charges. The South Ossetian authorities released Giunashvili on November 26 in a prisoner exchange. Georgian authorities repeatedly criticized the Russian Federation for detentions along the Administrative Boundary Line (ABL) as well as processes of "borderization" in the region.

During the Geneva International Discussions this year, the conflict parties repeatedly failed to sign a non-use of force agreement. Moreover, the South Ossetian side expressed their concern over the NATO-Georgia cooperation. The Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM), also known as the Ergneti talks, continued this year with several meetings, during which the conflict parties assessed the security situation, detention of local Georgian residents, "borderization", and release of prisoners.

msa

GEORGIA – RUSSIA

Intensity: 2 | Change: • | Start: 1992

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

The non-violent crisis between Russia and Georgia over international power, including the contested authority over military and energy security in the Georgian breakaway regions Abkhazia and South Ossetia, continued. Throughout the year, both countries conducted military exercises. On June 1, Russia's Southern Military District launched snap exercises with approx. 6,500 personnel and conducted trainings in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. In August and December, Russian troops held drills in Abkhazia. The US-led Exercise Noble Partner took place from July 30 until August 12 at the Vaziani military base near the capital Tbilisi. Military personnel from Georgia participated, alongside NATO members and partner countries of the USA, Armenia, Germany, Slovenia, Turkey, Ukraine and the United Kingdom. In September, the US-Georgian military exercise Agile Spirit was held at the Orpolo firing range, close to Kutaisi, Imereti region. Russia criticized both Georgia and NATO for the expanding NATO infrastructure in Georgia [→ EU, USA et al. – Russia]. The Russian deputy foreign minister stated that the activities mounted to a serious threat of destabilization in the South Caucasus and to the security of Russia, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia. On March 24, the Russian minister of foreign affairs accused Georgia of sabotaging the Geneva International Discussions, which had been launched in 2008 to address the consequences of the 2008 conflict in Georgia. Both sides were repeatedly unable to conclude an agreement over the non-use of force during the Geneva Discussions. At the UN General Assembly on September 21, Georgian prime minister Giorgi Kvirikashvili accused the Russian Federation of "intensifying its policy of occupation and factual annexation of Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia." Meanwhile, the Karasin-Abashidze format continued into 2017, with informal meetings in Prague on July 7 and November 16. Both sides continued to discuss the implementation of cross-border trade monitoring, also in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, as part of a Swiss-mediated agreement between Russia and Georgia in 2011.

msa

GERMANY (XENOPHOBES)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 2014

Conflict parties: xenophobes, various right-wing groups, GIDA-movements et al. vs. pro-asylum activists, government
Conflict items: system/ideology

The violent crisis over the orientation of the political system, in particular asylum and immigration policies, between right-

wing groups, such as Gruppe Freital and supporters of the far-right National Democratic Party of Germany (NPD), movements against Islamization of the Occident (GIDA), as well as various xenophobes, on the one hand, and the government and pro-asylum activists, on the other, continued.

Throughout the year, police investigated at least 1,389 attacks on asylum seeker accommodation and further facilities related to refugees, stating that the majority of the attacks was politically motivated and conducted by right-wing militants. For instance, on January 1, xenophobes set fire to a stroller in front of an asylum seeker's apartment in Schwerin, Mecklenburg Pomerania, injuring one person. On October 1, xenophobes torched an unoccupied refugee accommodation in Tett nang, Baden-Wuerttemberg, causing damage of approx. USD 100,000. Most of the incidents remained unresolved with no-one claiming responsibility.

Apart from attacks on infrastructure, xenophobes conducted more than 330 assaults on asylum seekers. For instance, on March 3, a xenophobe attacked a Syrian refugee with a samurai sword in Düren, North Rhine-Westphalia, seriously injuring him. On March 22, xenophobes fired gunshots at a refugee accommodation in Obermehler, Thuringia. On October 1, three men, two of them right-wing extremists known to the police, broke into a refugee accommodation in Apolda, Thuringia, attacking underaged inhabitants. According to police, five people were injured.

Over the course of the year, supporters of the GIDA movements as well as other xenophobic groups held at least twelve protests. On March 4, about 500 people protested the asylum policy of the federal government in the capital Berlin. On March 13, 16 right-wing extremists appeared on a PEGIDA demonstration wearing forbidden Nazi uniforms in Wuppertal, North Rhine-Westphalia. On May 1, approx. 180 supporters of the far-right NPD protested the current asylum policy in Bochum, North-Rhine Westphalia. In a counter-protest by more than 2,400 pro-asylum activists, counter-protesters injured four police officers. On June 13, a counter-protester was attacked and injured by xenophobes after a right-wing protest in Cottbus, Brandenburg.

The Federal Constitutional Court (BVerfG) continued to pursue judicial action against right-wing extremist groups, for instance against the so-called Gruppe Freital, who had conducted several attacks on asylum seekers last year.

Furthermore, the far-right groups "Der III. Weg" and "Identitäre Bewegung", which was monitored by the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (BfV), took part in extremist protests, meetings and actions throughout Europe. For instance, starting in August, members of "Identitäre Bewegung" put to sea off the Libyan coast, trying to prevent immigrants coming from Africa to cross the Mediterranean Sea. In addition, the BfV started to monitor the newly emerged right-wing group Soldiers of Odin Germany in December [→ Sweden (xenophobes)].

Right-wing militants and xenophobes threatened politicians and pro-asylum activists throughout the year. For instance, on November 27, a xenophobe stabbed and seriously injured Andreas Hollstein, mayor of Altena and member of the Christian Democratic Party, giving Hollstein's pro-asylum policies as grounds. jre

GREECE (SOCIAL PROTESTS, LEFT-WING MILITANTS)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 2010

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

Conflict items: system/ideology

The violent crisis over the orientation of the political system between various left-wing groups and the government, continued. Members of social groups organized anti-austerity protests throughout the year.

On January 5, police found an arms cache including two assault rifles, two pistols, four grenades, and bullets in the hide-out of arrested anarchist leader Panagiota Roupa in Athens, Attica region. Five days later, the anarchist group "Revolutionary Self-Defense" injured one police officer and damaged a police bus in an assault rifle attack on the office of the Panhellenic Socialist Movement party (PASOK) in Exarchia, Athens.

On March 15 and 16, the anarchist guerrilla group "Conspiracy of Cells of Fire" sent letter bombs to the German Finance Ministry in Berlin and the Paris offices of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), injuring one IMF employee. The group allegedly sent a parcel bomb to the former Greek Prime Minister Lucas Papademos on May 25, injuring Papademos and two others. On March 21, police detected eight similar parcel bombs in a post office in Athens.

Throughout the year, urban guerilla groups attacked police forces with assault rifles, Molotov cocktails, flares, and stones on a weekly, at times daily basis, mainly in the Exarchia district, Athens. For instance, on April 18, around 20 anarchists attacked the home of the Minister of State Alekos Flambouraris with stones and clashed with riot police. Violent clashes continued in Exarchia during the year injuring several police officers. These attacks sometimes involved more than hundred members of anarchist guerrilla groups and caused damage to public buildings, surrounding shops, and cars.

The annual November 17 march turned violent in Athens and Thessaloniki, Central Macedonia region, when anti-establishment youth groups threw petrol bombs and stones on riot police who responded with tear gas leaving at least three people injured.

Throughout the year, the two largest workers' unions, the Civil Servants' Confederation (ADEDY) and General Confederation of Greek Workers (GSEE), organized anti-austerity protests. For example, on March 1, as part of a protest-campaign against commercialization plans, national railway workers rallied in Athens and disrupted the city traffic. The same day, public transportation services partially collapsed in Athens when several thousand people gathered outside the parliament in protest against austerity measures.

On May 17, violence erupted in Athens during a country-wide 24-hour strike. Urban guerilla group members threw Molotov cocktails, stones, and flares at riot police who responded with tear gas. The guerilla members damaged shops and cars and set fire to one of the guard boxes at the parliament. The following day, police stopped municipal workers trying to storm the Administrative Reform Ministry in Athens. From May 20

to 23 and in the last two weeks of June, municipal workers staged country-wide protests, injuring at least two police officers.

On December 5, an anti-austerity protest of about 1,500 people in Athens turned violent, leaving eight people injured. Protesters clashed with police forces, who used tear gas outside the Labor Ministry and the Prime Minister's office.

jth

HUNGARY (RIGHT-WINGS – MINORITIES)

Intensity: 2 | Change: • | Start: 2008

Conflict parties: Jobbik, Fidesz, Force and Determination vs. Jewish community, LGBT groups, Roma community, Muslim community

Conflict items: system/ideology, subnational predominance

The non-violent crisis over subnational predominance and ideology between various far-right parties such as Viktor Orbán's Fidesz, and Jobbik, on the one hand, and the Jewish, LGBT, and Muslim communities and the Roma minority, on the other, continued. Moreover, on July 8, the far-right groups Identitesz Association of College Students, Erpatak, and Bettyársereg founded the party Force and Determination in order to run for the 2018 parliamentary elections, criticizing Jobbik's alleged shift towards mainstream politics.

On April 13, the Hungarian Constitutional Court declared that the ban on expressing Muslim faith or LGBT lifestyle, imposed by the mayor of Asotthalom, Csongrad County, in 2016, violated human rights. On May 17, the EU Parliament passed a resolution that called for sanctions over alleged breaches of Hungary's rule of law, accusing Hungary of denying rights to minority communities. On June 13, however, the Hungarian government passed a bill imposing financial restraint on NGOs supported from abroad. On July 8, police prevented a group of 80 right-wing extremists from interfering with the LGBT Budapest Pride parade. Jobbik used derogatory speech against the Roma community and Muslim refugees and, furthermore, announced that they would forbid the Budapest Pride if re-elected. In a speech in June, Orbán praised anti-Semite Miklos Horthy, head of state during the World War II. Moreover, he launched two national billboard campaigns against the activities of George Soros, a Jewish-Hungarian philanthropist living in the US, founder of the "Open Society Foundation". In October, the government issued a nationwide questionnaire, asking the Hungarians whether they supported the activities of Soros. Denounced as the so-called "Soros-Plan", the government alleged it would contribute to the dissolution of Hungary. The campaign against Soros was criticized by the Jewish community as "a proxy for anti-Semitism". On December 8, a Fidesz MP posted a photo of a slaughtered pig with a sentence carved into its skin, which could either mean "he was the next in line" or "he was Soros". On December 9, Jobbik was fined over EUR two million by the State Audit office for campaigning irregularities, which possibly bankrupted Jobbik. On December 15, Jobbik along with figures from the Greens and liberal parties, protested in front

of the Fidesz headquarters against what they called "an illegal government crackdown on Jobbik". dbu

LATVIA (RUSSIAN-SPEAKING MINORITY)

Intensity: 1 | Change: • | Start: 1991

Conflict parties: Russian-speaking minority vs. government

Conflict items: autonomy

The dispute over autonomy between the government and the Russian-speaking minority, represented by the Social Democratic Party "Harmony" (SDPS), continued, with issues such as citizenship and language contested.

On June 3, municipal elections took place in the capital, Riga, in which the Harmony Party succeeded in winning the majority of votes by a small margin. This was considered a downward trend compared to previous elections. On April 26, Harmony leader and Riga's mayor, Nils Ushakov, was fined by the government for using the Russian language during an event at a school in Riga.

On May 6, the President of Latvia, Raimonds Vejonis, demanded that all non-citizens, especially children born to parents of the Russian-speaking minority, should be granted Latvian citizenship. On July 12, a proposed law concerning the reform of the educational system sparked a public debate, but was not introduced to parliament. The reform would have limited the rights of Russian-speaking students at school. On September 20, Vejonis suggested a reform which would have given newborn the Latvian citizenship automatically. However, one day later, the majority of the Latvian parliament rejected this proposal. In October, Ombudsman Juris Jansons, Latvia's responsible person for human rights, criticized the continuing existence of a non-citizen status and the lack of political will to reform this issue.

The conflict between Latvia and Russia [→ Russia – Latvia] also strained relations between the Latvian majority and the Russian-speaking minority. For example, on June 22, Russia issued a diplomatic complaint in front of OSCE that Latvia was systematically discriminating minority's language rights. spe

MOLDOVA (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: 1 | Change: ↓ | Start: 2009

Conflict parties: opposition parties vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology, national power

The conflict over national power and the orientation of the political system between governmental bodies de-escalated to a dispute. While the prime minister and most of the ministries were headed by members of pro-European parties (PDM, PL, EPPM), President Igor Dodon represented the pro-Russian political actors after his election in 2016. Hence, conflict measures have shifted towards governmental level.

On January 24, Dodon proposed a national referendum to ex-

tend presidential rights to hold elections, followed by a presidential decree in March. However, on July 27, Moldova's Constitutional Court ruled that the proposed referendum was unconstitutional. On April 18, Dodon launched a draft law to introduce a mixed electoral system in competition to a proposal by the PDM. From April onwards, protests against the reform were held. For instance, on June 11, 4,000 people demonstrated in the capital, Chisinau. Nevertheless, the government passed an election law on June 20, introducing a mixed electoral system. The Venice Commission and the OSCE raised concerns about the changes. In October and again on December 19 and 28, Dodon refused the nomination of pro-European ministers who had been appointed by Prime Minister Pavel Filip. Therefore, the Moldovan Constitutional Court temporarily suspended Dodon on October 20. awi

MOLDOVA (TRANSNISTRIA)

Intensity: 2 | Change: • | Start: 1989

Conflict parties: Transnistrian regional government vs. government

Conflict items: secession

The non-violent crisis over secession between the break-away region Transnistria, the so-called Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic, and the Moldovan government, continued.

On January 4, Igor Dodon, as the first Moldovan President to visit Transnistria in eight years, met the de-facto President Vadim Krasnoselsky in Bendery, Transnistria. Following this, Dodon brought up a possible conflict settlement, demanding a referendum to determine a political solution. However, this was declined by Krasnoselsky.

De-facto Foreign Minister of Transnistria Vitaly Ignatiev repeatedly condemned the agreement of February 13 between the Moldovan and the Ukrainian governments to open thirteen joint customs control checkpoints at the Transnistrian border, stating that it could trigger violence. Nevertheless, the first joint checkpoint "Kuchurgan-Pervomaisk" was opened on July 17.

The deployment of Russian troops to Transnistrian territory remained a controversial topic. From June to October, the Operative Group of the Russian Armed Forces in Transnistria conducted several military exercises in Transnistria. The Moldovan government criticized Russian involvement and demanded the replacement of Russian peacekeeping troops with civil observers of international organizations. Russian and Transnistrian authorities rejected the proposal.

Subsequently, on August 23, the Moldovan government called on the UN General Assembly (GA) to discuss the withdrawal of Russian troops from Transnistria. Russia's Permanent Representative to the UN, Vasily Nebenzya, condemned this move as counterproductive for a peaceful reintegration process. On November 21, a letter was published by the Moldovan media, in which the Moldovan Permanent Representative to the UN, Victor Moraru, had asked the GA not to include the topic on its current agenda.

The 5+2 talks between Moldova and Transnistria, with the OSCE, Russia, and Ukraine as mediators, and the US and the

EU as observers, took place from November 27 to 28. The talks ended with solidified agreements between Moldova and Transnistria on socio-economic grounds. On December 5, the Transnistrian government demanded a mutual guarantee mechanism to ensure the implementation of the agreed commitments. On December 18, Krasnoselsky and Moldovan Prime Minister Pavel Filip jointly inaugurated a bridge over the Nistru river. [awi](#)

NORWAY ET AL. – RUSSIA (ARCTIC)

Intensity: 2 | Change: ↗ | Start: 2001

Conflict parties: Norway, Denmark, Canada, United States vs. Russia

Conflict items: territory, resources

The dispute over territory and resources in the Arctic between Russia, on the one hand, and Norway, Denmark, Canada, and the United States, on the other, escalated to a non-violent crisis. In 2017, only Russia, Norway and US were involved in the dispute.

In January, due to an agreement from 2016 between the US and Norway, 330 US Marines were deployed to Vaernes military base, approx. 1,500 km from the Russian border. In June, this deployment was prolonged until the end of 2018. Russia perceived the initial deployment as a provocation and, in June, warned Norway of straining diplomatic ties.

In the beginning of February, two Norwegian diplomats were denied visas for Russia. Shortly afterwards, Norway's Police Security Service accused Russian spies of targeting Norwegians in Norway, while Norwegian Military Intelligence reported espionage and cyber threats from Russia. In Russia, the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation (FSB) arrested Frode Berg, a retired Norwegian border inspector from Kirkenes, Finnmark, northern Norway, in early December. He was expected to be kept in pre-trial detention until February 2018 as the FSB accused him of espionage. More specifically, he supposedly had acquired information through a Russian citizen, Aleksey Zhitnyuk, who had access to classified information about the Russian Navy. Berg was accused of having transmitted this information to the Norwegian Special Service. Zhitnyuk was accused of high treason.

In May, it was announced that the NATO Parliamentary Assembly meeting would take place at Svalbard archipelago, Longyearbyen. While Norway has held sovereignty over Svalbard since the 1920 Svalbard Treaty, Article 9 of this treaty stipulates that Svalbard cannot be used for war-like purposes, which Russia considered violated by NATO. In October, a national security report concerning maritime activities, issued by the Russian Defense Ministry, called Norway's Svalbard policy a potential risk of war. [tlu](#)

ROMANIA (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: 3 | Change: ↑ | Start: 2012

Conflict parties: opposition movement vs. government

Conflict items: national power

The conflict over national power between the opposition movement, led by the Save Romania Union (USR) party, and the government escalated to a violent crisis.

After the legislative election on 12/11/2016, the Social-Democratic Party (PSD) and the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats (ALDE) formed the new coalition government. However, both party leaders, Liviu Dragnea (PSD) and Calin Popescu-Tariceanu (ALDE) were barred from taking up governmental positions as both were convicted for criminal offences.

On January 18, the new parliament led by Prime Minister Sorin Grindeanu (PSD) debated on amnesties regarding graft offences. Consequently, on January 18 and 22, several thousand people protested in the capital Bucharest against the decriminalization plan. In an emergency session on January 31, the government decided to change the Romanian Criminal Code, resulting in the decriminalization of corruption that had caused damages not-exceeding 200,000 Lei, amounting to approx. 52,600 USD. While the government justified those changes on grounds of reducing prison overcrowding, the opposition alleged that the amendment is aimed at rehabilitating Dragnea, who had been convicted of electoral fraud in 2015. Following the adoption of the legislation, daily mass protests of several tens of thousands began in Bucharest and spread all over the country, peaking on February 4, with over 600,000 protesters, making this the biggest protests since the 1989 Romanian Revolution. The same day, the government repelled the decree. While the mass protests were predominantly peaceful, on the night of February 1, hooligans of CS Dinamo Bucuresti threw firecrackers and stones at the police, injuring at least two protesters and two policemen. The police responded with tear gas.

Tensions between Dragnea and Grindeanu led to the resignation of the latter on June 21. Both PSD and ALDE had withdrawn their support, he was excluded from the party, and his cabinet had resigned.

On August 23, Minister of Justice Tudorel Toader proposed changes to three laws, which would mainly remove the president's authority to appoint the national anti-corruption prosecutor and placing the judicial inspection under the control of the Ministry. Four days later, approx. 1,000 people protested the legislative amendments in Bucharest and several other cities. Until mid-October, more than 3,500 judges and prosecutors signed a petition against the bill. On November 5, as the draft was discussed in parliament, more than 20,000 demonstrators gathered in Bucharest. In at least 13 other cities, approx. 30,000 people protested against judicial and fiscal reforms in Bucharest, while some 20,000 rallied in about 70 other cities. More than 10,000 people in Bucharest and thousands in other major cities took to the streets again on December 10. The leaders of the two main

opposition parties and former PM Dacian Ciolos voiced their support for the protests and announced they would unite against the government. Hundreds of judges and prosecutors staged their own protests in Bucharest, Cluj, Timisoara, Galati, Brasov, and Constanta on December 18, criticizing that the legislative changes would hamper prosecution. President Iohannis, the European Commission, the US State Department, the Council of Europe, and several EU member states criticized the proposed changes as a serious threat to the rule of law.

sst

RUSSIA (ISLAMIST MILITANTS / NORTHERN CAUCASUS)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 1989

Conflict parties: Caucasus Emirate (CE) vs. government

Conflict items: secession, system/ideology

The violent crisis over ideology and secession between militant groups fighting under the umbrella of the Caucasian Emirate (CE) and the so-called Islamic State (IS) on the one hand, and the central and regional governments on the other hand, continued.

The CE aimed to establish an independent Islamic Emirate in the North Caucasus Federal District (NCFD), comprising the republics of Dagestan (RoD), Chechnya (RoC), Ingushetia (RoI), Kabardino-Balkaria (RoKB), Karachay-Cherkessia (RoKC), and North Ossetia-Alania (RoNOA), as well as the region Stavropol Krai (SK). Throughout the year, 108 people were killed, among them 82 militants, 21 security forces and five civilians, and a further 34 security forces and seven civilians and one militant were injured. Most incidences occurred in RoD, RoC and RoI, at times in RoKB as well as in SK. While RoD was the region most greatly affected in 2016, RoC became the main center of conflict this year. On January 11, the Chechen government requested soldiers of the Russian National Guard to the village Tsotsi-Yurt, Kurchaloi District, RoC in order to detain alleged IS-affiliated militants leading to a clash between the soldiers and the militants. Four militants and two soldiers were killed. On March 25, IS-militants attacked a military facility in Naurskaya village, Grozny Oblast, RoC killing six soldiers and wounding three. In return, six attackers were killed. In a counter-terrorist operation (CTO) on August 23, security forces initiated a shootout with militants of the Malgobek militant grouping in the village of Psedach, Malgobekski Raion, RoI. They killed four militants, including their leader Bekkhan Soltukiev.

From August to December, violent clashes between militants and security forces occurred on a regular basis, mostly within the scope of CTOs. For example, on December 17, in the village of Gubden, RoD, security forces killed three alleged militants in a shootout, one of whom was on the federal wanted list. One day later, security forces killed five militant suspects, allegedly planning a terrorist attack, in the mountainous area of the Zelenchuksky District, RoKC. Two events took place in central Russia, outside the Northern Caucasus region. In Au-

gust, an alleged IS-militant from Dagestan injured eight people with a knife in Surgut, Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug in Western Siberia. On April 3, 16 people were killed and over 50 injured in a suicide bombing at a metro station in St. Petersburg, eponymous oblast. A Russian citizen from Kyrgyzstan, known to have had ties with radical Islamists was responsible for the attack. [isg](#)

RUSSIA (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 2001

Conflict parties: Progress Party, United Democrats Movement, Yabloko, opposition movements vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology, national power

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

Authorities repeatedly took actions against civil society organizations and government critics. For instance, the criminal prosecution of Alexei Navalny, leader of the opposition Progress Party, on embezzlement charges, continued.

On February 8, the district court in Kirov reaffirmed the previous conviction of Navalny in 2013, which had been overturned by the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) in early 2016. On July 6, members of the National Guard raided Navalny's campaign offices in Moscow, confiscating material and injuring one volunteer. On October 17, the ECHR ruled that Navalny had been unfairly convicted of financial crimes in 2014 and ordered Russia to pay compensation. The Ministry of Justice disagreed with the ruling. On December 24, over 15,000 people protested in 20 Russian cities to support Navalny's candidacy in the presidential elections in 2018. Subsequently, the Central Electoral Commission announced that Navalny would be barred from running in the elections due to his criminal conviction. On April 26, the government declared Open Russia, an organization founded by government critic Mikhail Khodorkovsky, and two other organizations as "undesired organizations", based on accusations of inciting protest. Three days later, hundreds of people in Moscow and other cities presented letters of protest against President Vladimir Putin, following calls by Open Russia to voice their dissatisfaction. The police detained around 120 protesters in St. Petersburg.

On several occasions, parliament tightened control over the internet, social media, and news outlets. Parliament adopted two laws restricting online anonymity on July 21. Two days later, around 800 people protested against internet censorship in Moscow. On November 15, parliament adopted laws which required media outlets to register as foreign agents when financed from abroad and allowed the blocking of websites of "undesired organizations" without judicial review. The government started blocking Open Russia websites from December 11 onwards.

Throughout the year, opposition movements and civil society groups organized rallies to protest against corruption and President Putin. For example, on March 26, 7,000 people protested in the capital Moscow. On June 12, coinciding with

the Russia Day holiday, protesters in 187 Russian cities again took to the streets against corruption. Hundreds of protesters marched against the government on October 7, President Putin's birthday, in 26 Russian cities. In total, at least 2,686 people were detained during the protests, including Navalny, who received several short prison sentences.

On September 10, elections for different levels of government took place in 82 regions. While the governing party United Russia won the elections for governors, the opposition parties Yabloko and United Democrats Movement won a high number of seats in several municipal districts in Moscow, securing a majority in 10 municipal councils. Golos, a monitoring organization, reported around 600 irregularities in the course of the elections.

vpa

RUSSIA – UKRAINE

Intensity: 2 | Change: • | Start: 2003

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

The non-violent crisis over territory, international power and resources between Russia and Ukraine, continued.

As in previous years, the bilateral relations between the two countries were negatively affected, both by the conflict over the status of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the war in Donbas [→ Ukraine (Donbas)].

On January 17, Ukraine filed a lawsuit against Russia at the International Court of Justice (ICJ), accusing Russia of violating the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism and the UN Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. Ukraine argued that Russia had supported separatists in Donbas financially as well as militarily, and discriminated against Crimean Tatars and ethnic Ukrainians in Crimea [→ Ukraine (Crimean Tatars)]. Ukraine also requested the court issue provisional measures, which the ICJ denied regarding Donbas region on April 19. However, the ICJ granted provisional measures concerning the situation in Crimea. It demanded Russia to offer education in Ukrainian language and to conserve representative institutions of the Crimean Tatar community, in particular the executive organ Mejlis.

Both conflict parties were unsuccessful in reaching an agreement concerning Donbas region throughout the year. On September 5, Russian President Vladimir Putin called for an UN Peacekeeping Mission in eastern Ukraine. The operational area of this mission became a contentious issue between him and the Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko. As in previous years, Russia continued to send convoys to the Donbas region that allegedly contained humanitarian aid. Ukraine accused Russia of delivering weapons.

The situation on Crimea remained tense. Throughout the first half of the year, Russia intensified the military presence on the peninsula, especially along the Crimean border with the Ukrainian mainland. The Russian army regularly conducted field and naval exercises and prepared air defense missile systems for combat [→ USA, EU et al – Russia]. Access and

use of maritime zones surrounding Crimea continued to be a point of contention, with Ukraine accusing Russia of violating its territorial waters. After Ukraine had instituted proceedings under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea on 12/22/2016, an arbitral tribunal was constituted in early 2017. Russia continued to build the Kerch Strait Bridge between the Taman Peninsula of Krasnodar Krai in Russia and the Crimean peninsula. The bridge was supposedly planned to reduce the Crimean dependency on Ukraine regarding infrastructure and to promote Russian tourism to Crimea. In November, Russia started to build a fence on the border between Crimea and the Ukrainian mainland. It is supposed to be finalized by July 2018. According to Russian authorities, the fence is planned to de-mark the border for 50 kilometers and to ensure the security of Crimean inhabitants and tourists.

The conflict affected the civil society, not only in Crimea and Donbas but also in other Ukrainian regions. Ukrainian officials did not permit the Russian Eurovision entrant, Julia Samoilova, to travel to Kiev for the show in early May, because she had visited Crimea in 2015. Since she had not officially crossed a Ukrainian border checkpoint, her stay had been illegal under Ukrainian law. Foreign politicians and other people who visited Crimea faced the same consequence.

Throughout the year, Ukraine tightened its sanctions against Russian individuals, products, broadcasts and websites. For example, on January 27, Ukraine prohibited Russian book imports for three months. In early June, the Ukrainian parliament declared NATO membership a strategic goal of the country. The Security Service SBU of Ukraine blamed Russia for a cyber-attack on July 1, which started in Ukraine and spread around the world. On September 1, the Association Agreement between the EU and Ukraine fully entered into force. The US and the EU extended their diplomatic and economic sanctions against Russia and Crimea for another year. In early June, Poroshenko signed a law on Ukrainian language television quotes, followed by a law on September 25 that strengthened the use of Ukrainian language in schools. The laws were criticized by Russian and other ethnic minorities in Ukraine. mso, jme

SERBIA (KOSOVO – OPPOSITION)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 2015

Conflict parties: Vetevendosje et al. vs. Kosovar government
Conflict items: system/ideology, subnational predominance

The violent crisis over the orientation of the political system and subnational predominance between the opposition parties, most prominently Vetevendosje, and the government of Kosovo, continued.

On January 4, Vetevendosje leader Visar Ymeri called for early elections, due to disagreements between the opposition and the government on the status of Serb-majority municipalities, the border demarcation with Montenegro, and the transformation of the Kosovo Security Force into an armed force. On January 9, the opposition party Alliance for the Future of

Kosovo (AAK) accused the government of inaction about the release of party leader Ramush Haradinaj, who was arrested in France due to a Serbian arrest warrant for his former activities as leader of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA). Subsequently, Vetevendosje threatened to use tear gas in the Kosovar assembly. On April 15, Prime Minister Isa Mustafa stated that early elections would be the only solution if the assembly failed to adopt the border demarcation agreement with Montenegro. After PDK left the ruling coalition, it held a successful motion of no-confidence with other opposition parties on May 5, President Hashim Thaci dissolved the assembly on May 11. On June 11, new elections were held, which were won by the so-called PAN-coalition, comprising of PDK, AAK, and Initiative for Kosovo (NISMA). The single party with the most votes was Vetevendosje. However, the coalition did not gain enough seats to form the government, and neither elect the prime minister nor the president for the next two months. On September 9, a new government led by Haradinaj was formed by the coalition of PAN, New Kosovo Alliance (AKR), and the Serbian List. On October 31, LDK and Vetevendosje announced that they planned a no-confidence motion against the government.

On November 24, four Vetevendosje MPs were arrested after not attending court to face charges of releasing tear gas in parliament in 2015 and 2016. The arrest caused a skirmish between police and a handful Vetevendosje supporters including MPs. The police employed tear gas.

On December 22, 43 MPs from the ruling coalition signed a demand for an extraordinary parliamentary session to revoke the Kosovo law that allows the Specialist Chambers to operate. Parliament did not vote on the issue due to a missing quorum in the presidency of the assembly. Supposedly, the internationally staffed court based in the Hague, Netherlands, would only target former KLA members by Kosovar law. met

SERBIA (KOSOVO)

Intensity: 2 | Change: ↗ | Start: 1989

Conflict parties: Kosovar Government vs. Serbian Minority / northern Kosovo, government

Conflict items: secession

The conflict over secession between the Kosovar government and the Serbian government escalated to a non-violent crisis. On January 4, Kosovo's Minister for Dialogue stated that the dialogue, including talks on mutual recognition, the border demarcation, and compensation of war damages, will enter its final phase this year. After Ramush Haradinaj was arrested in France on a Serbian warrant for his former activities as KLA leader on January 5, Kosovar opposition parties called for halting dialogue [→ Serbia (Kosovo — opposition)]. On January 14, a Serbian train, reestablishing a former connection between Belgrade and Mitrovica-North, covered with a banner "Kosovo is Serbia", stopped shortly before entering Kosovo.

Kosovar authorities criticized this as an aggressive interference. Serbian President Tomislav Nikolic stated that he is ready to send armed forces into Kosovo if Serbs are being

threatened in Mitrovica-North. This was met with disbelief by the Kosovar Government. On the next day, according to the UN thousands of Kosovo Serbs staged a protest in Mitrovica North against the presence of Kosovar police. After several EU-mediated talks in Brussels, Belgium, to de-escalate the situation, tensions arose after Kosovar parties debated the transformation the Kosovar Security Force into an army. On February 5, the wall in Mitrovica, which was built in the ethnically divided town in December 2016, was demolished by local authorities as a result of an agreement between the Kosovar government and the Mitrovica North municipality. On March 29, Serbia's then-prime minister Aleksandar Vucic annulled his visit to Kosovo, after Kosovo government conditioned his visit to exclude two ministers of the Serbian delegation. After another meeting in Brussels on July 1, Presidents Aleksandar Vucic and Hashim Thaci agreed to continue the dialogue on the normalization of relations. On September 9, the Serbian List party joined the ruling coalition. On October 19, ethnic Serbian judges refused to join the swearing-in ceremony for judges in Kosovo. On October 30, a working group resumed the Pristina-Belgrade dialogue in Brussels. met

SPAIN (CATALAN NATIONALISTS / CATALONIA)

Intensity: 3 | Change: ↗ | Start: 1979

Conflict parties: Catalan regional government, civil organizations (Catalan Civil Society et al.) vs. Spanish national government

Conflict items: secession,

The non-violent crisis over secession between the Catalan regional government and the Spanish national government escalated to a violent crisis.

On June 9, Catalan President Carles Puigdemont announced they will hold a referendum on October 1, demanding unconstitutionally that the result will be legally binding. On Catalan National Day, September 11, up to one million people marched for independence in Barcelona. On September 20, Guardia Civil officers raided a dozen Catalan regional government offices and arrested 14 senior officials to stop the referendum from taking place. On September 23, the Spanish Government announced that Catalan regional police Mossos d'Esquadra would be brought under the authority of the National Police Corps. According to media reports, the government subsequently stationed up to 10,000 police and Guardia Civil forces in Catalonia. By September 30, police had seized almost ten million of ballot papers and closed schools that would have served as polling stations.

On October 1, Catalan regional government held the referendum on independence. National Police Corps, Guardia Civil and several officers of Mossos d'Esquadra used batons and rubber bullets to hinder people from voting. While media reported at least 92 injured people, a report by the Health Department of the Catalan government stated that 991 people, including 33 police officers, had been hospitalized. The Catalan regional government counted over 90 percent of votes in favor of independence, with a turnout of 42 percent. While Rajoy denounced the referendum as non-binding, the Span-

ish National Court of Constitution (TriCons) declared it illegal. On October 10, Puigdemont signed the independence declaration but announced that it would not come into force immediately, aiming to resume dialogue with the Spanish government first. Rajoy called upon Puigdemont to declare his intentions. On October 4, the Spanish government deployed hundreds of military personnel to Catalonia, especially Barcelona, to support police forces. According to the police, over 350,000 people protested in Barcelona against independence on October 8. On Spain's National Day, October 12, tens of thousands of people protested for Spanish unity in Barcelona.

After the Catalan regional government suspended their declaration of independence on October 10, Rajoy gave the Catalan Regional President an ultimatum to make his position clear by October 19. On October 27, the Catalan parliament unilaterally voted for independence. In reaction, the government dissolved Catalonia's regional government and announced new elections to be held on December 21, making use of article 155 of the Spanish Constitution. On October 29, at least 300,000 people attended a rally for Spanish unity in Barcelona demanding Puigdemont's arrest. After Spanish prosecutors had charged Puigdemont and four ex-ministers of the Catalan regional parliament with sedition and rebellion on October 30, the accused politicians fled to Belgium. On November 2, the Spanish Supreme Court subpoenaed eight former Catalan Cabinet members and retained them in custody. On November 3, the Spanish government issued European arrest warrants against Puigdemont, Antoni Comín, Clara Ponsatí, Meritxell Serret and Lluís Puig while a Belgian Court granted them conditional release after turning themselves in. However, on December 5, the Spanish Supreme Court withdrew the warrants.

On December 21, Catalan regional elections were held. The pro-independence parties Together for Catalonia, Republican Left of Catalonia, and Popular Unity Candidacy gained absolute majority. Puigdemont called for new talks with Spain, a proposition which was immediately rejected by Rajoy. pmr

SPAIN – UNITED KINGDOM (GIBRALTAR)

Intensity: 2 | Change: ↗ | Start: 1954

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

The dispute over the territory of Gibraltar between Spain and the United Kingdom (UK) escalated to a non-violent crisis. Three days after UK PM Theresa May had formally set the so-called Brexit in motion on March 28 by signing the official letter to the European Council President invoking Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty, the European Commission offered Spain a veto right over the future relationship between Gibraltar and the EU during the upcoming Brexit-negotiations. Spanish Foreign Minister, Alfonso Dastis, repeatedly, for instance on August 7, expressed his hope to mention joint sovereignty over Gibraltar as an option, without making the status of Gibraltar a requirement for a successful agreement between the EU and UK. In response to the suggestion of

war as an option to defend British territory from Spain's access made by Michael Howard, former leader of the British Conservative Party, Spanish foreign minister, Alfonso Dastis, urged the British government to remain calm in the Brexit-negotiations.

On several occasions the British Royal Navy reacted to Spanish ships that had entered British-Gibraltarian territorial waters in an allegedly unlawful manner. On April 4, for instance, they sent the HMS Scimitar patrol ship to approach a Spanish Navy patrol ship, forcing it to leave British territory. A spokesperson for the British Foreign Office described Spain's action as an unlawful incursion. On April 13 and again on April 29, Spanish Navy's warship "P78 Cazadora" entered British-Gibraltarian territorial waters. In reaction to at least 423 Spanish boats entering the territorial waters without permission in 2017, on December 6, Conservative Party MP Nigel Evans condemned the actions as an attempted land grab.

On May 3, a Spanish governmental report was leaked containing classified information about the Spanish government's plans to fight the low tax regime of Gibraltar in Brexit negotiations to avoid "disloyal competition". pmr

SWEDEN (XENOPHOBES)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 2015

Conflict parties: xenophobes, Nordic Resistance Movement, Nordic Youth, Soldiers of Odin, Sweden Democrats vs. pro-asylum activists, government
Conflict items: system/ideology

The violent crisis over the orientation of the political system, in particular asylum and immigration policies, between several xenophobic actors, such as the Nordic Resistance Movement (NMR) and Soldiers of Odin, and Sweden Democrats, on the one hand, and the government, supported by pro-asylum and social activists, on the other, continued.

In 2017, the government of PM Stefan Löfven, leader of the Swedish Social Democrats, continued to issue restrictive asylum policies. Additionally, Löfven repeatedly extended border controls to Denmark, stating that the reason was the increasing number of asylum seekers coming to Europe.

On February 24, the government enacted political measures to reduce the intake of foreign workers to provide more jobs for the unemployed in Sweden, including refugees who had come to the country in recent years.

However, several political parties, with Sweden Democrats leading the way, criticized the government for not enacting yet further restrictive measures against asylum seekers and the overall handling of the immigration issue.

On January 19, then-leader of the Moderate Party, Anna Kinberg Batra, called on the center-right opposition to cooperate with the Sweden Democrats in order to bring down the minority coalition government of PM Löfven.

On February 18, US President Donald Trump falsely claimed in a speech in Florida, USA, that a terrorist attack had happened in Sweden. On this occasion, the leader of the Sweden Democrats, Jimmie Åkesson, and Sweden Democrats' MP

Matthias Karlsson supported Trump's statement, denouncing the Swedish government and its manner of ruling the country in an OP-Ed for the American newspaper, the Wall Street Journal.

On April 10, after four people had been killed in a terrorist attack in the capital Stockholm conducted by the Islamic State-zealot Rakhmat Akilov, Akesson blamed the government for being responsible, calling the attack a "first-rate scandal".

Throughout the year, xenophobes conducted at least five arson or bomb attacks on refugee accommodations and other facilities frequently visited by immigrants. For instance, on January 5, three neo-Nazis with ties to the NMR conducted a homemade bomb attack on a refugee accommodation in Gothenburg, Vastra Gotalands, leaving one person seriously injured. A regional court charged the three men with attempted murder for the incident, while two of them faced further charges for two other bomb attacks. Other attacks remained unresolved, with no-one claiming responsibility.

Over the course of the year, right-wing extremist groups, such as NMR and Soldiers of Odin, protested against the government and clashed with police and left-wing groups. For instance, on January 7, during one of their patrols in Jonkoping, Smaland, approximately 35 Soldiers of Odin members clashed with members of the left-wing group Antifascistisk Aktion. Police arrested twelve people, stating that some were armed with firearms and batons. On August 8, members of the anti-immigrant group Nordic Youth attacked and threw flares at Afghan refugees, who were demonstrating against their deportation, leaving three injured. According to the police, on September 30 approx. 600 people participated in a NMR demonstration in Gothenburg. After clashes between demonstrators and left-wing activists had left at least three injured, 60 people, among them NMR leader Simon Lindberg, were arrested. On November 26, Sweden Democrats board member Martin Strid denounced Muslims as being "not completely human" during a television interview. Several politicians, among them PM Stefan Löfven, condemned the statement as racist. tfr

UKRAINE (CRIMEAN TATARS)

Intensity: 2 | Change: • | Start: 1988

Conflict parties: Crimean Tatars vs. Crimean regional government, Russia
Conflict items: autonomy

The non-violent crisis over autonomy between the Muslim minority group Crimean Tatars, on the one hand, and the Crimean regional government and Russia, on the other, continued.

On January 17, Ukraine filed a lawsuit with the International Court of Justice (ICJ), claiming i.a. that Russia had violated the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination by discriminating against non-Russian residents of Crimea, especially ethnic Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar inhabitants [→ Russia – Ukraine]. The ICJ granted Ukraine provisional measures on April 19. It demanded Russia to conserve representative institutions of the Crimean Tatar community, in particular the executive organ Mejlis, and

to provide education in the Ukrainian language.

After Russia had classified the Mejlis an extremist organization and prohibited their actions in September 2016, the Mejlis filed a lawsuit with the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) on March 29. The Council of Europe stated in early May that Russia must end all violations of human rights in Crimea immediately. It appealed to Russia to revoke its classification of the Mejlis.

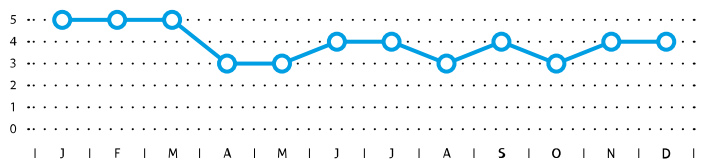
The human rights situation has remained serious ever since several Crimean Tatars openly criticized the annexation of Crimea and organized protests against it in early 2014. Under Russian law, this has been a criminal offence. Several politically active members of Crimean Tatars were sentenced to perennial imprisonment or penal colony. On October 25, Russia released two Crimean Tatar leaders from prison. On November 8, Russian authorities searched several houses of Crimean Tatars. The UN and several human rights organizations criticized the human rights situation on various occasions.

mso

UKRAINE (DONBAS)

Intensity: 5 | Change: • | Start: 2014

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



The war over secession, the orientation of the political system, and resources in the Donbas region between several militant anti-government groups, including the self-proclaimed Donetsk (DPR) and Luhansk (LPR) People's Republics supported by Russia, on the one hand, and the Ukrainian government, supported by Western countries, on the other, continued. The affected region comprised major parts of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts in eastern Ukraine, which were the main coal and ore mining areas.

According to the UN, 10,303 people were killed and 24,778 wounded since the beginning of the conflict in April 2014 until November 15. This year, 98 civilians were killed and 446 injured as a result of shelling and mine explosions especially during agricultural work or visits to forests. The government reported that 227 soldiers were killed and approx. 963 wounded, while at least 100 militants were killed. According to the International Committee of the Red Cross, up to 2,000 people went missing. The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre estimated that approx. 13,000 inhabitants were internally displaced in the first half of the year. Furthermore, residential areas and infrastructure were heavily damaged, particularly in Avdiivka and Yasynuvata, Donetsk oblast. Civilians suffered restrictions of freedom of movement and speech, as well as lack of food, water, energy, and shelter. International organizations highlighted the serious humanitarian situation and held both sides accountable. As

UKRAINE (DONBAS)



January



February



March



April



May



June



July



August



September



October



November



December

in earlier years, the government accused Russia of supplying DPR and LPR with weapons [→ Russia – Ukraine]. The OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM) consisted of almost 700 members.

Throughout the year, the parties agreed on several ceasefires, which both sides violated frequently. Despite the ceasefire of 12/23/2016, 175 persons were killed and 609 injured in Donetsk oblast in the first three months. The hostilities escalated significantly between January 29 and February 3. For instance, on January 30, SMM recorded 2,499 explosions in Donetsk oblast. The fighting concentrated on the government-controlled town Avdiivka, where SMM counted 1,224 explosions and about 1,400 bursts of heavy machine gun and small arms fire. The ceasefire violations also intensified in DPR-controlled Yasynuvata. The humanitarian situation in Avdiivka worsened. The power supply of the Avdiivka Coke Plant and of the water filtration station were cut by the shelling, leaving residents without heating, water supply, and electricity. In Makiivka, Donetsk oblast, and Donetsk city, shelling intensified as well. Four hospitals, three schools, and a kindergarten were damaged by shelling. On January 31, SMM counted over 10,330 explosions in Donetsk oblast and 730 explosions in Luhansk oblast. According to the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (HRMMU), the hostilities killed seven civilians and injured 46 within six days. The conflict escalated further in late February. For instance, more than 1,200 explosions were recorded on February 23, including 1,000 in the area of Avdiivka and Yasynuvata, close to the Donetsk airport. During March, the number of ceasefire violation remained high with reported numbers of up to 1,600 explosions per day. On March 23, a munitions depot near Kharkiv, Kharkiv oblast, caught fire, prompting the evacuation of 20,000 residents. The Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko blamed Russia for sabotage. While the intensity of hostilities decreased at the end of March, regular ceasefire violations continued. However, cases of civilian casualties were reported frequently. For instance, on May 25, eight civilians were injured in shelling of a residential building in Krasnohorivka, Donetsk oblast. On June 30, ceasefire violations peaked with almost 1,000 explosions mostly near Yasynuvata. On July 20, eight soldiers were killed and ten were wounded. In August, the shelling intensified especially in Vasylivka, Donetsk oblast. On August 22, Russia and Ukraine agreed on a ceasefire on the occasion of the new school year. Nonetheless, between August 27 and 30, the hostilities increased again. During September, the ceasefire violations continued. For instance, on September 10, one soldier was killed and another was wounded in shelling near Krasnohorivka, Donetsk oblast. From October 9 to 15, SMM recorded 3,335 violations.

Following repeated shelling of the water filtration station in Donetsk oblast between November 3 and 5, the UN voiced concerns over risks of a chemical disaster and pollution of drinking water. The line of contact between DPR and LPR, on the one side, and Ukraine, on the other, continued to divide communities. The HRMMU raised concerns over the protection of civilians, reporting 36 civilian deaths and frequent damage to residential buildings and infrastructure, including water facilities and schools. On November 9, Principal Deputy Chief Monitor of SMM Alexander Hug stated that the use of heavy weapons near the conflict line has increased fivefold.

SMM observed about 3,900 heavy weapons near the conflict line, 40 percent of those in government-controlled and 60 percent in separatist-controlled areas. Between November 21 and 25, international news agencies reported a power struggle among separatist leaders in the self-proclaimed LPR. On November 21 and 22, SMM observed 100 to 150 armed persons in unmarked uniforms and 30 military-type armoured vehicles in Luhansk city center.

Reportedly, LPR leader Igor Plotnitsky fled to Russia after lamenting a coup. Former LPR security minister Leonid Pasechnik took over his position. Between December 8 and 15, SMM recorded 20,000 ceasefire violations, the highest number since March. On December 18, eight civilians were injured and 50 houses, a kindergarten, school, and hospital were damaged in Novoluhanske, Luhansk oblast.

SMM visited weapon storage bases of both sides almost daily, monitoring the compliance with Minsk II concerning the withdrawal of heavy weapons. On several occasions, both sides hindered SMM from examining arsenals or delayed access, especially in the disengagement areas. Additionally, SMM continued to operate under unstable conditions. For instance, on April 23, an explosion destroyed an SMM vehicle near Pryshyb, Luhansk oblast. One SMM patrol member was killed and two were injured. On June 20, armed men attacked an SMM patrol in DPR-controlled Yasynuvata.

Throughout the year, international efforts to resolve the conflict continued. On January 16, Ukraine filed a lawsuit against Russia at the International Court of Justice [→ Russia – Ukraine; Ukraine (Crimean Tatars)]. In Ukraine, early parliamentary elections and a change of the constitution were discussed. Poroshenko opposed the idea, warning of destabilization. As from January 25, veterans of the Ukrainian Army blocked trains to and from separatist-held territories near Bakhmut, Donetsk oblast. This led to coal shortages and prompted the government to declare an energy emergency. Although US President Donald Trump repeatedly appealed to end sanctions against Russia, on February 2, the US ambassador to the UN, Nikki Haley, condemned Russian "aggressive behaviour" in Ukraine and declared the sanctions would remain in force until the return of Crimea. The President of the European Council, Donald Tusk, and NATO Secretary, General Jens Stoltenberg, accused Russia of fueling the conflict. On February 16, the Trilateral Contact Group consisting of Russia, Ukraine, and the OSCE agreed to withdraw heavy weapons from the line of contact by February 20. The Members of the Contact Group reconvened in Minsk on April 12. The EU extended its sanctions against individuals and entities undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty, and independence of Ukraine on March 13. Four days later, the government cut off transportation to and trade with Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, except for humanitarian trade. The economic blockade resulted in the closure of several mine factories in the region and prompted the Ukrainian National Bank to revise its economic forecast for 2017 downwards.

On March 23, the Normandy format member countries France, Germany, and Ukraine met in Paris without Russia. Russia participated again in the Berlin meeting of the Normandy format on May 30. On June 28, the EU extended its economic sanctions against Russia until 1/31/2018. During the G20 summit in Hamburg, Germany, on July 7, the leaders of France, Ger-

many, and Russia discussed possible solutions to the Donbas conflict. On July 18, DPR leader Alexander Sachartschenko declared the foundation of the state "Little Russia" (Malorossia) consisting of DPR- and LPR-controlled areas without approval of Russia or the LPR. Officials in Ukraine and Russia criticized the declaration as a violation of the Minsk agreements. The Trilateral Contact Group met in Minsk on July 19. The talks resulted in progress on prisoner exchanges. On August 23, OSCE, DPR, and LPR representatives met in Minsk for peace talks.

On September 5, Russian President Vladimir Putin announced a resolution on a UN peacekeeping mission in eastern Ukraine in order to protect SMM and civilians. According to Putin, their deployment should be limited to the line of contact and be subject to approval by DPR and LPR. The government and Western countries demanded the UN peacekeeping mission to be deployed also in other disputed areas. On November 13, US Special Representative for Ukraine Kurt Volker met with Kremlin negotiator Vladislav Surkov in Belgrade to discuss the deployment of UN peacekeepers to Donbas. On October 4, Poroshenko proposed a law on the reintegration of the Donbas. It labeled Russia "aggressor", determined the legal status of the occupied areas, and planned to replace the "Anti-Terrorist Operation" with the so-called "Operation on Defense of Ukraine". The EU decided to extend its economic sanctions against Russia for another six months on December 14. Five days later, Russia withdrew its officers from the Joint Center for Control and Coordination (JCCC). Russia's presidential press officer, Dmitry Peskov, later stated that a return of Russia's officers to the JCCC would only be possible if the provocations by Ukraine stopped. France and Germany issued a joined statement urging Russia to return to the JCCC on December 23. The same day, the US declared its plans to sell weapons, including 210 anti-tank missiles, to the Ukraine for defence purposes. On December 27, DPR, LPR, and Ukraine exchanged 380 prisoners at Majorsk and Horlivka, Donetsk oblast. cbi, mst

UKRAINE (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 2013

Conflict parties: Svoboda, Right Sector, Azov Battalion et al., right-wing militants, Opposition Bloc, pro-Russian activists, Movement of New Forces, Government, left-wing activists

Conflict items: system/ideology, national power

The violent crisis over the orientation of the political system and national power between right-wing militant groups, such as Svoboda, National Corps and Right Sector, supported by neo-Nazis and right-wing militants, as well as pro-Russian opposition parties, such as Opposition Bloc (OB), supported by pro-Russian and Russian activists, Movement of New Forces and Democratic Alliance Ukraine, and the government, continued. Throughout the year, OB lost popular support, while national right-wing groups and newly established oppositional party Movement of New Forces gained significant leverage. OB's loss of influence was widely attributed to the suc-

cessful implementation of government policies, restricting its legislative actions and marginalizing its pro-Russian stance. Although the Security Service of Ukraine prevented several planned attacks on politicians and public figures throughout the year, right-wing militants and pro-Russian activists conducted approx. 35 violent attacks, killing at least six people and leaving several injured. Attacks mostly targeted individuals, such as MPs, former politicians, or political activists, but also Russian-related commercial buildings, offices of government parties, and private property. For instance, after the leader of the local OB branch in Chernivtsi city in the eponymous oblast had been severely injured on May 11, he accused the attackers of being radicals and neo-Nazis. On September 18, two militants injured Evhen Lisichkin, an anti-corruption activist and head of the Democratic Alliance, in Kharkiv, threatening to kill him for his civil activism. On November 3, head of the Petro Poroshenko Bloc Serhiy Samarsky was attacked and killed by militants in Severodonetsk, Luhansk oblast. Throughout the year, most incidents remained unresolved, with no-one claiming responsibility. OB representatives repeatedly blamed the government for insufficient protection of freedom of speech and failed investigations. In the course of the year, political activists and police forces violently clashed on several occasions. For instance, on November 18, clashes erupted in Kiev between LGBT activists, independent Democratic Alliance Ukraine, Right Sector, and Svoboda, among others, and escalated when police forces interfered. All sides used weapons, such as noise grenades and stones, leaving at least one person severely injured. Moreover, right-wing militants and neo-Nazis staged several attacks on homosexual people. On May 18, about 30 militants attacked rights activists during an LGBT rally in Kharkiv, clashing with police forces and activists.

Throughout the year, Russian-related entities, journalists and individuals were attacked. For instance, on January 31, National Corps members vandalized Russian banks in Kiev. On May 17, right-wing militants attacked a taxi driver in the Dnepropetrovsk region for speaking Russian, shooting him in the leg. Furthermore, the government repeatedly pursued legislative action against oppositional groups. For instance, on June 24, the editor of an oppositional Ukrainian website was arrested on suspicion of blackmailing.

The emerging party Movement of New Forces, officially registered in February, organized several protests in the second half of the year. The pro-European party under lead of Mikheil Saakashvili demanded the impeachment of President Petro Poroshenko and the implementation of a new Ukrainian anti-corruption court. On December 3, several thousand people participated in reportedly the largest anti-government demonstration in Kiev since the 2013 Euromaidan. After his supporters had freed him from custody, Saakashvili stated on December 6 that he would continue to resist any judicial measure. Two days later, however, police forces arrested him again on suspicions of membership in a criminal group, incitement of the people and jeopardizing political stability as part of a Russian plot. On December 10, thousands of protesters marched through Kiev, demanding the release of Saakashvili and the impeachment of Poroshenko. Four days later, Saakashvili was officially freed. On December 17, clashes between Movement of New Forces members and police forces in Kiev left at least 15 members injured. Amidst the

protests, Poroshenko signed the new anti-corruption court law on December 22. The protests, however, continued. sdr, tfr

UNITED KINGDOM (NATIONALISTS / NORTHERN IRELAND)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 1968

Conflict parties: CIRA, ONH, RIRA, SDLP, SF vs. Alliance Party, DUP, Government, Orange Order, UDA, UUP, UVF

Conflict items: secession

The violent conflict between the antagonistic communities over the secession of Northern Ireland (N-IRL) from the United Kingdom (UK), continued.

The Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) scandal, which began in November 2016, triggered the intensification of N-IRL's political crisis in the first half of January. The RHI was introduced in 2012 under the responsibility of current First Minister Arlene Foster of the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP). It aimed to promote renewable energy but was later closed due to exploitation. On January 9, Deputy First Minister, Martin McGuinness, of Sinn Féin (SF) announced his resignation over Foster's handling of the scandal, thereby triggering the removal of Foster due to the terms of the 1998 Good Friday Agreement (GFA). SF's refusal to nominate a replacement for McGuinness led to the breakdown of N-IRL's power-sharing government and to snap regional elections on March 2. For the first time since Ireland's (IRL) partition in 1921, unionist parties lost the majority of seats on election day. In addition, the DUP lost its ability to trigger the petition of concern, a parliamentary veto mechanism.

Talks, aimed to restore the power-sharing executive, followed suit but remained inconclusive throughout the year. One of the most contested issues became the Irish Language Act (ILA), a central SF demand, which aimed to equate Irish with English in N-IRL. Unionists repeatedly rejected ILA. On March 9, the Council of Europe stated that ILA would be a necessity and called on the British government to encourage such legislation.

The announcement of a snap UK-wide election for June 8 led to the talks' adjournment. On election day, the DUP won ten and SF seven out of 18 N-IRL seats, respectively, while the Social Democratic and Labour Party and the Ulster Unionist Party lost their representation in parliament. With her ruling Conservative Party having lost its majority, Prime Minister Theresa May announced to form a minority government backed by the DUP. Both parties struck a confidence-and-supply agreement on June 26. The deal included USD 1.352 billion in extra spending for N-IRL as well as mutual support for all Brexit and security legislation and a commitment to the GFA. SF leader Gerry Adams criticized the agreement as a "blank cheque for Tory Brexit which threatens the GFA".

Power-sharing talks finally collapsed on November 1, with both parties blaming each other for the failure. While disapproving of a return to Direct Rule, the British government announced that it would take steps to introduce a budget

bill for the region. Prior to this, it had rejected proposals by the Irish government to form a joint authority over N-IRL. Throughout the year, Irish representatives repeatedly stated that they would not support a return to Direct Rule.

The impact of the 2016 Brexit referendum continued to affect N-IRL's political landscape. The future status of the border between the two parts of IRL remained contested. On February 15, then Irish Prime Minister Enda Kenny called it a matter of "vital national interest" to avoid the return of a hard border. Negotiators of the UK and the EU struck a preliminary deal on December 8, promising to ensure an open border and barrier-free trade between IRL and the UK even in no Brexit agreement was struck.

Brexit also affected the question of Irish unity and the peace process. On January 21, Adams called for a special status for the region after Brexit, which the British government ruled out. On September 5, Adams called for an Irish unity referendum within the next five years, which the DUP and the Alliance Party immediately refused.

Sectarian tensions in N-IRL persisted. Actions of the Belfast city council against unregulated bonfires, lit by nationalist and loyalist groups, led to sporadic incidents of violence. For instance, on August 7, masked nationalist youths set several cars and a disused building on fire and attacked police officers with petrol bombs, bricks, and bottles, after the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) removed wood from their bonfire in West Belfast. On the other side, Ulster Protestant celebration day Twelfth of July passed peacefully and without protests from Catholic residents. On September 2, the leaders of all major parties in N-IRL jointly condemned sectarian threats, issued by loyalist Ulster Volunteer Force, which had resulted in four Catholic families leaving their homes in South Belfast.

As in previous years, paramilitary activity by republican and loyalist groups continued. On January 22, Real Irish Republican Army (RIRA) members attacked two police officers at a petrol station in North Belfast with automatic weapons, leaving one of them wounded. RIRA-related bombing incidents occurred throughout the year, for instance on February 22, March 21, and April 22. RIRA splinter Óglaigh na hÉireann (ONH) also claimed responsibility for several bombings and other attacks. For instance, group members shot and injured two civilians in West Belfast on January 12 in a so-called 'punishment attack' for their child's alleged antisocial behavior. Two days later, ONH planted a bomb in the same quarter in an attempt to attack police patrols. In May, following rumors of abandoning its armed campaign, ONH denied any contacts with government officials as well as an immediate ceasefire. Irish police also continued operations against dissident republicans. For instance on June 2, they arrested three men in Dublin. Two of them were charged, one for alleged RIRA membership and one for possession of explosives. In the course of the year, paramilitary-style shootings and assaults left 101 people injured and two dead.

mcm

UNITED KINGDOM (SNP / SCOTLAND)

Intensity: 2 | Change: ↗ | Start: 2007

Conflict parties: SNP, regional Scottish government vs. government

Conflict items: secession

The dispute between the Scottish regional government, formed by the Scottish National Party (SNP), and the British government over the secession of Scotland from the United Kingdom (UK) escalated to a non-violent crisis.

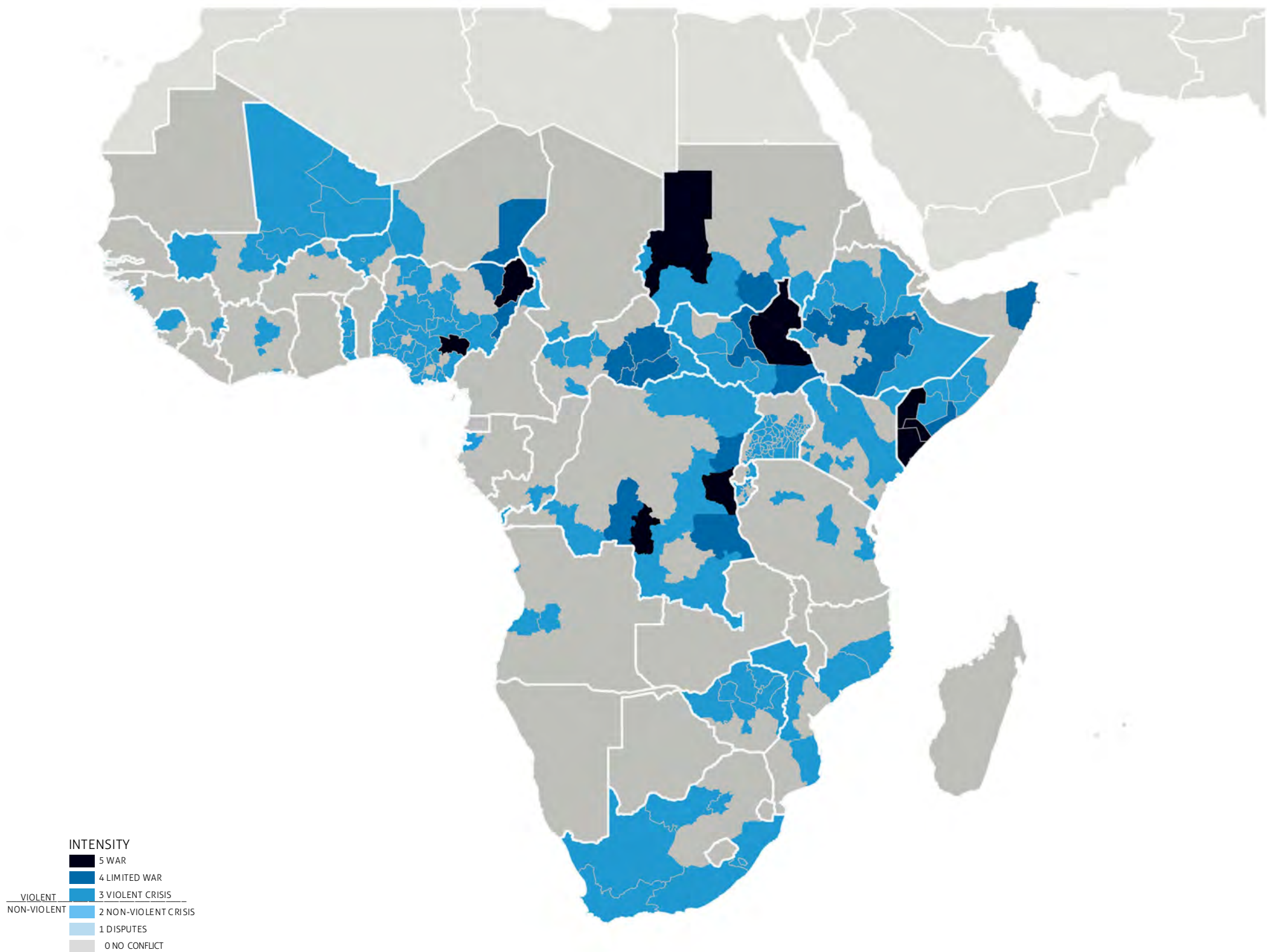
Regarding the so-called Brexit vote in 2016, where the majority of the Scottish population had voted to remain in the European Union, a second Scottish independence referendum

was debated throughout the year. First Minister of Scotland and SNP leader, Nicola Sturgeon, postponed a possible referendum after the SNP lost 21 of their 56 seats in Westminster in the British general election on June 8.

After the general election, several SNP members changed their position towards Brexit. On June 15, Ian Blackford, SNP's leader in Westminster, announced that the SNP would put their plans for a second referendum on hold if Scotland's remaining in the Single Market was guaranteed. On June 21, May rejected the idea that the Scottish parliament could also vote on Brexit plans separately. Sturgeon, however, repeatedly insisted on holding a separate referendum and urged the Scottish parliament to work out a good Brexit deal for Scotland. During a pro-independence rally in Glasgow on September 16, a participant stole a union flag from two unionist counter-demonstrators while shouting slurs.

crs

Sub-Saharan Africa



In 2017, the overall number of conflicts in Sub-Sahara Africa increased by one to 95, accounting for a quarter of the world's political conflicts. Counting ten wars and three limited wars, Sub-Sahara Africa was also the region most affected by highly violent conflicts. Moreover, violent measures were observed in 28 of the 43 Sub-Saharan states. A new war erupted in Ethiopia in the border region between Oromia Regional State and Somali Regional State between ethnic groups [→ Ethiopia (inter-ethnic rivalry)]. Three limited wars escalated to full-scale wars [→ Central African Republic (Anti-Balaka – ex-Séléka); DR Congo (KN); DR Congo (Mayi-Mayi et al.)], while the war in Sudan between SPLM/A-North and the government de-escalated significantly to a violent crisis [→ Sudan (SPLM/A-North / South Kordofan, Blue Nile)].

After the conflict in the CAR between Anti-Balaka and ex-Séléka groups had de-escalated in 2016, fighting intensified again in 2017 [→ Central African Republic (Anti-Balaka – ex-Séléka)]. More than 1,000 people were killed and the number of displaced people increased to at least 1.1 million, a record high since the beginning of the conflict in 2012. In the DR Congo, at least 1.7 million people were newly displaced in 2017 alone. In the Kasai region, the conflict between the Kamuina Nsapu militias and the government over subnational predominance escalated to a war. Throughout the year, at least 605,000 people were internally displaced while over 34,000 people fled to neighbouring Angola and 12,000 people to Zambia [→ DR Congo (KN)]. At least 95 people were killed and 224,000 displaced due to fighting between Batwa and Bantu groups in Tanganyika province [→ DR Congo (Bantu – Batwa)]. Furthermore, more than 100 armed groups were active in eastern DR Congo alone, fighting over subnational predominance as well as the access to natural resources, attacking the civilian population and repeatedly clashing with the Armed Forces of the DR Congo, supported by MONUSCO [→ DR Congo (Mayi-Mayi et al.); DR Congo, Rwanda (FDLR, CNRD), DR Congo, Uganda (ADF)]. On 12/31/2016, the government and opposition parties had reached an agreement, calling for elections in 2017 and demanding President Kabila to step down. However, tensions over the implementation of the December 31 Agreement grew in early 2017 and the elections were postponed to 12/23/2018 by the National Electoral Commission on November 5, citing difficulties with voter registration due to the violence in Central Kasai province [→ DR Congo (Opposition)].

In the Horn of Africa, the war between the Islamist group al-Shabaab and the Somali and Kenyan governments continued [→ Somalia, Kenya (al-Shabaab)]. As in previous years, al-Shabaab frequently attacked governmental and civilian targets in Somalia as well as neighboring Kenya, attempting to gain control over territory. In October, a major dyadic suicide bombing in the Somali capital Mogadishu killed more than 500 people. Between 2015 and 2017, over 200 al-Shabaab militants defected to the Islamic State in Somalia, clashing with Somali security forces and al-Shabaab militants mainly in Bari region, Puntland [→ Somalia (ISS)]. In the northern region of Somalia, a peace and power sharing deal between the self-declared Republic of Somaliland and Khatumo State was signed [→ Somalia (Khatumo State – Puntland – Somaliland)]. Inter-clan violence in Hiiran and Lower Shabelle experienced a decrease of violence this year [→ Somalia (Habr Gedir – Biymal/ Lower Shabelle); Somalia (Hawadle – Surre/ Hiiraan)]. In Kenya, violent protests enclosed the general elections in August [→ Kenya (opposition)]. An election re-run took place after the Supreme Court had approved the opposition's appeal. Uhuru Kenyatta was reaffirmed as president after presidential candidate Raila Odinga had withdrawn from the electoral process. In Ethiopia, the state of emergency declared in October 2016 was lifted in August. Regional security forces intensified their presence, killed and arrested hundreds of people including alleged opposition members [→ Ethiopia (opposition)]. Subsequently, ethnic Oromo and So-mali clashed along their border, leaving over 200 people dead and more than 700,000 displaced [→ Ethiopia (inter-communal rivalry)]. Compared to previous years, the rebel groups Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) and Afar Revolutionary Democratic Unity Front (ARDUF) were barely active. The non-violent crisis between Eritrea and Djibouti over their border region, the so-called Ras Doumeira, re-emerged after Qatar withdrew its peacekeepers who had been deployed in 2010. As the construction of the Ethiopia Grand Renaissance Dam (GERD) was over 60% completed, tensions between Ethiopia, Sudan and Egypt increased [→ Ethiopia, Sudan – Egypt (GERD)].

In South Africa, violence against immigrants continued [→ South Africa (xenophobes)]. Nigerian nationals were especially affected by xenophobic attacks, which caused the Nigerian government to call upon the African Union to intervene. The 2016 student protests against tuition fees, the educational system and structural racism at South African universities came to a halt. Demonstrations against the government, especially against President Zuma, by opposition parties as well as civic groups increased in number and personnel [→ South Africa (opposition)]. Moreover, residents regularly protested the lack of housing and service delivery, especially in Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal provinces. In Angola, the violent conflict between a faction of the Front for the Liberation of the Enclave of Cabinda (FLEC) and the government over the secession of the Angolan province of Cabinda continued [→ Angola (FLEC / Cabinda)]. In 2017, at least 51 soldiers and militants were killed, which marks a slight decrease compared to 2016. The conflict over national power in Angola between the main opposition party National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) and the government, which had escalated to a violent conflict in 2016, also continued and was especially fanned by the 2017 general elections. In Tanzania, the violent crisis between the two main opposition parties Civic United Front (CUF) and Party for Democracy and Progress (Chadema), on the one hand, and the ruling Party of the Revolution (CCM), on the other, continued and left at least 35 people killed [→ Tanzania (Chadema, CUF – CCM)]. In Mozambique, where the violent conflict between the opposition party Mozambican National Resistance (RENAMO) and the ruling party Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO) had killed more than 60 people and forced thousands to flee last year, the two conflict parties resumed negotiations and started discussing a peace deal in 2017 [→ Mozambique (RENAMO)]. As a consequence of this, violence decreased significantly. Zimbabwe was venue of a coup d'état in November, when the military seized control over strategic points in the capital Harare, forcing then-president Robert Mugabe to resign. He was succeeded in office by Emmerson Mnangagwa, the former vice president.

In Nigeria, the war between Boko Haram and the governments of Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, and Niger continued for the sev-

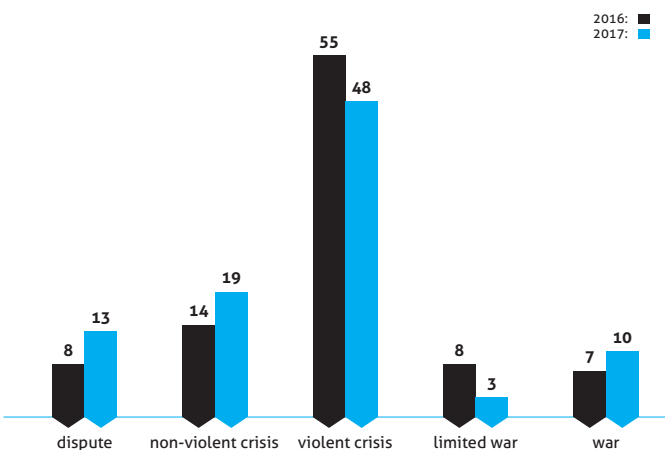
SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

enth consecutive year [→ Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, Niger (Boko Haram)]. As in the previous year, violence declined in 2017 and the death toll significantly decreased to approx. 2.150. As in 2016, Boko Haram conducted most of its attacks in Nigeria. The conflict between the ruling All Progressives Congress and the People's Democratic Party de-escalated to a violent crisis, despite the fact that during local elections violence erupted between supporters of both parties throughout the year [→ Nigeria (northerners – southerners)]. The war over arable land in Nigeria's Middle Belt between the predominantly Christian farmers of Berom and Tiv tribes, on the one hand, and the mainly Muslim Fulani nomads, on the other, continued [→ Nigeria (farmers – pastoralists)]. 600 people died in this conflict, which constitutes a decline of almost 50 percent compared to the previous year.

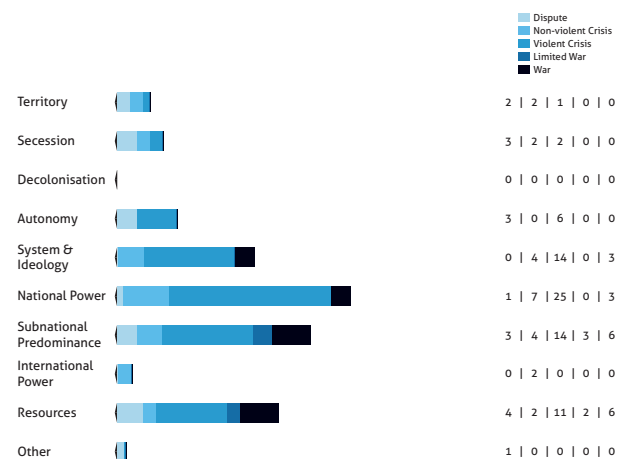
In Gambia, President Yahya Jammeh's refusal to accept his defeat in the 2016 election led to a military intervention by ECOWAS. After final negotiations he went into exile. Although the ECOWAS troops met with no resistance from the Gambian military, their continued presence beyond Jammeh's departure caused resentment in parts of the population [→ Gambia (opposition)]. The political change in the Gambia may have had a positive effect on the secession conflict in neighboring Senegal [→ Senegal (MFDC/Casamance)]. The violent opposition conflicts in Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Niger, Sierra Leone, and Togo continued.

In Sudan, the war in Darfur Region over water and land rights as well as control over gold mines between the Sudan Revolutionary Front and the government continued in its 15th consecutive year [→ Sudan (Darfur)]. The war between SPLM/A-North and the government de-escalated significantly to a violent crisis due to peace negotiations between the two conflict parties and a split of SPLM/A-N in March [→ Sudan (SPLM/A-North / South Kordofan, Blue Nile)]. The conflict between various tribes over subnational predominance and resources, especially cattle and arable land, continued as a limited war. Fighting mainly took place along ethnic lines, but also between farmers and cattle herders, and killed 348 people in 2017. In South Sudan, two wars continued: the fighting between various ethnic groups over subnational predominance and resources, especially cattle and arable land [→ South Sudan (inter-communal rivalry)], as well as the war between the armed opposition faction SPLM/A-in Opposition and the government [→ South Sudan (SPLM/A-IO)]. Cattle raids as the most common form of inter-communal violence in South Sudan were especially fanned by a famine in the northern-central part of the country. In the border region Abyei between Sudan and South Sudan, the violent crisis over subnational predominance and resources between the ethnic African Ngok Dinka people and the pastoralist ethnic Arab Misseriya tribe continued [→ Sudan, South Sudan (Abyei)]. While the situation had improved by June due to widespread international aid, last year's severe food crisis continued in South Sudan and once more deteriorated in the second half of the year. As in previous years, Sudan's conflict regions were also on the brink of famine.

CONFLICT INTENSITIES IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA IN 2017 COMPARED TO 2016



FREQUENCY OF CONFLICT INTENSITIES BY CONFLICT ITEM IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA IN 2017



FREQUENCY OF CONFLICT INTENSITIES BY CONFLICT TYPE IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA IN 2017



Overview: Conflicts in sub-Saharan Africa in 2017

Name of conflict ¹	Conflict parties ²	Conflict items	Start	Change ³	Int. ⁴
Angola (FLEC / Cabinda)*	FLEC vs. government	secession, resources	1975	•	3
Angola (UNITA)	UNITA vs. MPLA	national power	1975	•	3
Burkina Faso (opposition)*	CDP vs. government	national power	2014	•	2
Burundi (opposition)*	student groups, government	system/ideology	2006	•	3
Burundi – Rwanda*	Burundi vs. Rwanda	international power	2015	•	2
Burundi, DR Congo (FNL)*	FNL-Rwasa, FNL-Nzabampema vs. Burundi, DR Congo	national power, subnational predominance	2005	•	3
Cameroon, Nigeria (militants / Bakassi)*	BSF vs. Cameroon, Nigeria	secession	2006	↓	1
Central African Republic (Anti-Balaka – ex-Séléka)	Anti-Balaka vs. Ex-Séléka	national power, resources	2012	↗	5
Central African Republic, DR Congo, South Sudan, Uganda (LRA)	LRA vs. CAR, DRC, South Sudan, Uganda	subnational predominance, resources	1987	•	3
Chad (opposition)*	opposition groups vs. government	national power	1990	•	3
Chad (rebel groups)*	FPR, UFDD et al. vs. government	national power, resources	2005	•	1
Côte d'Ivoire (militant groups)*	militant groups vs. government	national power	2012	•	2
Côte d'Ivoire (opposition)	FPI vs. government	national power	1999	•	3
Djibouti (FRUD)*	FRUD vs. government	system/ideology, national power	1991	•	2
Djibouti (opposition)*	MJO, USN vs. government	system/ideology, national power	2011	•	2
Djibouti – Eritrea	Djibouti vs. Eritrea	territory	1996	NEW	2
DR Congo (Bantu – Batwa)	Bantu militias vs. Batwa militias vs. government	subnational predominance	2013	•	4
DR Congo (ex-M23)*	ex-M23 vs. government	subnational predominance	2004	•	3
DR Congo (Ituri Militias)*	FRPI vs. government	subnational predominance, resources	1999	•	3
DR Congo (Kata Katanga)*	Kata Katanga vs. government	subnational predominance, resources	2011	↓	1
DR Congo (KN)	KN vs. government	subnational predominance	2016	↗	5
DR Congo (Mayi-Mayi et al.)	Mayi-Mayi groups vs. Nyatura groups vs. Raia Mutomboki vs. APCLS vs. FDLR vs. government	subnational predominance, resources	2003	↗	5
DR Congo (opposition)	Rassemblement, Lucha et al. vs. government	national power	1997	•	3
DR Congo – Rwanda*	DR Congo vs. Rwanda	international power	1998	•	2
DR Congo, Rwanda (FDLR, CNRD)	FDLR vs. CNRD vs. DR Congo, Rwanda	national power, subnational predominance, resources	1994	↘	3
DR Congo, Uganda (ADF)	ADF vs. DRC, Uganda	subnational predominance, resources	1995	•	4
Egypt – Ethiopia, Sudan (GERD)	Egypt vs. Ethiopia, Sudan	resources	2011	↗	2
Equatorial Guinea – Gabon (Mbanié, Cocotier, Conga islands)*	Equatorial Guinea vs. Gabon	territory, resources	1970	•	1
Eritrea (RSADO)*	RSADO vs. government	autonomy	1999	↓	1
Eritrea – Ethiopia*	Eritrea vs. Ethiopia	territory	1998	↘	2
Ethiopia (ARDUF)	ARDUF vs. government	autonomy	1995	•	3
Ethiopia (inter-ethnic rivalry)	Oromo, Amhara vs. Somali	subnational predominance, resources	2017	NEW	5
Ethiopia (OLF / Oromiya)*	OLF vs. government	secession	1992	↘	2
Ethiopia (ONLF / Ogaden)	ONLF, government	autonomy, resources	1994	•	3
Ethiopia (opposition)	ethnic groups vs. government	system/ideology, national power	2005	•	3
Ethiopia (TPDM)*	TPDM vs. government	system/ideology	2002	↘	2
France – Rwanda	France vs. Rwanda	other	2004	•	1

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Name of conflict ¹	Conflict parties ²	Conflict items	Start	Change ³	Int. ⁴
Gabon (opposition)*	opposition groups vs. government	national power	2009	•	3
Gambia (opposition)	opposition groups vs. government	national power	2016	•	3
Guinea (opposition)	UFDG, SLECG, FPSE et al. vs. government	system/ideology, national power	2006	•	3
Guinea-Bissau (opposition)*	PAIGC vs. PRS	system/ideology, national power	1998	•	3
Kenya (inter-communal rivalry)*	Pokot vs. Turkana vs. Samburu vs. Degodia vs. Garre vs. Maasai vs. Kipsigis vs. Giriama vs. Orma	subnational predominance, resources	1963	•	3
Kenya (MRC / Coast)*	MRC vs. government	secession	2008	↘	1
Kenya (opposition)	JP vs. NASA	national power	1999	•	3
Mali (CMA et al. / Azawad)	CMA et al. vs. government	autonomy	1989	↗	3
Mali (inter-militant rivalry / northern Mali)	CMA vs. Platform	subnational predominance	2012	•	3
Mali (opposition)*	opposition groups vs. government	system/ideology, national power	2012	•	3
Mozambique (RENAMO)	RENAMO vs. FRELIMO	national power	2012	•	3
Niger (opposition)	MODEN/FA Lumana Africa, student unions et al. vs. government	national power	2009	•	3
Nigeria (Christians – Muslims)*	Christians vs. Muslims	subnational predominance	1960	•	3
Nigeria (Eggon groups / Nasarawa State)*	Fulani, Alago, Agatu, Government Nigeria, Gwandara, Migili vs. Eggon Groups	subnational predominance	2012	↓	1
Nigeria (farmers – pastoralists)	Farmers vs. Pastoralists	subnational predominance	1960	•	5
Nigeria (Ijaw groups / Niger Delta)*	Ijaw Groups, Niger Delta Avengers, MEND, IPOB vs. Government Nigeria, International Oil Companies	autonomy, resources	1997	•	3
Nigeria (Islamic Movement)*	IMN vs. Government Nigeria	system/ideology, subnational predominance	1991	•	3
Nigeria (northerners – southerners)	Northerners, APC supporters vs. Southerners, PDP supporters	system/ideology, national power	1960	↘	3
Nigeria (Pro-Biafra Groups / Biafra)	Pro-Biafra Groups vs. Government Nigeria	secession	1967	•	3
Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, Niger (Boko Haram)	Boko Haram vs. Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, Niger	system/ideology	2003	•	5
Republic of Congo (Ninja militias)*	Ninja militias vs. government	subnational predominance	1993	•	3
Republic of Congo (opposition)*	opposition groups vs. PCT	national power	2015	•	2
Rwanda (opposition)*	Unified Democratic Forces (UDF), Democratic Green Party of Rwanda vs. government	national power	2003	•	2
Senegal (MFDC / Casamance)	MFDC vs. government	secession	1982	↘	2
Sierra Leone (APC – SLPP)*	APC vs. SLPP	national power	2007	•	3
Somalia (ASWJ)*	ASWJ vs. government vs. Interim Galmudug Administration	subnational predominance	2014	↘	2
Somalia (Habar Gidir – Biyomal / Lower Shabelle)*	Habr Gedir militias vs. Biymal militias	subnational predominance	2014	•	3
Somalia (Hawadle – Surre / Hiiraan)*	Hawadle militias vs. Surre militias	subnational predominance, resources	2012	↘	2
Somalia (inter-militia rivalry / Jubaland)*	Hirale militias vs. Interim Jubaland Administration	subnational predominance	1991	•	2
Somalia (ISS)*	ISS vs. al-Shabaab vs. FGS	national power	2015	NEW	3
Somalia (Khatumo State – Puntland – Somaliland)*	Regional government of Somaliland vs. Khatumo State vs. autonomous region of Puntland	subnational predominance	1998	↘	2
Somalia (Puntland)*	autonomous region of Puntland vs. government	autonomy	1998	•	1

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Name of conflict ¹	Conflict parties ²	Conflict items	Start	Change ³	Int. ⁴
Somalia (Somaliland)	regional government of Somaliland vs. government	secession	1991	•	1
Somalia, Kenya (al-Shabaab)	al-Shabaab vs. Somalia, Kenya	system/ideology, national power	2006	•	5
South Africa (opposition)	ANC vs. EFF, COSATU, DA, ANC factions, service delivery protesters, university students	system/ideology, national power	2015	•	3
South Africa (xenophobes)	immigrants vs. xenophobes	system/ideology	1994	•	3
South Sudan (inter-communal rivalry)	Murle vs. Dinka vs. Ethiopian villagers	subnational predominance, resources	2011	•	5
South Sudan (opposition)	DC, CPSS, LPSS, Sudan African National Union, FD, South Sudan Liberal party, United Democratic Front, the Popular Front for Democratic Reform,, Pan-African National Guard vs. Government	system/ideology, national power	2011	•	3
South Sudan (SPLM/A-IO)	SPLM/A-IO vs. government	system/ideology, national power, resources	2011	•	5
South Sudan (various militias)*	NDM, National Salvation Front, Arrow Boys, SSDF, Popular Defense Forces, REMNASA, TFNF, Government	system/ideology, subnational predominance	2011	•	3
South Sudan – Sudan*	South Sudan vs. Sudan	territory, resources	2011	•	3
South Sudan, Uganda (border communities)*	Kuku vs. Mandi	territory	2011	↘	1
Sudan (Darfur)	SRF, SLM-AW, SLM-MM, JEM, SLM-TC vs. government	subnational predominance, resources	2003	•	5
Sudan (Eastern Front)*	Beja Congress vs. Government	autonomy, resources	2005	↘	1
Sudan (inter-communal rivalry)	Rizeigat vs. Ma'aliya vs. Habaniya vs. Salamat vs. Gimir et al.	subnational predominance, resources	2007	•	4
Sudan (opposition)	NCF, Sudan Call Forces vs. Government	system/ideology, national power	2011	•	3
Sudan (SPLM/A-North / South Kordofan, Blue Nile)	SPLM/A-N vs. government	autonomy, resources	2011	↓	3
Sudan, South Sudan (Abyei)	Misseriya vs. Ngok Dinka	subnational predominance, resources	2011	•	3
Swaziland (opposition)*	government vs. SUDF	system/ideology, national power	1998	↘	2
Tanzania (Chadema, CUF – CCM)	government (CCM) vs. CUF, Chadema	system/ideology, national power	1993	•	3
Tanzania (Christians – Muslims)*	Christians vs. Muslims	subnational predominance	2012	↘	1
Togo (opposition)*	ANC, CST vs. government	national power	1963	•	3
Uganda (Bakozzo / Rwenzururu)	Kingdom of Rwenzururu vs. government	autonomy	2014	•	3
Uganda (inter-communal rivalry / Rwenzururu)*	Bakozzo vs. Bamba et al.	subnational predominance, resources	2012	•	3
Uganda (opposition)	FDC, DP, UPC, Jeema vs. government	national power	2001	•	3
Zimbabwe (opposition)	ZRP, government (ZANU-PF) vs. MDC-T, MDC Alliance	system/ideology, national power	2000	•	3

^{1 2 3 4} cf. overview table for Europe

ANGOLA (UNITA)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 1975

Conflict parties: UNITA vs. MPLA
Conflict items: national power

The conflict over national power between the government

and the main opposition party, National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), continued as a violent crisis. The governing party, Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), and UNITA had previously fought against one another in the civil war, from 1975 to 2002.

After abating violence in 2014 and 2015, the conflict became more violent in 2016 and remained at a violent level throughout 2017, when general elections were held in Angola. On February 22, a group of 40 MPLA members armed with picks and machetes stormed and destroyed the headquarters of

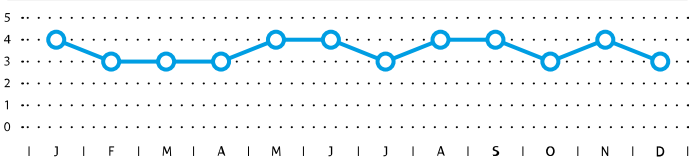
UNITA in Benguela, Benguela Province. At the end of July, a UNITA delegation was campaigning in Huambo, Huambo Province, for the general elections, when they were attacked by MPLA militants, who killed one of the activists. On election day, August 23, the Angolan Rapid Intervention police fired on a group of UNITA supporters who had gathered to supervise the vote counting in Huambo. The group threw stones at a police car. Police arrested 40 UNITA supporters.

A month after the election, on September 18, the son of a UNITA member was shot by MPLA supporters in the capital Luanda, Luanda Province, and UNITA and MPLA militants clashed in Benguela. Residents fled into the woods to escape the violence. hka

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

Intensity: 5 | Change: ↗ | Start: 2012

Conflict parties: Anti-Balaka vs. Ex-Séléka
Conflict items: national power, resources



The limited war over national power and resources between ex-Séléka and Anti-Balaka groups escalated to a war.

In 2012, predominantly Muslim armed groups, mainly the Front for the Rebirth of Central Africa (FPRC), the Union for Peace in Central Africa (UPC), and Patriotic Rally for the Rebirth of the Central African Republic (RPRC), had joined together to form the Séléka militias, with the aim of overthrowing the then-president François Bozizé.

After the leader of Séléka had declared himself president in 2013, he officially dissolved the Séléka rebel group in September of the same year. However, many fighters remained active as ex-Séléka. In the meantime, predominantly Christian militias had formed as Anti-Balaka groups to counter Séléka activities. The militias were strengthened by members of the former Armed Forces (FACA). In 2016, Faustin Archange Touadera was elected President of the country. Violence between the two groups continued.

Throughout 2017, at least 1,000 people were killed and the number of displaced people reached a record high of 1.1 million, about a quarter of CAR's population. More than 285,000 people were internally displaced, leading to approx. 688,700 IDPs in the country.

Additionally, the number of CAR refugees in neighboring countries increased from more than 460,000 in January to more than 545,000 by the end of the year. In September, the Cameroonian government decided to close its northern border with CAR, after members of armed groups had kidnapped Cameroonian citizens. The armed groups continued to rely on the exploitation of natural resources such as diamonds and gold, and on illegal taxation as a source of income.

Tensions between the two ex-Séléka groups FPRC and UPC continued. On February 11, MINUSCA helicopters launched

an assault on FPRC fighters, after they had tried to move towards Bambari, Ouaka prefecture, where UPC leader Ali Darassa and many of his fighters were based. Allegedly, several FPRC fighters were killed, among them Ex-Séléka General Joseph Zoundeiko. MINUSCA declared Bambari free of armed groups, after it had secured the departure of Darassa and Anti-Balaka elements from the town. However, a FPRC-led coalition continued to attack UPC and from March 20 to 24, Anti-Balaka groups joined the coalition to expel UPC from the mining towns Nzako and Bakouma, Mbomou prefecture. At least eighteen people were killed during the attacks. The coalition was based on the shared depiction of Darassa as a foreigner belonging to the ethnic group Fulani. Thus, Fulani civilians were targeted by Anti-Balaka elements during the seizure of Bakouma on March 20. Between May 7 and 9, Anti-Balaka members attacked UPC elements in Alindao, Basse-Kotto prefecture. At least 100 people were killed and more than 14,000 displaced. As a result of the continuing attacks, the UPS was significantly weakened. While FPRC and Anti-Balaka cooperated in fighting UPC, the groups repeatedly clashed during the year. On May 13, MINUSCA forces were attacked by heavily armed Anti-Balaka forces in Bangassou, Mbomou prefecture. Anti-Balaka fighters killed one MINUSCA soldier, destroyed the access bridges to Bangassou, and took control of several water points. The offensive against MINUSCA was followed by attacks on the predominantly Muslim neighbourhood Tokoyo, Bangassou. The Anti-Balaka fighters attacked the local mosque, killing the Imam, and forcing around 1,500 people to seek refuge in a Catholic Church. In total, at least 115 people, among them many civilians, were killed and more than 17,000 displaced. Following the attacks, several clashes between FPRC and Anti-Balaka fighters erupted, including between forces that had earlier collaborated. Starting on May 15, clashes between Anti-Balaka and FPRC in Bria, Haute-Kotto, killed at least 50 people and displaced more than 38,000. On June 6, FPRC fighters launched an offensive against Anti-Balaka elements in Bakouma, following Anti-Balaka attacks on Nzako. Subsequently, armed groups involved in the conflict signed an "immediate ceasefire" deal at a meeting in Rome mediated by Sant'Egidio peace group on June 19. The Rome Agreement constituted the fifth deal signed by armed groups in four years. The groups committed to end attacks in exchange for political representation and their acceptance into the country's armed forces. Nevertheless, violence continued and only one day after the agreement had been signed, between 50 and 100 people were killed in Bria, following clashes between FPRC and Anti-Balaka elements. Furthermore, increased violence in and against IDP-camps was reported in July and the following months. The prefectures Mbomou, Haute-Mbomou, Haute-Kotto, Basse-Kotto and Ouaka in the southeast of CAR were especially affected. On September 7 and 8, tensions in camps in Bria left at least ten people dead and 50 injured. Several houses were destroyed by grenades and the office of a humanitarian organization was pillaged.

On October 22, clashes in Nzako erupted again, leaving at least 25 people dead.

Armed groups, primarily Anti-Balaka fighters, continued to attack civilians from ethnic Fulani communities and clashed with the militia Retour, Reclamation and Rehabilitation (3R), that had emerged to protect members of the Fulani ethnic

group from attacks by Anti-Balaka militias in 2015. On January 28, twelve people were killed during an Anti-Balaka ambush on a convoy of Fulani traders escorted by 3R fighters near Kouï, Ouham-Pendé prefecture. Clashes between 3R and Anti-Balaka fighters on February 2 left at least two civilians and one Anti-Balaka fighter dead. Seven 3R fighters were injured while several thousand civilians fled the area. Attempting to appease the tensions, 3R and Anti-Balaka signed a ceasefire agreement in Bouar, capital of Nana-Mambéré prefecture, on December 15.

Violence also affected humanitarian workers and MINUSCA peacekeepers. Throughout the year, at least 13 humanitarian workers and 34 peacekeepers were killed during attacks by armed groups. Anti-Balaka fighters ambushed a MINUSCA convoy near Bangassou on May 8, killing five MINUSCA soldiers and wounding ten. Between July 24 and 25, suspected Anti-Balaka fighters killed and wounded three peacekeepers in Bangassou, Mbomou prefecture. One week later, violence spread into Mbomou prefecture, where at least 50 people were killed, among them six Red Cross workers. In November and December, armed groups installed check points on main axes in Ouaka prefecture, preventing humanitarian workers from passing. On November 15, the UNSC extended the mandate for MINUSCA for another year, as a result of the high level of violence during the year, and decided to strengthen the mission by deploying an additional 900 military personnel.

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

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 1987

Conflict parties:	LRA vs. CAR, DRC, South Sudan, Uganda
Conflict items:	subnational predominance, re-sources

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

Having been driven out of northern Uganda in 2006, the group remained active in CAR, DRC, and parts of South Sudan. Due to several military operations, internal splits, and defections, the group had been significantly weakened in recent years and reportedly consisted of a few hundred men in 2017. As in 2016, violent LRA activities concentrated on eastern CAR and northern DRC, with only one reported attack in South Sudan. Throughout 2017, the LRA continued to attack villages and civilians. Around 600 people were abducted, hundreds displaced, and about 17 civilians were killed.

In March, the US announced the withdrawal of 100 Special Forces deployed to support the African Union Regional Task Force to fight the LRA and detain its leader Joseph Kony. One month later, Uganda began to withdraw its contingent from the Task Force and handed over the responsibility to fight the LRA in CAR to the local authorities in May. The trial against former LRA commander Dominic Ongwen continued at the

ICC.

In CAR, the LRA was active in the Haut-Mboumou, Mbomou, and Haute-Kotto prefectures.

On February 25, five LRA fighters abducted eleven civilians in Gambara, Haut-Mboumo. Two weeks later, one woman was killed, and two men injured during an attack on civilians by LRA elements belonging to a splinter group, led by commander Achaye Doctor in Dembia, Mbomou. In December, LRA fighters killed one civilian and abducted eight others during a raid on a village close to Mbangana, Haute-Kotto.

In the DRC, the LRA was active in the provinces Bas-Uélé and Haut-Uélé. Throughout January, at least 87 civilians were abducted in both provinces. For instance, on January 8, the Congolese Armed Forces (FARDC) seized control over Nakolongbo, Ango territory, Bas-Uélé, expelling the LRA fighters from the village and destroying several LRA camps in the area. Subsequently, around 33 abductees were freed while the LRA fighters reportedly fled to neighboring CAR. LRA activities continued during the following months. On May 12, LRA forces launched an attack on a military camp in Bambangana, Dungu territory, Haut-Uélé, killing an army sergeant and one civilian. Attacks by LRA forces intensified in June, especially around Garamba National Park, Dungu, close to the South Sudanese border. During a raid by around 40 LRA fighters on the Tanganyika mining area, Dungu, 61 civilians were temporarily kidnapped and forced to carry looted goods and food. The attack led to the displacement of an unknown number of civilians to the nearby town of Gangala Nabodio, Dungu. On June 11, one FARDC soldier and one guard of the Garamba National Park, Dungu, were killed during an ambush by LRA members. One day later, LRA fighters attacked the military position in Bambangana again, killing one FARDC soldier and one civilian. On June 18, two FARDC soldiers were killed in an ambush by alleged LRA members in Angar, Bas-Uélé. On the same day, a group of about ten LRA fighters attacked a mining camp near Gangala na Bodio, Haut-Uélé, abducting eight artisanal miners and looting gold, diamond, and money. Violence continued in July and August, with at least six civilians, one LRA fighter, and one FARDC soldier killed. The following months saw a reduction in LRA activities in the DRC.

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CÔTE D'IVOIRE (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 1999

Conflict parties:	FPI vs. government
Conflict items:	national power

The violent crisis over national power between the opposition parties, especially the Ivorian Popular Front (FPI), on the one hand, and the Rally of the Republicans (RDR) of President Alassane Ouattara, on the other, continued.

Violent protests concerning the invalid election of the candidate of the l'Union pour la démocratie et la paix en Côte d'Ivoire (UDPCI) in December 2016 continued in January 2017.

During the night of January 5 to 6, soldiers protested in Bouaké, Vallée du Bandama district, Gbêkê region, in the department of Korhogo, in Daloa, Sassandra-Marahoué district, Haut-Sassandra region, and Daoukro. They demanded higher salaries, faster promotions and reduced working time. First shootings were reported in the morning of January 6 and the protests intensified throughout the following weeks. The military took control of some regional police commissariats and blocked roads. On January 13, representatives of military and government reached an agreement, which triggered new and further demands. The protests were joined by further security forces like gendarmes, soldiers, prison keepers and customs officers. On January 17, four people died during new violent protests by the military in the capital Yamoussoukro. On January 18, the paramilitary gendarmes sealed off all access and closed the port of Abidjan district.

On May 11, a spokesman for the soldiers had announced an end to the protests and the cessation of their financial demands, during a ceremony attended by other soldiers and President Ouattara. However, violent protests by dissatisfied soldiers resurged in the subsequent days. On May 13, the government agreed to a deal of amnesty and remuneration. On May 14, five people were injured when soldiers opened fire during a protest against an army mutiny in Bouaké. On May 16, after a road blockade that lasted five days, soldiers reached an agreement on bonus payments with the government and agreed to return to their barracks. On September 7, the government declared that the recent military revolts were part of an attempt by supporters of former president Laurent Gbagbo to destabilize the country.

Moreover, student protests took place at different universities from September 11 onwards, particularly at the Cité Rouge University in Cocody, Abidjan. They denounced high costs and tuition fees. In some cases the police used tear gas to disperse the protesters.

On July 18, a regional tribunal sentenced the former minister of Construction, Water and Forestry, Assoa Adou of Gbagbo's government, to ten years of arrest for the acquisition of arms, the formation of armed gangs and murder. On March 29, an Ivory Coast court found former First Lady Simone Gbagbo not guilty of war crimes and crimes against humanity after a trial on her alleged role in post-election abuses that led to the deaths of thousands in December 2010 to May 2011. Her case is pending before the ICC. jwi

DJIBOUTI – ERITREA

Intensity: 2 | Change: **NEW** | Start: 1996

Conflict parties: Djibouti vs. Eritrea
Conflict items: territory

The conflict over the territory of the Ras Doumeira region between Djibouti and Eritrea re-emerged as a non-violent crisis. Djibouti accused Eritrea of occupying disputed territory along their shared border, Ras Doumeira Island and hill, after Qatar had withdrawn its peacekeepers on June 14. Qatar removed its contingent, days after the two East African countries sided with Saudi Arabia and its allies in their dispute with Qatar [→ Qatar - Saudia Arabia et al.].

According to Djiboutian Foreign Minister Mahamoud Ali Yousouf, on June 16, alleged Eritrean military movements on the Ras Doumeira hill were reported and the Djiboutian military would be "on alert". No casualties were reported. On June 20, the UNSC called on Eritrea and Djibouti to peacefully resolve the conflict.

The conflict had already escalated in June 2008, when Eritrean military had occupied the hill area under the pretext of collecting sand for ongoing road constructions. Djibouti accused Eritrea of having set up new maps that indicate Ras Doumeira as Eritrean territory which Eritrea had denied. Reportedly, Eritrean soldiers had deserted to the Djiboutian side on 06/10/08, having caused a heavy firefight for several days. The Djiboutian government stated that 44 Djiboutian and 100 Eritrean soldiers had been killed.

In early June 2010, Qatar had offered to take a mediation role in order to reconcile the bilateral conflict. The UN, as well as the AU had continuously called for a peaceful resolution and supported Qatar's reconciliation efforts.

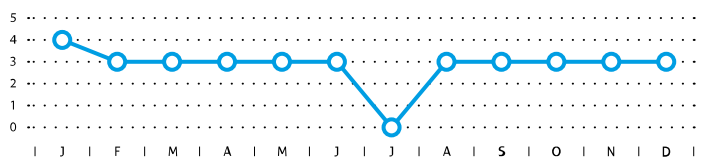
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DR CONGO (BANTU – BATWA)

Intensity: 4 | Change: • | Start: 2013

Conflict parties: Bantu militias vs. Batwa militias vs. government

Conflict items: subnational predominance



The limited war over subnational predominance in the provinces of Tanganyika between militias of the ethnic group Batwa and Bantu groups, predominantly ethnic Luba militias, continued. While violence concentrated on Tanganyika province, attacks were also reported in Pweto territory, Haut-Katanga province, and Kambambare and Kasongo territory, Maniema province.

The government, MONUSCO representatives as well as local and civil authorities organized several peace dialogues between Batwa and Bantu leaders in 2017.

From January to November, at least 224,000 people were internally displaced in the Tanganyika region, mostly due to violent attacks and clashes between Bantu and Batwa members. At least 95 people were killed and more than 135 injured.

In January, Batwa militias launched several attacks against Bantu communities in Moba and Manono territory, Tanganyika. Attacks between January 3 to 8 left at least 19 people were killed, 41 injured and more than 65 houses destroyed resulting in the displacement of approx. 15,000 people. On February 5, three people were killed and at least ten people injured in a violent clash between Bantu and Batwa militias close to Monde, Kabalo territory, Tanganyika. On the same day, Batwa militiamen attacked farmers of the Bantu community in Maseba, Moba killing several civilians. Following a peace forum in Kalemie, Tanganyika, a peace deal

was signed by leaders of the two groups on February 25. However, violence only decreased temporarily, and clashes in March between Bantu and Batwa in Kosovo and Kizabi, Pweto, led to the displacement of approx. 3,650 people. On March 21, Bantu militia members killed 18 people in an attack on a Batwa camp in Mutiba, Manono. Between December 2016 and March 2017, about 82,000 people fled to Haut-Lomami and Haut-Katanga provinces due to the conflict between Bantu and Batwa communities in Tanganyika. On April 3, Batwa community members attacked three Burundian men that were working for Bantu farmers with poisoned arrows and machetes, killing one and injuring the other two. Batwa people accused the Bantu farmers working on Batwa territory of not paying dues. On the next day, Batwa militiamen attacked a Bantu community in Babuyu, Kabambare, Maniema and beheaded one person. During the attack, at least 20 people were injured, 12 houses and commercial properties destroyed. Between May 1 and 5, at least 12,000 people fled towards Kalemie due to violent clashes between Bantu and Batwa communities in area surrounding the city. The clashes forced a further 25,000 IDPs towards Kalemie. Three weeks later, Batwa militias attacked several villages on the Kalemie-Nyunzu axis, Tanganyika, killing 23 people and injuring 38. From July onwards, MONUSCO and Congolese authorities tried to calm the situation by implementing several peacemaking measures in different cities in Tanganyika. However, attacks and displacement continued. In October, the inhabitants of eleven villages located on the Pweto-Kipeto axis, Haut-Katanga, left their homes, due to intercommunal clashes and attacks of a Bantu militia called "Elements". On December 29, Batwa militia members attacked the inhabitants of Katato village, Nyunzu. Two people were reportedly killed and seven injured by arrows.

As in the previous year, Batwa militias also attacked UN and government personnel.

On August 23, Batwa militiamen armed with arrows attacked an MONUSCO convoy in Lambo Kilele, Kalemie, wounding one soldier. Furthermore, Batwa militias attacked positions of the Armed Forces of the DR Congo (FARDC) in Pweto, Haut-Katanga, in October. kda

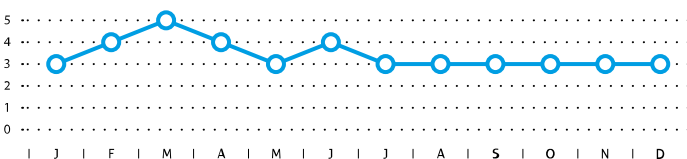
Central province. Reportedly, the decision had been based on Mpandi's criticism of the government [→ DR Congo (Opposition)], urging state security forces to leave Kasai Central and accusing them of abusing the local population. Following the rejection of his appointment, tensions between state authorities and Mpandi's militia had increased significantly. On 08/12/16, the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC) had launched an operation against Mpandi in his home district, accusing his militia of attacking a village. In course of the operation, Mpandi had been killed, prompting the escalation of violence from both sides. Following his death, numerous small militias emerged, taking up Mpandi's demands and seeking to avenge his death. The militias named themselves Kamuina Nsapu (KN), mostly consisting of Luba, the ethnic group to which Mpandi also belonged. Reportedly, many of the KN militias recruited hundreds of child soldiers into their ranks. By mid-January 2017, around 600 people had been killed and 216,000 displaced due to fighting between KN and FARDC as well as attacks on the civilian population.

In 2017, violence further escalated, leaving more than 4,000 people dead and at least 605,000 internally displaced. Furthermore, over 34,000 people fled to neighbouring Angola, while more than 12,000 sought refuge in Zambia. Throughout the year, violence spread into all provinces making up the Kasai region, Kasai, Kasai Central, Kasai Oriental, Sankuru and Lomami provinces, and further affected Lualaba province. In January, at least 26 people were killed during clashes between FARDC and KN militias in Kasai Central. On January 4, KN militias took control over Tshimbulu. During a FARDC attack on the city between February 6 and 13 around 100 people were killed. Following the attack, a video appeared, showing FARDC soldiers shooting 13 civilians with alleged KN affiliations. Subsequent international pressure on the government to investigate human rights violations committed by FARDC soldiers led to the arrest of seven officers on March 18. In March and April, violence further increased and spread to Kasai Central's neighboring provinces, notably Kasai, Lomami, and Lualaba. On March 11, KN militias attacked the town of Mwene Ditum, Lomami, killing two FARDC soldiers and nine civilians. A day later, two members of the UN Group of Experts, who had been sent to Central Kasai to investigate human rights abuses, were abducted, allegedly by KN members. On March 27, the bodies of the two UN investigators were found by MONUSCO soldiers near Bunkonde, Kasai Central. Although Congolese authorities arrested several suspects, the circumstances of their deaths remained unclear. On March 24, KN militias killed and decapitated around 40 police officers in an ambush between Tshikapa and Kananga, Kasai Central. Between March 28 and 30, FARDC soldiers with alleged ties to KN in Nganza, a commune of Kananga city, reportedly killed at least 40 people. On April 16, Jacques Kabeya Ntumba Mupala was accepted as the new Kamuina Nsapu by the government. However, violence continued and KN militias increasingly targeted state institutions. For instance, by the end of April, around 350 schools had been destroyed in the Kasai region. Furthermore, ethnic tensions increased with the formation of Bana Mura in early April, a new militia mainly consisting of members from the ethnic groups of Tshokwe, Pende, and

DR CONGO (KAMUINA NSAPU)

Intensity: 5 | Change: ↗ | Start: 2016

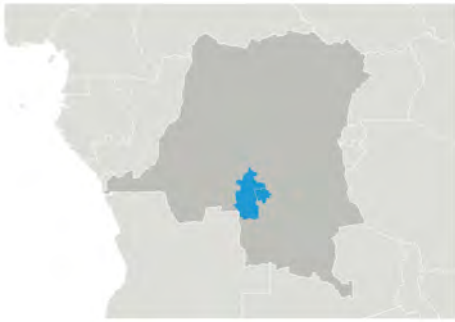
Conflict parties: KN vs. government
Conflict items: subnational predominance



The limited war over subnational predominance between the government and the Kamuina Nsapu militia in the Kasai region escalated to a war.

In early 2016, the government had refused to accept the appointment of Jean-Pierre Mpandi as Kamuina Nsapu, the title of the hereditary chief of the Bajila Kasanga chieftaincy, Kasai

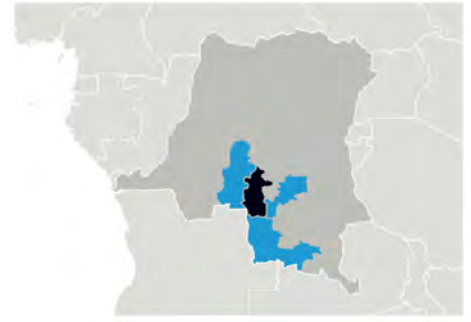
DR CONGO (KAMUINA NSAPU)



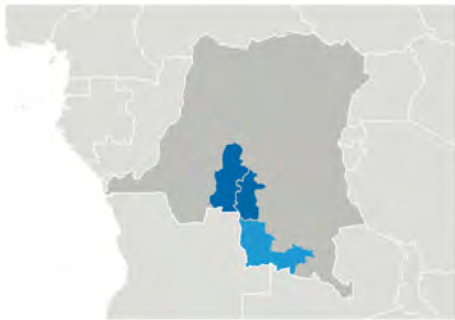
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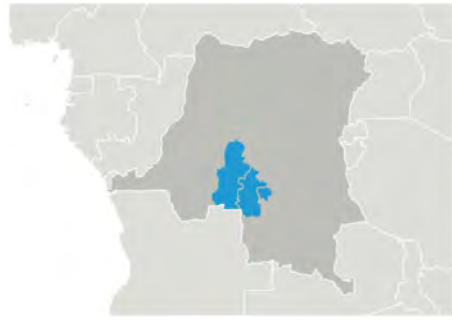
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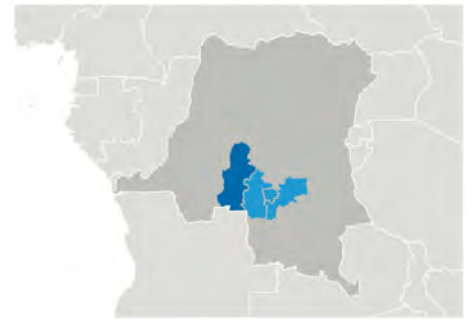
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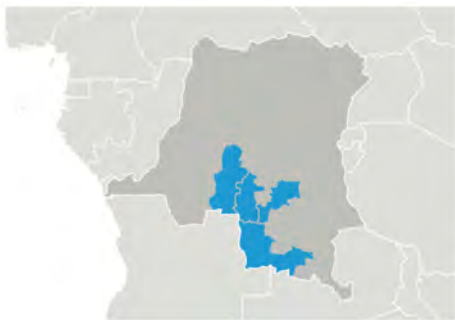
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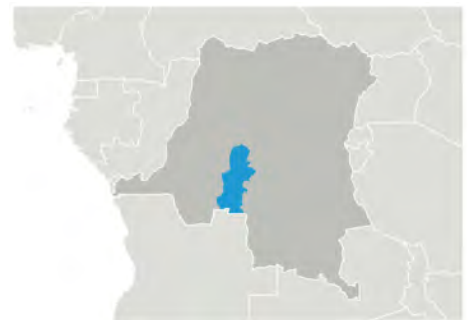
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July



August



September



October



November



December

Tetela, who considered themselves native to the Kasai region. Bana Mura was allegedly backed by the government to support its fight against the KN militias. According to the UN, KN militias as well as Bana Mura fighters and FARDC soldiers, in collaboration with other state agents, killed at least 251 people between March 12 and June 19 in attacks on villages in Kamonia territory, Kasai. The attacks were often launched along ethnic lines and included targeted killings. KN militias mainly attacked villages to target government officials, civilians suspected to collaborate with them, and individuals alleged of practicing sorcery. For instance, on March 23, KN militias killed a nurse, a motorcycle taxi driver, a border official, and another person for allegedly hiding a police officer in Kanyola village. Bana Mura militias targeted civilians belonging to the Luba and Lulua ethnic groups in several attacks, usually armed with machetes, knives, hunting rifles, and containers of fuel. For instance, on April 24, hundreds of Bana Mura fighters attacked Cinq village, killing dozens of inhabitants and at least 90 patients, staff, and people who had sought refuge in a health center. Furthermore, Bana Mura militias took part in attacks by FARDC and other state security forces mostly targeting individuals with alleged links to KN. On May 9, a FARDC commander reportedly killed the Luba representative of Tshitundu village in a joint attack with other security forces and approx. 100 Bana Mura militia members. In another attack, FARDC soldiers allegedly fired a rocket into a Pentecostal church in Djiboko, killing between 60 and 90 people. The violence in Kamonia territory caused more than 30,000 people to flee to Angola. In mid-April, MONUSCO increased its presence in Kasai to 300 soldiers. Clashes between KN and FARDC continued in Kasai Oriental, where dozens were killed on May 7 in Kazumba territory. Between May 1 and 15, more than 125,000 IDPs were registered in Kwilu province, fleeing the violence in Kasai region. Around 50,000 new IDPs were registered per month in June and July in Kasai. However, violence started to decrease significantly in July and August. By the end of August, around 270,000 IDPs had returned to their homes in Kasai region. Between September 18 and 21, the government held a peace forum in Kananga. The forum was attended by more than 800 people, including local officials, the traditional chiefs of the region, civil society representatives as well as high ranking government officials such as President Joseph Kabila. However, it was boycotted by many opposition politicians. At the end of the forum, the traditional chiefs of the Kasai region signed an agreement to promote peace and development in the region. Between late September and early October, security forces arrested several KN leaders. By November, clashes between KN, FARDC, and Bana Mura as well as attacks on civilians by all groups were mainly restricted to parts of the provinces of Kasai and Kasai Central.

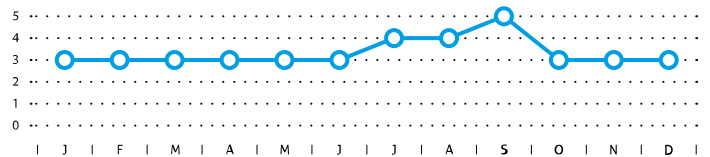
On May 29, the EU imposed sanctions on several Congolese officials for alleged human rights abuses in the context of the electoral process and their involvement in the violence in Kasai region. The list included Kyungu Mutanga, known as Gédéon, the former leader of the Mayi-Mayi Kata Katanga militia [→ DR Congo (Kata Katanga)]. In November 2016, he had surrendered to the authorities together with approx. 100 of his fighters. According to the EU, his militia was implicated in supporting government forces in human rights abuses in Kasai in 2017. *bal, emh*

DR CONGO (MAYI-MAYI ET AL.)

Intensity: 5 | Change: ↗ | Start: 2003

Conflict parties: Mayi-Mayi groups vs. Nyatura groups vs. Raia Mutomboki vs. APCLS vs. FDLR vs. government

Conflict items: subnational predominance, resources



The limited war over subnational predominance and resources in the provinces North and South Kivu, Ituri, and Maniema between local armed groups, on the one side, and the Armed Forces of the DR Congo (FARDC), supported by MONUSCO, on the other, as well as clashes between local armed groups, escalated to a war.

Most local militias had formed in the context of the Second Congo War, between 1998-2003, in opposition to armed Rwandan and Ugandan-backed groups such as the Congolese Rally for Democracy. After the end of the war, local militias of varying size and strength continued to emerge, often recruiting along ethnic lines, and usually named after their commanders. According to the Kivu Security Tracker, around 120 of such groups were active in 2017 in North and South Kivu alone, often consisting of less than 100 fighters. Apart from clashing with other armed actors and fighting over subnational predominance and resources, the groups continued to target civilians and relied on illegal taxation. By the end of the year, at least 700 people had been killed and hundreds of thousands displaced in the four affected provinces.

In South Kivu, 176,000 people were displaced in 2017, with 103,000 in Fizi territory alone. Uvira and Fizi territories were heavily affected by violence between members of the ethnic groups Banyamulenge and Bafuliiru around the Hauts Plateaux. For instance, clashes between August 11 and 15 between Banyamulenge militias and Mayi Mayi Bafuliiru in Kahuna, Kagogo, Ishenge, Kanyaga/Kabuga, led to the displacement of 5,000 people. Five civilians were killed and three injured by Banyamulenge fighters. On September 1, Banyamulenge militia members attacked the predominantly Bafuliiru village of Ishenge, close to Bijombo, burning down more than 60 houses and causing the local population to flee. Between December 4 and 5, around 3,400 people fled Bijombo, situated on the Hauts Plateaux in Uvira, after five people had been killed in clashes between a Banyamulenge militia and Mayi-Mayi Bafuliiru.

Furthermore, a coalition between around a dozen armed groups, called National People's Coalition for the Sovereignty of Congo (CNPSC), started an offensive on June 30 to "liberate the country". The CNPSC was led by William Amuri, alias Yakutumba, and his militia, the Mayi-Mayi Yakutumba. The coalition had formed as anti-Kabila alliance in late 2016 after President Joseph Kabila had refused to step down, and recruited mainly from the ethnic Bembe communities [→ DR

Congo (Opposition)]. On June 29, CNPSC fighters attacked a FARDC base in Lulimba, Fizi, stealing weapons and ammunition. At least ten people were killed in fighting between June 29 and July 1, when Yakutumba forces gained control of several villages in Misisi, Fizi, and around Lulimba. By early July, FARDC forces took control over several villages in Misisi and around Lulimba. According to the UN, the fighting between CNPSC and FARDC caused the displacement of around 50,000 people in the region, between June 29 and July 5. In August, violence spread to neighboring Maniema, when Mayi-Mayi Malaika fighters, led by She Assani and members of the CNPSC, took control over Kabambare city, eponymous territory. A FARDC ammunition depot in the city was looted and at least four policemen were killed in the fighting. In September, the group launched another offensive, gaining control over the city of Kilembwe, Fizi, between September 11 and 12. Six people, among them 5 militants, were killed and several injured. On September 13, FARDC forces regained control over the city. Ten days later, CNPSC fighters had taken control of various villages around Mboko, Tanganyika sector, Fizi. Mboko was taken by fighters allegedly under the control of René Itongwa on September 24. Subsequently, FARDC forces launched an offensive, killing six Mayi-Mayi Yakutumba fighters in the Tanganyika sector between September 24 and 25. However, FARDC soldiers were unable to stop the CNPSC offensive, and on September 27, CNPSC fighters attacked the city of Uvira. FARDC forces, supported by MONUSCO, were able to repel the attack and started an offensive against the group in the surrounding area. Although FARDC forces managed to regain control over several villages, fighting between the groups continued until the end of the year.

Various Raia Mutomboki (RM) factions continued to operate in South Kivu's territories Kabare, Kalehe, Shabunda and Walungu. For instance, on January 31, two RM fighters were killed during an attack on a FARDC position in Mulungu, Shabunda. Between May 12 and 13, around 2,000 people were displaced due to clashes between RM Kindu fighters and FARDC soldiers in the villages of Museme and Kilogoze, Shabunda. RM Ndarumanga and RM Maheshe fighters clashed on February 15 in Walungu. At least four people were killed during the fighting.

RM factions continued to operate in Walikale, North Kivu. The two most active factions constituted RM Elenge, led by Heritier Elenge Mupenge, and RM Mirage, led by Mirage Bitunya. Both groups predominantly recruited members of the Rega ethnic group. On August 1, RM Elenge fighters looted villages on the Walikale-Bukavu Road, killing three civilians and burning down 22 houses. RM Elenge militants were attacked by FARDC soldiers during a raid on Kilongote village on September 12.

The ethnic Hutu Nyatura groups operated mainly in Rutshuru and Masisi territory, but were also active in Walikale, North Kivu. In total, at least 74 people were killed in attacks by Nyatura groups. The groups were dependent on the illegal taxation of civilians. The most active factions were Nyatura Kasongo, Nyatura Domi and Nyatura John Love. The Nyatura Kasongo group was led by Kasongo Kalamo and consisted of up to 200 fighters. It also controlled Nyatura forces led by Ngwiti Bahati and "Noheri". Until March, Nyatura Kasongo militants cooperated with the Conseil National Pour le Renouveau et la Démocratie-Ubwiye (CNRD), a splinter group of

the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) [→ DR Congo, Rwanda (FDLR)]. Following the end of the alliance, the Kasongo group and its associated Nyatura groups repeatedly clashed with CNRD and cooperated with FDLR fighters. For instance, on August 9, CNRD fighters killed Ngwiti during an attack on his militia in Muheto, Masisi. In total, at least six people were killed during the attack. On October 11, a coalition of Kasongo and FDLR militants raided a village in Rutshuru territory, killing seven and injuring three. Kasongo militants and FDLR fighters also attacked Nduma Defense of Congo (NDC)-Renewed militants on October 30 in the village Ihula, Walikale. One person was killed and one injured during the attack. On December 20, Kasongo was killed in a clash with CNRD militants. On May 8, Domi and FDLR fighters attacked a FARDC position close to Kitchanga, Rutshuru, killing four FARDC soldiers and freeing twelve prisoners, among them an FDLR officer. John Love militants repeatedly clashed with FARDC forces and attacked civilians in Rutshuru. For instance, on September 7, John Love fighters attacked FARDC positions in Bwalanda and Rwahurukene. At least two people were killed and three injured during the attack. On November 3, John Love fighters raided the village of Katolo, killing seven and injuring eleven. At least 60 houses were burned down during the attack.

The predominantly ethnic Hunde Alliance of Patriots for a Free and Sovereign Congo (APCLS) clashed with other armed groups, such as the Nyatura Kasongo and the Forces for the Defense of Congo (FDC), led by Butu Luanda, as well as FARDC forces. They also attacked civilians in Masisi, Walikale, and Rutshuru territories, North Kivu. At least 34 people were killed in 2017. On March 26, APCLS clashed with the FDC in Nyamaboko, Masisi, causing the displacement of hundreds of households. Eight people were killed in the clashes. On June 4, three people were killed and eight injured in an APCLS attack on a FARDC position in Nyabiondo, Masisi. On August 19, APCLS militants clashed with Nyatura Kasongo fighters in the villages of Bifumbi and Katovu, Masisi. Six people were killed in the fighting and several houses were burned down. The Nduma Defense of Congo (NDC), also known as Mayi-Mayi Sheka, remained active in Masisi, Rutshuru and Walikale territories, North Kivu. Its splinter group, NDC-Renewed or Mayi-Mayi Guidon, led Guidon Shimiray Mwiswa, mainly operated in Lubero territory, North Kivu. Throughout the year, at least 65 people were killed in infighting, in clashes with the FARDC, supported by MONUSCO, Nyatura groups and Mayi-Mayi Mazembe, and in attacks on civilians. On July 17, at least eleven people were killed in clashes between Sheka fighters and Gedeon militants in Kalambayiro and Maninge, Walikale. The inhabitants of the later were forced to flee their village due to the fighting. On July 26, the leader of the Sheka group, Ntabo Ntaberi Sheka, surrendered to MONUSCO forces in Walikale. He had been wanted for crimes against humanity since 2011. However, clashes continued and at least 20,000 people were displaced in Masisi between August and October. The Mayi-Mayi Mazembe consisted of loosely connected armed groups that recruited its fighters predominantly among members of the local ethnic Nande population. The groups were mainly active in Rutshuru, Beni and, Lubero territories but also operated in Walikale territory, North Kivu. Throughout the year, at least 241 people were killed in clashes with FARDC, other armed groups, and during attacks on civilians.

After a coalition of NDC/R and Mazembe fighters had attacked the village of Mutanda, Rutshuru territory, on February 17, killing 27 people and injuring five, the two groups started to fight against one another. More than 20,000 people fled southern Lubero between July and mid-August due to clashes between NDC/R and Mazembe. On August 3, NDC/R and Mazembe failed to agree on a ceasefire and five days later, NDC/R militants attacked a Mazembe position in Kateku, Lubero. Ten people were killed and ten injured in the subsequent fighting. On October 5, FARDC launched an offensive against Mazembe positions in Kanyambi, Kitsumbiro, and Mubana, Lubero territory. Ten Mazembe fighters and eleven civilians were killed, and two people injured during the operation. On October 11, Mazembe fighters killed at least nine civilians in the villages of Butsiri and Mirangi, Rutshuru. Following the attack, Hutu inhabitants fled the area. On November 19, a coalition of Mazembe fighters and Mayi-Mayi Malaika militants clashed with FARDC forces in Bulambo, Beni. Six people were killed and seven injured.

The group Nzirunga led by Alphonse Nzirunga was solely active in Beni territory, North Kivu. Throughout the year, at least 55 people were killed in clashes between the militia and FARDC, supported by MONUSCO. On June 11, alleged Nzirunga fighters attacked Kangbayi prison, enabling more than 900 prisoners to escape. The fighting left four people dead. Five days later, Nzirunga militants clashed with the FARDC and MONUSCO in Kabasha, Beni, for two days. At least 28 people were killed and two injured during the fighting. On June 22, a coalition of FARDC and MONUSCO attacked a Nzirunga position in Kalau. At least nine people were killed and nine injured. On August 22, the FARDC attacked a Nzirunga position in Soma, killing four militants and seizing an RPG.

The Léopards group was created in September after its commander Muthundo had separated from Mayi-Mayi Nzirunga. The group was solely active in Beni territory, North Kivu and consisted of around 40 fighters. It mainly targeted FARDC forces and Mayi Mayi Lwanga fighters. On September 17, Léopards fighters clashed with Mayi Mayi Lwanga in Buhambya, Beni. The fighting lasted for four days and at least 15 Léopards fighters and four Lwanga militants were killed. On October 29, Léopards militants attacked a FARDC position in Bulambo, Beni. One person was killed in the attack.

The Mayi-Mayi Charles group led by Charles Bokande mainly operated in Rutshuru territory but was also active in Lubero territory, North Kivu. The group reportedly controlled the access to natural resources in parts of Virunga National Park and depended on the taxation of local farmers and fishermen along the southern shore of Lake Edward. It mainly recruited its fighters from the local ethnic Nande community and constituted one of the largest Mayi-Mayi groups in the region, consisting of approx. 300 fighters. In February, the FARDC colonel Jackson Muhukambuto Paluku, a former Mayi-Mayi leader, deserted from the army to join the group. Throughout the year, at least 65 people were killed in clashes with FARDC forces as well as in attacks on civilians. On May 2, the group held 50 fishermen hostage at Lake Edward, Rutshuru, stating that they had failed to pay fishing tax. Six Charles fighters and two FARDC soldiers were killed during an ambush on a FARDC vehicle in Humule, Rutshuru, on June 30. Twelve days later, Charles militants again attacked FARDC soldiers

in Ishasha, Rutshuru, killing nine and wounding four soldiers. More than 35 soldiers were killed in an attack on FARDC by Charles militants on August 14, Buholu, Rutshuru. Ihu, emh

DR CONGO (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 1997

Conflict parties: Rassemblement, Lucha et al. vs. government

Conflict items: national power

The violent crisis over national power and the orientation of the political system between the parties of the opposition alliance Rally of Political and Social Forces for Change in the Democratic Republic of Congo (Rassemblement), and other oppositional groups, on the one hand, and the government, on the other, controlled by parties of the Presidential Majority, continued.

Throughout the year, clashes between protesters and security forces left at least 26 people dead and several dozens injured. As of November, the UN Joint Human Rights Office reported 1,078 human rights violations by state agents related to the restriction of democratic space. The death of long-time opposition leader Étienne Tshisekedi on February 1 and the subsequent appointment of his son Felix as the alliance's president led to the partial disintegration of the Rassemblement. The year was marked by significant contention over the implementation of the December 31 Agreement between opposition groups and the Presidential Majority, mediated by the National Episcopal Commission (CENCO).

On March 28, CENCO withdrew from its role as mediator between the government and opposition due to persistent disagreements of the parties concerning the implementation of the December 31 Agreement. Following this announcement, hundreds of opposition supporters demonstrated in Kinshasa, clashing with riot police and burning tires. Police used live munition and tear gas to disperse the crowd, injuring several demonstrators. On April 7, President Kabila appointed former Rassemblement spokesperson Bruno Tshibala as prime minister of the new transitional government, which was formed one month later. The transitional government largely constituted of individuals from the Presidential Majority, but also dissident members of the Rassemblement. On April 10, the Rassemblement organized protests against Tshibala's appointment in the cities of Lubumbashi, Haut-Katanga province, Bukavu, South Kivu province, and Mbandaka, Equateur province. Police dispersed the demonstrations, injuring several protesters and arresting at least 132. On April 27 and 28, the Presidential Majority, the Movement for the Liberation of the Congo (MLC), the Republican Opposition, opposition groups led by Vital Kamerhe, and civil society representatives signed a 'special arrangement', declaring that the prime minister was not to be chosen by the Rassemblement, as originally agreed in the December 31 Agreement. In the first half of the year, the EU and the US issued travel, financial, and economic sanctions against ten officials for alleged human rights violations in the context of the electoral process. On July 31, the youth movement Struggle for

Change ("Lucha") initiated nationwide protests against the delays in planned election preparations. In Goma, North Kivu, protesters threw stones and police employed tear gas to disperse the demonstrators, arresting between 68 and 100 people. On August 7, police shot dead twelve suspected members of the politico-religious movement Bundu Dia Mayala when they attacked security forces in Kinshasa in an anti-government protest. The following day, the Rassemblement organized strikes in Kinshasa, Goma, Lubumbashi, as well as in Mbuji-Mayi, Kasai-Oriental province. On October 30 and 31, civil society groups staged protests in several cities demanding the president to step down by the end of the year. For instance in Goma, three civilians and two police officers were killed, and 15 civilians and four security forces were injured. Protests continued throughout November and December. On November 5, the Independent National Electoral Commission announced that the elections would be held on 12/23/2018, as continuing violence in Central Kasai province had impeded voter registration [→ DR Congo (Kamuina Nsapu)]. Despite a government ban, thousands of protesters took to the streets in Kinshasa, Kamina, Haut-Lomani province, and Kananga, Kasai Central, on December 31. At least seven protesters and one police officer were killed, numerous were injured, and 128 people arrested. According to a December report by Human Rights Watch, Congolese security officers had recruited around 200 ex-M23 fighters in December 2016, who were deployed to crack down on demonstrators between 12/19/2016 and 12/22/2016 [→ DR Congo (ex-M23)].

jli

DR CONGO, RWANDA (FDLR, CNRD)

Intensity: 3 | Change: ↘ | Start: 1994

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

The conflict over national power, subnational predominance, and resources between the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), on the one hand, and the governments of the DR Congo, supported by MONUSCO, and Rwanda, on the other, de-escalated to a violent crisis.

FDLR was formed in 2000, after parts of the former Rwandan army and the Interahamwe militia had crossed the Congolese border following the Rwandan Genocide in 1994. In 2017, FDLR was solely active in North Kivu province, Nyiragongo, Rutshuru, Masisi, and Walikale territories, and by mid-2017, FDLR held no significant positions outside of Rutshuru.

According to a UN report, the breakaway of a fraction called the Conseil National Pour le Renouveau et la Démocratie-Ubwiyunge (CNRD), led by "Colonel" Laurent Ndagijimana, former vice-president of the FDLR, significantly weakened the group in May 2016. The report stated that the FDLR, formerly the largest militia in the DR Congo, had lost around half of its approx. 1,600 fighters as a result of the split and defections in the second half of 2016. Until May this year, FDLR and allied Mayi-Mayi Nyatura repeatedly clashed with other Mayi-Mayi Nyatura groups associated with CNRD [→ DR Congo (Mayi-

Mayi et al.)]. Throughout the year, both CNRD and FDLR were weakened by defections and a lack of new recruits. CNRD's headquarters were located in Faringa, Rutshuru, with some factions also operating in South Kivu. Similar to the FDLR, the group's main source of income constituted charcoal and wooden planks.

The Congolese Armed Forces (FARDC), supported by MONUSCO, continued its fight against the FDLR, initiating the operation Eagle Eye 1 in January to dismantle FDLR hideouts in the regions around the Virunga National Park, resuming Sukola II operations in mid-April, and launching the joint operation Phoenix Rising with MONUSCO in Rutshuru in September. On January 11, FARDC expelled elements of the FDLR and Mayi-Mayi Nyatura from the localities Munguli, Muliki, and Ngoroba in the southeast of Nyanzale town, Masisi. On April 22, the intervention brigade of MONUSCO was deployed to support FARDC forces in northeast of Kiwanja village, Rutshuru.

Compared to last year, FDLR attacks on villages, lootings, and other forms of violence against the civilian population decreased significantly. However, attacks on villages continued and between April 5 and 12, the village of Kishishe, Rutshuru, was repeatedly looted. Around 500 families fled towards the village Bambo after about 200 houses had been looted by FDLR, ex-M23, and Mayi-Mayi Nyatura [→ DR Congo (ex-M23)]. On November 23, FDLR's breakaway faction FDLR-RUD mutilated and decapitated five inhabitants of Kibirizi village, Rutshuru, with machetes.

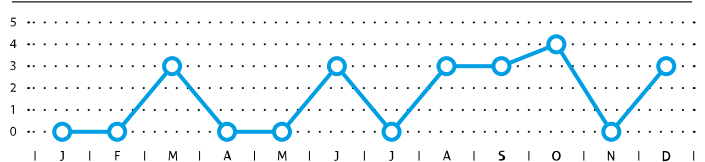
The fight against FDLR remained a central political issue. On January 11, in a speech delivered in front of the UNSC, the Ambassador of the DRC to the UN invited all UN member states to facilitate the repatriation of FDLR militants to their countries of origin. On March 31, UNSC extended MONUSCO's mandate by two years, while reducing the troop strength from 19,815 to 16,215. In June, in Stuttgart, Germany, a Rwandan citizen living in Germany was given 21 months probation for supporting the former FDLR president Ignace Murwanashyaka by maintaining the FDLR website throughout 2008 and 2009. HRW published a report in October, accusing Rwandan security forces of unlawfully detaining and torturing alleged FDLR members and supporters between 2010 and 2017.

iro

DR CONGO, UGANDA (ADF)

Intensity: 4 | Change: • | Start: 1995

Conflict parties: ADF vs. DRC, Uganda
Conflict items: subnational predominance, resources



The limited war over subnational predominance and resources between the Islamist armed group Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) and the governments of the DR Congo (DRC), supported by MONUSCO, as well as Uganda, continued.

The ADF was mainly active in Beni territory, North Kivu province. The group maintained cross-border economic and logistic networks, especially in illegal logging and gold mining. Meanwhile, recruiting in Uganda continued. Although the number of ADF fighters had been substantially reduced to a few hundred due to military operations of the Congolese Armed Forces (FARDC) in 2016, the core of the group reportedly remained intact with Seka Baluku as key leader. The group reportedly operated out of its base called Madina II and the Camp Ya Miba near Mwalika, Beni.

Throughout the year, alleged ADF fighters repeatedly clashed with FARDC and MONUSCO forces. Fighting left at least 12 FARDC soldiers, 18 MONUSCO peacekeepers, and 14 ADF fighters dead. Approx. 61 MONUSCO soldiers were injured. On January 2, MONUSCO launched an attack on ADF camp Allspice located in the "death triangle" between Eringeti, Kamango, and Mbau, Beni, using combat helicopters. This attack aside, the situation remained relatively calm in the first half of the year. In June, ADF began to attack FARDC and MONUSCO positions in Beni. Between June 2 and 4, three clashes between ADF fighters and FARDC forces were reported around Virunga National Park. On June 22, alleged ADF members clashed with FARDC forces in an area south of Beni city. Reportedly, twelve ADF fighters and one soldier were killed. After the ADF had reoccupied Abyalos, Parking and Tungudu, on August 12, FARDC soldiers managed to regain control over the camps a day later. During the fighting, at least seven FARDC soldiers were killed. In October, clashes between ADF fighters, FARDC, and MONUSCO intensified. For instance, on October 9, ADF fighters attacked a MONUSCO position in Mamunjoma, killing three peacekeepers and wounding 17 others. On October 26, ADF members entered the north-eastern part of Beni city. Following several clashes, MONUSCO intensified its operations in the Mbau-Kamango axis, in cooperation with FARDC. MONUSCO conducted helicopter airstrikes on ADF positions, combined with ground-based offensive operations. Alleged ADF fighters attacked MONUSCO peacekeepers at one of their bases near the Semuliki bridge on the Mbau-Kamango axis on December 7. At least 15 MONUSCO and five FARDC soldiers were killed, and 44 peacekeepers were wounded. The Ugandan People's Defense Force claimed to have launched airstrikes and long-range artillery attacks against ADF positions along the Mbau-Kamango axis on December 22.

Attacks by ADF fighters on civilians in DRC continued throughout the year. However, the number of killed civilians decreased significantly compared to the previous year. According to a report by the Congo Research Group, the killings in Beni between 2014 and 2016 were carried out by ADF fighters as well as several other local militias such as Mayi-Mayi groups operating in the area [→ DR Congo (Mayi-Mayi et al.)]. Furthermore, the report linked members of the FARDC to the killings.

In 2017, at least 30 civilians were killed, 50 kidnapped, and thousands displaced by alleged ADF fighters. In March, four civilians were killed by alleged ADF fighters in Beni. On October 7, alleged ADF members killed up to 26 civilians during an ambush on a convoy between Kamango and Mbau, Beni. On October 26, ADF fighters attacked and looted the Evangelical Nyakunde Hospital in Beni city. Several doctors, nurses, and patients were injured. Pharmaceuticals and money were

stolen.

Between 12/18/2016 until January 18 this year, at least 25,000 people arrived in Irumu territory, Ituri province, fleeing ADF activities in North Kivu.

The UN Group of Experts again found no evidence for sustained links between ADF and international jihadist groups. bbr, tag

EGYPT – ETHIOPIA, SUDAN (GERD)

Intensity: 2 | Change: ↗ | Start: 2011

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

The dispute over the construction and control of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) between Ethiopia and Sudan, on the one hand, and Egypt, on the other, intensified.

Sudan, who had initially supported Egypt on this matter, changed sides in 2012, allegedly due to scientific evidence on the downstream impact on the Blue Nile's water flow.

With more than 50 percent of the construction works finished, diplomatic tensions between the riparian states of the Nile increased. Due to a technical upgrading, the hydroelectric dam would be able to generate an estimated 15,000 megawatt per year.

On March 2, deputy government spokesman Zadiq Abrha announced that Ethiopian security forces successfully foiled an attack conducted by 20 members of an Ethiopian militant group, the so-called Benishangul Gumez Peoples Liberation Movement (BPLM). The rebel group had supposedly traveled from Eritrea to Ethiopia in order to disrupt the construction on the dam. 13 attackers were reportedly shot dead, the remaining fleeing to Sudanese territory where they were caught by Sudanese forces and later handed over to Ethiopia. The statements of Ethiopia and Sudan, however, had to be regarded with caution.

In July, satellite pictures suggested an early flooding of the dam's basin, at which point Egypt accused Ethiopia of violating Article 5 of the 2015 Declaration of Principles, the tripartite framework agreement on the regulation of the water usage between Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia. The basin was, in fact, full due to heavy floods, common for this time of the year. In August, Sudan published a government statement, fending off Egypt's allegation that the damming of the Nile through GERD would cause water shortages in Egypt, where 90 percent of the national water supply was obtained from the Nile. Throughout the year, however, the three countries collectively emphasized the importance of the Declaration of Principles and of abiding by its rules.

anf

ETHIOPIA (ARDUF)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 1995

Conflict parties: ARDUF vs. government
Conflict items: autonomy

The conflict between the Afar Revolutionary Democratic Unity Front (ARDUF) and the government over the autonomy of the Afar region, including the Afar regions in Eritrea and Djibouti, continued on the level of a violent crisis.

On October 6, the ARDUF party released a statement condemning the government for celebrating the Nations, Nationalities and People's Day in Semera, capital of the Afar region. The day was annually celebrated on December 8 to commemorate the adoption of the Constitution that enshrined rights of nation, nationalities, and peoples, of which they had been deprived in previous regimes. The ARDUF accused the sitting government of violating the aforementioned rights and failing to secure basic needs. On December 3, unknown gunmen killed one foreigner and one local, while they were camping at the region's Erta Ale volcano. In response, the Ethiopian government reportedly launched a nocturnal military action to dislodge ARDUF fighters from their bases. ARDUF later claimed to have killed 17 government soldiers and wounded dozens. On December 7 and December 18, the ARDUF party accused the government of having unlawfully arrested more than 580 people since August, and condemned the violent suppression of protesters in the Oromiya region. In the statements, the ARDUF party called on other opposition groups in Ethiopia to support their efforts.

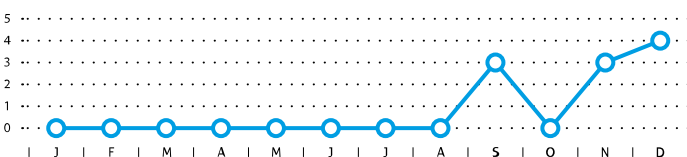
Throughout the year, 13 persons were killed, 15 wounded, and several villages raided in clashes between government forces and Afar people.

krp

ETHIOPIA (INTER-ETHNIC RIVALRY)

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

Conflict parties: Oromo, Amhara vs. Somali
Conflict items: subnational predominance, re-sources



A war over subnational predominance and resources in the border region of Oromia Regional State and Somali Regional State between the ethnic groups inhabiting the two regions, the former by mainly ethnic Oromo and Amhara, and the latter by ethnic Somali, erupted.

In the past, the two subnational governments and their respective citizens had been involved in border conflicts stemming from disputes over grazing and arable land as well as water. Although the 2004 demarcation referendum legally decided the issue, sporadic violent clashes in the border region had taken place in previous years. Between February and May, the so-called Liyu police, a paramilitary unit set up by the Somali Regional State, conducted cross-border attacks and raids in several towns in Oromia. Hundreds of Oromo and Amhara were killed, arrested or displaced. These events happened during the state of emergency declared on 10/09/16 after violent anti-government protests took place

in various towns in Oromia [→ Ethiopia (opposition)]. The state of emergency was lifted on August 4. From September onwards, Oromo and Amhara staged anti-government protests in Oromia, calling for an end of the Liyu police violence and protesting the displacement of Oromo and Amhara. The protests resulted in violent clashes along the border of Oromia and Somali region between Oromo and Amhara, on the one hand, and Somali, on the other hand. In the course of the following escalation, at least 200 people were killed and more than one hundred arrested. According to UNOCHA, approx. 700,000 Oromo and Somali were displaced this year, the majority of them after September. On September 11, more than 30 people were killed on both sides during clashes in Awaday, Oromia. Following the resurgence of violence, the government intensified the presence of military and regional security forces, such as Liyu police, in Oromia. Throughout October, Liyu police allegedly conducted raids in East and West-Haraghe zone, Oromia, and violently intervened in anti-government protests in Nekemte town, Oromia, killing at least 30. Between November 20 and 26, at least 20 people were killed in continuing clashes between Oromo and Somali. Reportedly, local security forces arrested at least 98 people in Oromia and five in Somali region on suspicion of stoking the September violence. On December 12, at least 15 people were killed and another 12 injured in cross-border clashes. Allegedly, security forces opened fire on a group of protesters which had set up roadblocks in the town of Chelenko, Oromia. Subsequently, student protests took place at several universities in East and West-Haraghe zone, Oromia. Reportedly, local security forces killed at least three students. Between December 14 and 18, at least 61 people were killed in clashes between Oromo and Somali in Oromia. First, Somali attacked Oromo in the Hawi Gudina and Daro Lebu districts, resulting in the killing of 29 Oromos. In reaction, 32 Somali were killed in Oromia region. bib

ETHIOPIA (ONLF / OGADEN)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 1994

Conflict parties: ONLF, government
Conflict items: autonomy, resources

The violent crisis over the autonomy of the Ogaden region in Somali Regional State between the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) and the Ethiopian government, continued.

During the first half of the year, widespread starvation and an outbreak of cholera were reported due to severe drought. On March 8, the ONLF claimed that "more than 300 persons have died during the cholera epidemic in Ogaden during the last 72 hours" and that "thousands are also at a life-threatening stage". The ONLF accused the Ethiopian government of denying the Ogaden people access to medicine and food.

The ONLF claimed that it had killed ten Ethiopian soldiers and wounded an unknown number in a fight in Anfi, Hamaro District on June 3.

On August 28, ONLF-leader Abdikarim Muse, was extradited from Somalia to Ethiopia after having been found by Somali

government forces, hiding in their country. Muse is considered a leading figure in the military arm of the ONLF and is allegedly the mastermind behind the attack on an oilfield in Ogaden 04/24/04, when reportedly 65 persons were killed. The cabinet of the Somali federal government then decided to hand Muse over to the Ethiopian government.

The conflict between the Ethiopian government and the ONLF had been overshadowed by ethnic tensions in the border region of Oromiya regional state and the Ogaden [→ Ethiopia (inter-ethnic rivalry)]. On December 21, the ONLF and the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) issued a joint declaration in which they accused the federal Ethiopian government of spurring these tensions as part of a "divide and conquer" strategy. The Liyu police, a special police unit originally established to fight the ONLF in the Ogaden and frequently accused of human rights violations by the ONLF and international organizations such as Human Rights Watch, was involved in these ethnic clashes. Reportedly, Liyu police members invaded Oromiya regional state between late February and early March, looting villages and killing hundreds of Oromo civilians. lih

ETHIOPIA (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 2005

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

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

Violent protests erupted mainly in Oromia and Amhara regions, Southern Nations and Nationalities Peoples Region, as well as in Benshangul-Gumuz region, western Ethiopia. On March 30, the state of emergency of October 2016 was extended until July. Thereby, the government continued to detain, arrest, and convict opposition leaders and members. On February 23, prosecutors accused Merera Gudina, leader of the opposition party Oromo Federalist Congress, of terrorism for speaking at the European Parliament. Furthermore, they pressed charges against Oromo activist Jawar Mohammed and against Berhanu Nega, the executive director of the Oromia Media Network (OMN). Media continued to be under government control. For instance, on June 1, the government shut down internet and telephone lines, but reactivated them shortly after.

On April 18, Ethiopia's Human Rights Commission (EHRC) published a report, holding OMN and opposition groups responsible for supposedly 669 fatalities during the protests since 2015. On April 20, the parliament announced the prosecution of opposition parties for fueling the protests in Oromia and Amhara regions. Blue Party member Yonatan Tesfaye was sentenced to six years in prison.

The so-called Liyu police, a special police force unit originally set up in 2008 by the Somali regional state government to fight Ogaden Liberation Front (ONLF), conducted arbitrary cross border attacks against the Oromo community until May [→ Ethiopia (ONLF/Ogaden)]. According to Oromia estimates, 500,000 people were internally displaced throughout

the year [→ Ethiopia (inter-communal rivalry)].

In August, the government lifted the state of emergency but refused a UN investigation regarding the EHRC's report on ongoing protests. The arrest of 29,000 alleged opposition members fueled violent riots from October onwards. Protesters demanded the release of political prisoners and the termination of violence perpetrated by the Liyu police. For instance on December 15, federal police forces allegedly opened fire on peacefully demonstrating students in Nekemte, Nekemte woreda, killing 16 students and injuring several.

vic

FRANCE – RWANDA

Intensity: 1 | Change: • | Start: 2004

Conflict parties: France vs. Rwanda
Conflict items: other

The dispute over the juridical reappraisal of the 1994 Rwandan genocide between Rwanda and its former colonial power France, continued.

The three non-governmental organizations Sherpa, Collective of Civil Parties for Rwanda (CPCR) and Ibuka France filed a suit against the French bank BNP Paribas on June 28, prompting the opening of a preliminary investigation by the public prosecutor. The trio accused BNP Paribas of complicity in genocide, crimes against humanity as well as war crimes, claiming it knowingly approved a transfer of USD 1.3 million from the Rwandan central bank to an arms dealer during the genocide to buy 80 tonnes of weapons that were subsequently used to carry out the massacres, violating the UN arms embargo. Following this, a full-scale inquiry into allegations of complicity was opened in September.

In June, French journalist Patrick de Saint-Exupéry wrote in the French journal *Révue XXI* that Hubert Védrine, former secretary-general under François Mitterrand, gave direct orders to re-arm the former Rwandan army and Interahamwe militia, who executed the massacres, despite the UN arms embargo, in 1994. According to the journalist, two senior government officials had been charged with researching the presidential archives between 1990 and 1994, after the government had announced in 2015 that it would open the archives to the public. According to these officials, during France's UN-mandated Operation Turquoise an official order had been given to re-arm Hutus at the border with Zaire, today the DR Congo, during the first half of July 1994, at a time when the genocide was already underway, and the UN had already placed an embargo on arms deliveries to Rwanda.

Guillaume Ancel, a former high ranking French military official who was part of Operation Turquoise, confirmed in an interview in June with TV5Monde that Paris gave orders to re-arm the former Rwandan army and Interahamwe militia at the height of the killings. Védrine denied the allegations.

On September 15, the French Constitutional Court ruled that a 25-year block on Mitterrand's documents in the Elysee archives was legitimate.

On October 31, the Paris Court of Appeals decided not to question the then-chief of defense of the French Armed Forces, Admiral Jacques Lanxade, and his deputy, General

Raymond Germanos. The decision was criticized by several civil organizations, such as the International Federation for Human Rights, citing that nearby French troops knowingly neglected to intervene in the massacre of hundreds of Tutsis in the Bisesero hills in June 1994.

On December 12, Washington law firm Cunningham Levy Muse published a report as part of a Rwandan investigation into the role of French officials in the genocide, examining publicly available information including witness testimonies. The report, commissioned by the Rwandan government, alleged that French military forces trained their Rwandan counterparts, supplied them with weapons even after the arms embargo, and, under the cover of a UN-sanctioned humanitarian mission, knowingly allowed the genocide to happen. fb

GAMBIA (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 2016

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

The violent crisis over national power between the former president Yahya Jammeh, head of the party Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction (APRC), on the one hand, and the leader of the oppositional United Democratic Party (UDP), Adama Barrow, supported by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), on the other, continued. Further opposition parties included People's Progressive Party (PPP) and National Reconciliation Party (NRP).

After Jammeh initially accepted his defeat in the December 2016 presidential election, he reversed his position in January, threatening legal action against Barrow's victory.

Despite international pressure from the UN, AU and ECOWAS, and several mediations attempts, Jammeh refused to step down. For example, on January 13, former Ghanaian President John Dramani Mahama and Nigeria's Muhammadu Buhari, ECOWAS' mediator in this political crisis, met with Jammeh in Banjul.

On January 17, Jammeh declared a state of emergency for 90 days. In reaction, several government officials and ministers resigned. After ECOWAS' deadline for Jammeh to step down had passed, Barrow was sworn in as president at the Gambian embassy in Senegal's capital Dhakar on January 19. The same day, the UNSC unanimously approved a resolution, which expressed support for ECOWAS but did not endorse military action, instead urging the parties to use political means. Throughout the day, a coalition of 7,000 multinational ground, naval and aerial forces, mainly from Senegal, began the ECOWAS Mission in The Gambia (ECOMIG). The AU approved of the mission. During the troops' advance, soldiers issued a few warning shots but faced no resistance from Gambian troops as Chief of Defence Staff General Ousman Badjie had pledged allegiance to the new president. Reportedly, ECOWAS troops and alleged members of the Senegalese Casamance Movement of Democratic Forces, who supported Jammeh, clashed along the Gambian-Senegalese border without casualties [→ Senegal (MFDC)]. According to UN-HCR, 48,000 people fled the ECOWAS invasion, mostly to

Senegal and Guinea-Bissau. The ECOWAS troops' advancement was halted for a last round of mediation by the presidents of Mauritania and Guinea and UN regional chief Mohammed Ibn Chambas, which resulted in Jammeh's agreement to step down and go into exile in Equatorial Guinea on January 21.

Barrow, who returned to the country on January 26, requested a further six months of ECOWAS presence in the country. On June 5, the mission was extended by another year. The number of soldiers continually decreased until, by mid June, only 500 remained. On October 19 and 20, Gambian and international human rights NGOs gathered in Banjul to investigate the crimes committed under Jammeh's regime between 1994 and 2017.

In Jammeh's hometown Kanilai, Western Division, Foni Bondali district, tensions between residents and ECOWAS soldiers continued. On April 20, ECOWAS soldiers injured three Gambian soldiers, who were guarding graves at Jammeh's home, in a gunfight. On June 2, thousands of Jammeh supporters protested in Kanilai against the presence of ECOWAS. ECOWAS soldiers opened fire, killing one person and injuring at least five. One soldier was stabbed. The police arrested 22 people for protesting illegally.

Furthermore, violence erupted in relation to local elections on April 6. For instance, on April 5, a group of five PPP youths from Panchang village, Central River Region, erected an illegal checkpoint at the Gambian-Senegalese border to prevent non-Gambian citizens from voting for the NRP candidate. Police later arrested the youths. On April 7, in Sibanor, Foni region, former president Jammeh's stronghold, APRC and UDP supporters clashed as APRC won legislative polls. Two people were injured and property was damaged. APRC supporters reportedly harassed supporters of opposition parties after they won elections. Police later arrested 24 APRC supporters and two UDP supporters.

joh

GUINEA (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 2006

Conflict parties: UFDG, SLECG, FPSE et al. vs. government
Conflict items: system/ideology, national power

The violent crisis over national power and various dimensions of the political system such as education and election rights between the opposition coalition, led by the party Union of Guinea's Democratic Forces (UFDG), on the one hand, and the government of President Alpha Condé and his party Rally of the Guinean People (RPG), on the other, continued. Another point of contention was the frequent claim that the government would not fulfill core state functions such as infrastructure.

After the government had proposed to change the electoral code, enabling Condé to run for a third presidential term, opposition MPs boycotted the National Assembly meeting on January 4, at which a vote on the proposal should have taken place. The electoral code was removed from the agenda. On June 29, three new opposition parties formed an alliance to

participate in the upcoming communal elections.

On August 2, three people were killed in opposition protests against the government's failure to hold promised communal elections in Dubréka, Kindia Region and in Conakry Region. On September 20, protesters took to the streets in Cosa, Conakry, calling upon the government to hold communal elections. One person was killed and one injured. On September 25, the Independent National Electoral Commission proposed to hold communal elections on 04/02/18, which was confirmed by Condé on December 5.

Throughout the year, teachers and teachers' unions repeatedly organized strikes in protest for better working conditions and minimum wage. For instance on February 6, the Syndical Federation of Educational Professionals (FPSE) and the Free Union of Teachers and Researchers of Guinea (SLECG) launched a nationwide strike. Between February 13 and 22, students and the educators' unions continued to protest by setting up barricades, burning tires and throwing rocks at police and security officers in Conakry, Kindia, Siguiri, Labé, and Koloma, Nzerekore Region. Police responded with teargas. According to the government, those clashes left eight people dead and more than 30 injured. Discussions between FSPE and SLECG and the government remained unsuccessful.

Students repeatedly protested the lack of teachers in Conakry, Koloma, and Kindia between November 14 and 21, throwing rocks at security forces and blocking main routes. Two students were killed in these clashes in Conakry, one was injured and another was sexually assaulted. The student protests continued on December 4 and 6 in Conakry and Nzérékoré, in which a student was killed by security forces.

On April 26 and 27, protests against the lack of electricity, basic social services and against uncertain work conditions led to clashes between mine workers and police in Boké, which left three dead and 29 injured. After failed negotiations between miners and the government, further confrontations between Boké miners and security forces left three dead and a dozen injured on May 8. In September and October, residents of Boké and of Beyla, Nzerekore, protested for better infrastructure and basic social services. Two locals were killed and several injured. afi

KENYA (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 1999

Conflict parties: JP vs. NASA

Conflict items: national power

The violent crisis over national power between the Jubilee Party of Kenya (JP), headed by President Uhuru Kenyatta and supported by the banned Mungiki group, on the one hand, and the opposition coalition National Super Alliance Party (NASA) under the leadership of Raila Odinga, on the other hand, continued.

Kenya's politics are shaped by ethnic affiliation and tribalism. While President Kenyatta belongs to the Kikuyu tribe, Odinga is an ethnic Luo from Maseno, Uasin Gishu County. Eldoret, Homa Bay, Kisumu, Migori and Siaya in western Kenya are major opposition strongholds.

On January 11, opposition parties, such as the Orange

Democratic Movement (ODM) and the Wiper Democratic Movement-Kenya, merged into NASA in order to compete with the umbrella coalition JP during the General Elections scheduled for August 8. Ahead of the General Elections, country-wide protests took place. Between March 18 and 26, JP and ODM supporters clashed during rallies in Mpeketon, Lamu County, in Kwale County and Tonoka grounds. They were dispersed by police forces who used tear gas and physical violence. On March 12, police barred supporters of the ODM from holding a rally in Mvita, Mombasa County, while Kenyatta was holding a JP election rally simultaneously. On April 27, Odinga was officially nominated presidential candidate by NASA officials, Kenyatta was appointed for JP on May 6. Between April and July, both parties accused each other of bribing voters and officials as well as of attempting electoral fraud. For instance, NASA, referring to leaked military documents, claimed on July 8 to have evidence of a plot by JP to manipulate the poll. Subsequently, NASA threatened to boycott the elections.

Tensions intensified from July 29 onwards. Reportedly, a man armed with a machete killed a guard of the house of Deputy President William Ruto, belonging to JP, while Ruto was not present. Two days later, the head of information, communication, and technology at the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission, Chris Msando, was found tortured to death. It remained unclear who murdered him.

Kenyatta was re-elected president on August 8, with 54 percent of the votes. NASA claimed that pre-marked ballots had been used during the election process and accused JP once again of bribing voters and key officials. Subsequently, Odinga announced that the NASA coalition would not accept the election results, which led to protests in opposition strongholds in western Kenya as well as in Nairobi. Police dispersed the protesters using teargas. On August 18, NASA announced to challenge the election result legally. On September 1, the Supreme Court declared the presidential election invalid, claiming that the polls had neither been verifiable nor transparent. Subsequently, an election re-run was set for October 26, which was later boycotted by opposition leader Odinga, who called for civil resistance. In the election re-run, Kenyatta was officially announced winner with approx. 98 percent of the vote. Overall, election-related violence caused at least 50 casualties between August and October in western parts of the country, such as Kisumu and Siaya county as well as in Nairobi.

Moreover, the banned Mungiki group, a militia affiliated with the Kikuyu tribe, which was involved in extrajudicial killings during the election related violence in 2007/2008, allegedly supported the government during this year's electoral process and was suspected of violence in several cases. Residents of Embakasi, Nairobi County, suspected more than 50 Mungiki members of planning riots on June 30. Two people were injured, and seven shops and several houses were torched. Alleged raids in the night of August 13 to 14 in Lucky Summer, Dandora and Mathare, Nairobi County, led to rumors on social media blaming Mungiki members in police disguise. One day later, police denied the incidents and declared the rumors "fake news". Reportedly, police arrested several people for spreading the news. On October 28, due to rumors that Mungiki accompanied Kikuyus in order to protect them from opposition supporters, confrontations took place dur-

ing an anti-government rally in Kawangware, Nairobi County. At least three people were killed, and shops and homes were torched.

rbe, lem

MALI (CMA ET AL. / AZAWAD)

Intensity: 3 | Change: ↗ | Start: 1989

Conflict parties: CMA et al. vs. government

Conflict items: autonomy

The conflict over autonomy between the Coordination of Movements of Azawad (CMA) and the government escalated to a violent crisis. The CMA, comprising the Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNL), the CMA-affiliated branch of the Arab Movement of Azawad (MAA-CMA) as well as other groups, demanded far-reaching autonomy of the northern regions Gao, Kidal, Ménaka, Taoudenni, and Timbuktu, which they referred to as Azawad. In June 2015, CMA, the Platform, and the government had signed a peace agreement after three years of negotiations. The Platform, consisting among others of the Self Defense Group of Imrad Tuareg and Allies (GATIA), the Movement for the Salvation of Azawad (MSA), the Coordination of Movements and Patriotic Front of Resistance (CM-FPR), and the MAA-Platform, considered itself pro-government despite calling for enhanced autonomy [→ Mali (inter-militant rivalry)]. The MAA-Platform, however, opposed the government.

As in the previous year, the most contentious issue in 2017 constituted the installation of interim authorities in the north. On February 10, the Agreement Monitoring Committee set about to oversee the implementation of the peace agreement and scheduled the installation of these authorities between February 13 and 20. Furthermore, as part of the so-called Operational Coordination Mechanism (MOC), the implementation of joint patrols of the military and members of CMA and the Platform was planned to begin on February 20. On February 16, the government appointed two CMA members as presidents of the interim authorities in the regions of Kidal and Timbuktu while members of the Platform, MSA, and a businessman from the capital Bamako were appointed interim presidents in the regions of Gao, Ménaka, and Taoudenni respectively. The first mixed patrols were conducted in Gao, eponymous region, on February 23. Five days later, CM-FPR shortly occupied Gao, denying state officials access to the town. However, between February 28 and March 2, interim authorities were installed in the regions Kidal, Gao, and Ménaka.

On March 5, violence between non-Islamist militant groups and the military erupted for the first time since May 2015. Militants of MAA-CMA and MAA-Platform joined forces and attacked an army checkpoint outside Timbuktu, eponymous region, killing several people. The groups contested the installation of interim authorities in the regions of Timbuktu and Taoudenni scheduled for March 6. One day later, militants of the Council of Justice in Azawad (CJA), a CMA-splinter group, surrounded Timbuktu, preventing the interim authorities' installation and demanding to be included in the decision making process concerning Timbuktu region.

On April 12, the military, GATIA, and MSA started to conduct joint patrols in the region of Ménaka, however, outside the MOC framework. On April 20, after the government and the CJA had reached an arrangement, interim authorities were installed in the regions of Timbuktu and Taoudenni.

On August 14, three weeks after clashes between CMA and the Platform over the town of Kidal, Prime Minister Abdoulaye Idrissa Maïga met with a CMA delegation in Bamako. Both sides agreed on the return of state authorities to Kidal town, which had been held by CMA since May 2014, and on the realization of the MOC joint patrols. On August 23, the official governor of Kidal returned to the town. On the occasion of Malian Independence Day, President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita met with the leaders of CMA and GATIA in Bamako on September 24 to discuss the peace process, focusing especially on Kidal. During a joint military operation called "Hawbi" on November 7, the G5 counter-terrorism force, comprising soldiers from Mali, Burkina Faso, Chad, Mauritania, and Nigeria, arrested eight CMA militants near Tessit, Gao region. The eight militants were released five days later after their identities had been confirmed. jas

MALI (INTER-MILITANT RIVALRY / NORTHERN MALI)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 2012

Conflict parties: CMA vs. Platform

Conflict items: subnational predominance

The violent crisis over subnational predominance between various militant groups in northern Mali, comprising the regions of Kidal, Gao, Ménaka, Taoudenni, and Timbuktu, continued.

In early 2012, the Ifoghas Tuareg group National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNL), together with various Islamist groups, had attempted to establish its own state in the northern regions which it called Azawad, while the Self-Defense Group of Imghad Tuareg and Allies (GATIA) as part of the so-called Platform was, from its formation in 2014, considered loyal to the government [→ Mali (HCUA, MNL et al. / Azawad); Algeria, Mali et al. (AQIM et al)].

In 2013, the MNL and several other militant pro-Azawad groups formed the Coordination of Azawad Movements (CMA). Despite a peace agreement from 2015, CMA and Platform members had clashed repeatedly, especially fighting over the control of the CMA-stronghold Kidal town, eponymous region.

This year, the violent confrontations between CMA and GATIA around Kidal continued until the end of July. In late January, GATIA accused the CMA of attacking one of their posts in Tin-Assoko, Kidal region, on January 21, which resulted in the death of 13 of their members and one alleged CMA fighter.

On June 8 and 9, fighting between CMA and GATIA militants in Kidal region allegedly left at least 30 members dead. In clashes between CMA and GATIA south of Aguelhok, Kidal region, 14 militants were killed and several injured on July 6. Five days later, CMA and GATIA clashed again northwest of Kidal town. The number of casualties remained unclear. On

July 26, dozens of militants were reportedly killed in fightings between GATIA and CMA close to Kidal when GATIA allegedly sought to seize the town. CMA claimed to have taken dozens of GATIA fighters as prisoners. Three days later, CMA took control of the formerly GATIA-held town of Ménaka, eponymous region, without facing resistance after GATIA had retreated from the town.

After MINUSMA and the Ministry of Territorial Administration had acted as facilitators, CMA and GATIA accepted a truce in Kidal on August 22. On September 20, CMA and the Platform signed a ceasefire agreement which included the formation of a commission comprising members of CMA and the Platform, the release of detainees, and the Platform's return to the town of Takalot, Kidal region, from whence it had been driven in late July. On October 10, after five days of talks between CMA and GATIA in Anéfis, Kidal region, both sides signed an agreement that included the establishment of four commissions specializing in issues of security, justice, politics, and reconciliation. Moreover, on May 2 and 17, clashes between the GATIA-affiliated Coordination of Movements and Patriotic Front of Resistance 1 (CM-FPR 1) and the CMA-affiliated CM-FPR 2 in Gourma and near the village of Archbichi, both in Timbuktu region, led to the deaths of 15 people.

jas

MOZAMBIQUE (RENAMO)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 2012

Conflict parties: RENAMO vs. FRELIMO

Conflict items: national power

The conflict over national power between the main opposition party Mozambican National Resistance (RENAMO) and the ruling party Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO) continued as a violent crisis. However, the two conflict parties resumed negotiations and started discussing a peace deal.

On January 4, RENAMO declared the extension of a two-month ceasefire that had been agreed upon in 2016. On March 3, it was extended for another two months and on May 4, RENAMO's leader Afonso Dakhlama declared its validity to be indefinite. On August 31, he vowed to sign a peace deal with the government in early November. However, no agreement was met until the end of the year.

Nevertheless, sporadic attacks against RENAMO members continued throughout the year. On February 16, the RENAMO headquarters were burned down in Machire, Manica province. RENAMO blamed FRELIMO for the attack, criticizing the incident as undermining RENAMO's effort to coordinate with the Defence and Security Forces a peaceful coexistence between FRELIMO and RENAMO. On June 17, four police officers torched the house, and attacked the wife and son of a RENAMO delegate in Pandagomwa, Honde province. On the same day, two soldiers shot and injured a RENAMO delegate in Chiquito, Macuo province, and injured his mother-in-law.

len

NIGER (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 2009

Conflict parties: MODEN/FA Lumana Africa, student unions et al. vs. government

Conflict items: national power

The violent crisis over national power between the government, led by President Mahamadou Issoufou and his Nigerien Party for Democracy and Socialism (PNDS), and opposition groups, such as the main opposition party Nigerien Democratic Movement for an African Federation (MODEN/FA Lumana Africa), continued.

A main point of contention between opposition and government was the scheduling of new elections, which should have taken place in 2016 but had been postponed by the government. On March 30, Issoufou declared that he would not modify the Nigerian constitution in order to carry out a third mandate. In the middle of August, the government adopted a draft order renewing the terms of office of municipal and regional councilors for another six months. The new commission for the preparation of the presidential elections in 2021, launched in November, was rejected by the opposition for the composition of its members.

On March 13, Hama Amadou, the leader of MODEN/FA Lumana Africa, who had been living in exile in France for one year, was sentenced to one year in prison for baby trafficking. His lawyers rejected the sentence and referred the case to the ECOWAS Court of Justice on April 21. Three days later, MODEN/FA Lumana Africa confirmed Amadou as political leader.

After an anti-government protest by members of the civil society in December 2016, political parties of the governing coalition Mouissance pour la Renaissance du Niger (MRN) organized a pro-government demonstration on January 8 in the capital Niamey that was attended by 20,000 supporters.

In response, at the beginning of February and March, thousands of members of the civil society and the opposition protested in Niamey and Zinder, eponymous region, Mirrah department. They denounced governmental mismanagement, the presence of western military bases, and demanded more justice and equality as well as the liberation of political prisoners. On April 10, during a demonstration for better living and study conditions, tens of thousands of students in Niamey clashed violently with police, who used teargas and opened fire. One student was killed, at least 20 students and 15 policemen were injured, and more than 60 students were temporarily arrested. On April 15, three policemen were arrested for reportedly attacking a protester. In order to settle the university crisis, Issoufou met with leaders of student unions, agreeing, i. a., to an independent commission investigation, and to bear the costs for injured students. On October 29, authorities and protesters clashed again, when the latter designated the financial law of 2018 as anti-social. 23 policemen were injured, and 14 cars and a commissariat were destroyed. The Minister of Internal Affairs Mohamed Bazoum blamed MODEN/FA Lumana Africa for the incident, which the latter denied. After the interdiction of demonstrations during

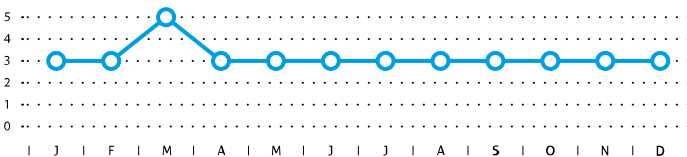
French President Emmanuel Macron's state visit on December 22, renewed protests against the new financial law erupted on December 31.

Throughout the year, authorities arrested and convicted several journalists, anti-government protesters, and opposition politicians. mme

NIGERIA (FARMERS – PASTORALISTS)

Intensity: 5 | Change: • | Start: 1960

Conflict parties: Farmers vs. Pastoralists
Conflict items: subnational predominance



The war over subnational predominance between farmers and pastoralists, continued. While the conflict mainly revolved around issues of the control over arable land and cattle, it was further fueled by differences concerning political, ethnic, and religious issues between the predominantly Christian farmers of Berom and Tiv tribes, on the one hand, and the mainly Muslim Fulani nomads, on the other. In total, violence between farmers and pastoralists accounted for 604 conflict-related deaths, which is approx. 500 less than in 2016. Desertification in the Sahel reduced fertile ground, and farmers appealed to their right to use their ancestor's farmland, while Fulani nomads claimed the areas as grazing land for their cattle. Due to increasing violence between farmers and pastoralists in Nigeria's Middle Belt since 2009, the government had established a Special Task Force (STF) in Plateau State to observe the situation and interfere if necessary. Furthermore, in previous years, many communities had formed vigilante groups to defend their farmland or livestock, but also conducted retaliatory attacks, which exacerbated hostilities. An Anti-Open Grazing, Kidnapping, Abduction, Cultism and Terrorism bill was signed into law on May 22 and implemented in November in Benue State. As a consequence, Fulani pastoralists started to leave the state.

Throughout January, 95 farmers and pastoralists died in clashes in the states of Delta, Benue, Kaduna, Adamawa, Niger, Akwa Ibom, Cross River and Taraba. For instance, on January 3, five farmers were killed by Fulani herdsmen after they had refused to let cattle graze on their farms in Etiope East LGA and Ukuwani LGA, Delta. 21 farmers were killed by herdsmen in three separate attacks in Okpokwu LGA and Ohimini LGA, Benue. Moreover, 13 people died in five clashes in Kaura LGA, Zangon Kataf LGA and Jema LGA, Kaduna. A large number of Fulani pastoralists attacked Gbagyi farmers in Bosso LGA, Niger, on January 12 and 15. They killed 13 farmers, while 6,000 people were displaced and almost all houses and farms in the village burned down. Furthermore, pastoralists invaded communities in Akwa Ibom and Adamawa, killing a total of 13 farmers and injuring scores. After Fulani herdsmen had killed three Mumuye farmers in Lau LGA, Taraba on January 22, the farmers launched two reprisal

attacks killing 18 while hundreds were displaced.

In February, pastoralists killed 29 farmers, injured scores and torched approx. 100 houses as they invaded several villages in Kaduna, Benue and Zamfara state. In late February, at least 2,000 Fulani herdsmen took over entire farms and destroyed crops in five communities of Ebonyi. In two connected clashes between herdsmen and farmers in Ogbia, Egbema and Ndoni LGAs, Rivers, and Ika South LGA, Delta, three were killed.

Overall, 92 farmers and pastoralists were killed in attacks in Benue, Delta, Abia, Kwara and Cross River in March. For instance, Fulani herdsmen invaded communities in Gwer LGA and Buruku LGA, Benue, killed 22 farmers, burned farms while entire communities fled. Moreover, Fulani pastoralists killed seven in attacks in Delta and Abia. In the most fatal attack on March 20, herdsmen attacked Ukum LGA, Benue, killed up to 50 people and burned many houses. The same day, three Fulani herdsmen were killed and many injured in a reprisal attack after Fulanis killed a farmer who had complained about grazing cattle on his farm, in Baruten LGA, Kwara. On March 29, the killing of cows belonging to Fulani pastoralists led to a reprisal attack resulting in ten deaths in Odukapni LGA, Cross River.

Throughout April, Fulani pastoralists attacked Tiv farmers in Benue four times, killing 25, injuring several and destroying many houses. On April 15, herdsmen killed 13 and injured several in Jema LGA, Kaduna. In Etiope East LGA, Delta, a villager was decapitated by Fulani, which was followed by protests of locals.

Several clashes from May 5 to 16 led to the death of 26 farmers and pastoralists in Taraba, scores were injured and over 16,000 displaced. In Benue, 18 farmers were killed in three separate attacks in Logo, Buruku and Obi, LGAs. On May 11 and 18, Fulani pastoralists killed nine farmers as they invaded villages in Delta and Rivers. On May 13, Fulani pastoralists killed 21 people praying in a mosque in Mokwa LGA, Niger. One day later, Fulani herders stabbed a local in Paikoro LGA, Niger, which led to the killing of four herdsmen.

On June 1, following a clash between farmers and herdsmen in which 14 were killed, farmers killed one herdsman in Oyiabo, Rivers. In communal clashes from June 18 to 23 between Fulani herdsmen and Mambilla farmers, 21 were killed in Gembu, Nguroje, Sardauna LGA, Taraba. After farmers killed two herdsmen on June 20 in Ndokwa West LGA, Delta, Fulani herdsmen killed one and injured one the next day in Ndokwa East LGA. At the end of the month, one woman was killed by Fulani in Esan West LGA, Edo and five farmers were killed in Lafia LGA, Nasarawa. After gunmen had killed four Fulani herdsmen in Kajuru LGA, Kaduna, on July 15, they invaded Ungwan Uka, Kajuru LGA, on the next day which led to the killing of 37 farmers.

Throughout August, five farmers died in Ondo, Benue and Edo in communal clashes. On September 8, Fulani herdsmen attacked Ancha, Bassa LGA, Plateau, where 19 were killed and five injured. On October 1, one Fulani pastoralist was killed by farmers in Igangan, Ibarapa North West LGA, Oyo. A reprisal attack four days later led to the death of one farmer.

In a series of attacks from October 10 to 16, 45 farmers were killed in Bassa LGA and Barikin Ladi LGA, Plateau. In these attacks 489 houses were burned and 13,726 fled. On October 25 and 27, a total of 6 farmers were killed in Yola South LGA,

Adamawa. Throughout November Fulani pastoralists killed a total of three farmers in Benue, Cross River, and Nasarawa. On November 20, farmers killed 60 Fulani herdsmen in Demsa LGA, Adamawa. In a reprisal attack two weeks later, Fulani herdsmen killed many farmers in Lawaru and Dong. Moreover, 20 farmers were killed by Fulani pastoralists in December in Kogi, Benue, Taraba and Kaduna. sas

NIGERIA (NORTHERNERS – SOUTHERNERS)

Intensity: 3 | Change: ↘ | Start: 1960

Conflict parties: Northerners, APC supporters vs. Southerners, PDP supporters

Conflict items: system/ideology, national power

The limited war over national power and the orientation of the political system between supporters of the two main political parties, the northern-based All Progressives Congress (APC) and the southern-based People's Democratic Party (PDP), de-escalated to a violent crisis.

Following the intensified violence in 2015 around the presidential elections as well as the gubernatorial and local elections in 2016, violence decreased this year. However, attacks, reprisal attacks, and kidnappings between supporters of the two political parties were recorded, especially during two by-elections in Osun and Enugu state and local government elections in Akwa Ibom state. Throughout the year, at least 24 people were killed.

Many of these deaths included killings of party officials in the states of Bayelsa, Benue, Obor, Ondo, Delta, Plateau, Rivers, and Sokoto. Likewise, on April 21, alleged PDP gunmen killed an APC chieftain and his son in Gandi, Rabah LGA, Sokoto. An APC chieftain was abducted by gunmen in Igbotu, Ese Odo LGA, Ondo State on June 15, and four days later, his body was found in the Ogolo River. Suspected APC gunmen also killed a PDP chieftain in Okpanam, Delta on July 30.

Throughout the year, violent clashes between APC and PDP supporters were also observed. On June 29, APC supporters attacked PDP followers in Ido-osun, Ebgedore LGA, Osun state during the state's by-elections. During the violence, 15 people sustained machete cuts and gunshot wounds. On September 13, a conflict between two brothers from opposing political parties triggered a clash between supporters of the APC and PDP in Ogobia, Otukpo LGA, Benue state. During the clash four people were killed, including an APC chieftain and a former state chairman of the PDP. During the same incident, multiple people were injured and several houses and vehicles were razed.

Two separate explosions in Enugu North LGA, Enugu State temporarily disturbed the by-elections occurring in the state on November 4, leaving five injured. Confrontations between APC and PDP supporters in another part of the state, Oji River LGA, led to three deaths, two of which were caused by intervening police.

Due to election irregularities, violence also accompanied local government elections in Akwa Ibom state on December 2. Rumors that election materials had been compromised by PDP supporters and other irregularities led the APC to with-

draw from the race, rejecting the results. Later that day, gunmen stormed the offices of the state's Independent Electoral Commission, firing shots. In another political clash on December 22 in Ogobia, Otukpo LGA, Benue, four people were killed. ras

NIGERIA (PRO-BIAFRA GROUPS / BIAFRA)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 1967

Conflict parties: Pro-Biafra Groups vs. Government Nigeria

Conflict items: secession

The violent crisis over secession of Biafra, a south-eastern part of Nigeria, between the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), as well as other pro-Biafra groups, on the one hand, and the government of Nigeria, on the other, continued. Biafra had declared its independence in 1967 and was re-integrated into Nigeria in 1970 after a civil war.

On January 20, Nigerian security forces killed at least eleven members of IPOB and other pro-Biafra groups in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, at a pro-Trump rally. Dozens of protesters were injured and over 50 arrested, most of which were charged with criminal conduct. The army denied the fatalities.

On February 12, military forces stormed a meeting of IPOB in Asaba, Delta state, killing at least one person, injuring 20, and arresting 17.

In the following weeks, both MASSOB and IPOB distanced themselves from former MASSOB leader Ralph Uwazuruike and his Biafra Independent Movement (BIM), accusing them of being involved in criminal activity and violating MASSOB's and IPOB's principle of non-violence.

In March, they declared their future cooperation in order to achieve their common goal of secession. Subsequently, MASSOB closed all remaining protest camps affiliated with Uwazuruike.

At the beginning of April, Nnamdi Kanu, leader of IPOB, announced a "sit-at-home order" for May 30, in celebration of the 50th anniversary of the independence of Biafra.

On May 22, BIM celebrated the former independence of Biafra in the states of Enugu, Ebonyi and Cross Rivers during which police arrested over 100 members of BIM. On May 30, most banks, schools, stores, and public transportation remained closed.

On June 28, seven pro-Biafra groups agreed to work together under the leadership of Kanu seeking an official referendum to establish an independent Republic of Biafra.

A week later, former president Obasanjo stated that Biafra secessionist activities should be stopped by all possible means, warning that they could lead to a repeat of the civil war. Interpreting Obasanjo's statement as an intimidation, Kanu threatened to kill Obasanjo the same day. Subsequently, tensions between pro-Biafra groups and the government manifested. Between September 10 to 14, security forces and soldiers repeatedly attacked and eventually raided Kanu's home in faraukwu Ibeku in Umuahia LGA, Abia State. They clashed with IPOB, allegedly killing and injuring several IPOB members. In protest, alleged IPOB supporters stormed a police station in

Aba, Umuahia LGA, Abia State. Afterwards, Kanu's whereabouts have remained unknown until the end of the year. His trial for treason was rescheduled for February 20, 2018. On September 20, the government declared IPOB a terrorist organisation, claiming they had found weapons in Kanu's house.

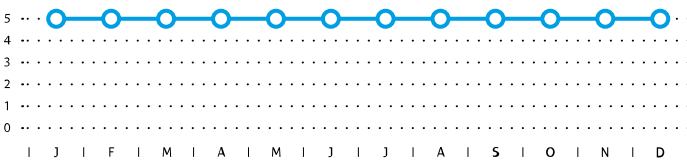
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NIGERIA, CAMEROON, CHAD, NIGER (BOKO HARAM)

Intensity: 5 | Change: • | Start: 2003

Conflict parties: Boko Haram vs. Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, Niger

Conflict items: system/ideology



The war over system and ideology between the Islamist group Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'Awati Wal-Jihad (Boko Haram) and the governments of Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, and Niger continued for the seventh consecutive year. The group radically opposed secular and liberal values, in particular Western education, seeking to establish an Islamic caliphate in the region. The Nigerian government received different types of intelligence, military training, and development support from the United States, the United Kingdom, and Israel.

In 2017, the conflict's total fatalities decreased to 2,150, which marks a significant decline compared to approx. 3,000 deaths in 2016 and approx. 12,000 deaths in 2015. As a consequence of the violence, 1.8 million people were displaced. According to UNICEF, 75 percent of the water infrastructure was destroyed or damaged due to the ongoing violence, leaving 3.6 million people with no access to clean water. Furthermore, the International Crisis Group reported that about 5 million people in the northeast of Nigeria have been facing severe food insecurity.

As in previous years, the Nigerian government under President Muhammadu Buhari repeatedly claimed that Boko Haram would soon be defeated. In contrast to these statements, Boko Haram frequently conducted attacks in Borno State, Yobe State and Adamawa State. In 2017, the number of attacks conducted in the neighboring countries of Nigeria decreased to 24, killing in total 475. Five attacks in Niger accounted for approx. 90 deaths. During military operations and one attack on a military base in Chad, approx. 219 people died and 17 attacks in Cameroon caused the death of approx. 166 people.

Alongside troops from Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, and Niger, forces from Benin contributed to an AU-mandated Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF). In October 2017, the government of Chad announced to withdraw troops from the MNJTF, due to undisclosed reasons.

The Nigerian government had authorized a Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF), consisting of 26,000 local vigilantes to counter Boko Haram, in 2016. Moreover, the government recruited

hunters to support the army with tracking skills while conducting missions in remote areas.

In May 2015, Boko Haram, led by Abubakar Shekau, had officially joined the so-called Islamic State (IS) [→ Syria, Iraq et al. (IS)]. In August 2015, IS proclaimed Abu Musab al-Barnawi, son of Boko Haram founder Mohammed Yusuf, as the new leader of the Islamic State's West African Province. Internal disagreements resulted in a split of Boko Haram into two factions, one led by Shekau, the other by al-Barnawi, the latter was acknowledged by the IS. However, the same day, Shekau again pledged his allegiance to IS and stated four days later that his group would not follow al-Barnawi's leadership. The faction led by al-Barnawi opposed the indiscriminate killing of Sunni Muslim civilians, and stated that they would concentrate their attacks on Western, military, and Christian targets such as churches.

In December 2016, Nigerian security forces had reportedly caught al-Barnawi, however, he appeared in a video message in August 2017. While the al-Barnawi led faction has reportedly been based in the Lake Chad region, the faction led by Shekau has allegedly been situated in Sambisa forest, Borno State. In contrast to 2016, no clashes between the two factions were reported in 2017.

Due to continuing military crackdown, Boko Haram's operations were mostly limited to small-scale attacks and hit-and-run raids, in which a group of militants would attack a remote village, overpower security forces, raid the village for supplies and leave before reinforcements arrive.

In larger cities like Maiduguri, Boko Haram often deployed suicide bombers, several times in coordinated attacks involving up to five suicide bombers, mostly young girls and women. A frequent target was the University of Maiduguri from May to July. Also, Boko Haram regularly abducted people, reportedly using them as work slaves or suicide bombers.

In 2017, the Nigerian Air Force regularly conducted attacks on Boko Haram bases with various types of fighter planes and attack helicopters. From April to July, the air force flew 108 attacks on Boko Haram bases in the Sambisa forest.

To fight the Boko Haram faction which is based on island in Lake Chad, the Chadian and Nigerian forces also deployed amphibious military units.

In January, the conflict between Boko Haram and the Nigerian government claimed approx. 222 lives. During a clearance operation, on January 12 and 13, in Bomboshe and Sinbaya in Dikwa LGA of Borno Nigerian troops killed 18 Boko Haram militants and destroyed a Boko Haram night market. In the most fatal attack in January, the Nigerian Air Force bombed a camp for IDPs in Rann, Kala Balge LGA, Borno on January 17, suspecting them to be Boko Haram militants. More than 100 people were killed.

The conflict accounted for approx. 141 deaths in February. On February 10, Boko Haram militants ambushed a military convoy on the Ajiri-Dikwa road in Borno using anti-aircraft guns and RPGs. In the subsequent fighting, seven Nigerian soldiers and over 30 Boko Haram members were killed.

March marked the least violent month in 2017, with approx. 91 conflict-related deaths. However, Boko Haram carried out a large-scale attack on Magumeri, Magumeri LGA of Borno. On March 15, 300 Boko Haram militants used pick-up trucks and motorcycles to attack the town, overrunning the military facilities and forcing the security personnel to retreat. The

militants raided and burned barracks, the police station as well as parts of the town. More than the two officially confirmed dead reportedly died during the attack.

From February 27 to March 7, the Chadian army conducted clearance operations near the border between Nigeria and Chad, during which they killed 60 Boko Haram militants and freed 5,000 people on Chadian territory. Contrary to reports that Shekau had been killed or wounded during an attack by Nigerian air force, Shekau appeared in a video message on March 17.

In April, the conflict resulted in 180 deaths. On April 10, Boko Haram militants attacked the village Gueskerou in Diffa Region in Niger, using mortars, RPGs, and machine guns. The Nigerian army killed 57 militants and pushed them back towards the Nigerian border. After the Nigerian air reconnaissance discovered and reported a large group of Boko Haram militants in the Sambisa forest, Arega area, Borno, the MNJTF killed 57 fighters on April 13.

In May, violence decreased, with 110 deaths reported. The most violent attack occurred on May 5, when Boko Haram militants attacked a military post in Kaiga near Lake Chad in Chad leaving nine Chadian soldiers and 40 Boko Haram militants dead.

Throughout May, at least ten suicide attack attempts took place in Maiduguri, capital of Borno State. In most of these attempts, the security forces detected the suicide bombers at check points, resulting overall in the death of the suicide bombers and four members of security personnel.

June marked the most violent month with a death toll of 327. The most fatal attacks took place between June 24 and 25. In clearance operations on five islands in Lake Chad, the Chadian army killed 162 Boko Haram militants and lost eight of its soldiers.

As in previous months, Maiduguri was frequently attacked. For instance, on June 8, Boko Haram militants armed with anti-aircraft guns and supported by several suicide bombers, attacked the outskirts of Maiduguri, killing 14 people. 18 days later, on June 26, four female suicide bombers killed twelve people at the University of Maiduguri.

In July, 241 deaths were reported. On June 25, Boko Haram militants attacked a convoy of specialists of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) in Barno Yasu, Magumeri LGA of Borno killing more than 50 people and abducting several. During a rescue mission, nine Nigerian soldiers, one civilian, and several Boko Haram militants were killed. In reaction, NNPC suspended exploration missions in the Lake Chad basin.

In total, the conflict led to 239 deaths in August. On August 18, three female suicide bombers attacked an IDP camp in Konduga area in Borno, killing 28 people. On August 5, Boko Haram militants raided two islands in Lake Chad, Duguri and Dabar Wanzam, and killed 31 fishermen.

In September, the death toll decreased again to 162 deaths. On September 18, three suicide bombers infiltrated a meeting of farmers in Mashimari, Konduga LGA, Borno, and killed twelve people. On September 13, a suicide bomber killed five people using a explosive belt in a Mosque in Kolofata, Far North Region in Cameroon.

In October, 168 people were killed. On September 26 and October 1, Nigerian security forces captured two Boko Haram leaders for planning attacks in Isua Akoko area, Akoko South-

East LGA, Ondo State. On October 9, a non-public mass trial for 2,300 captured Boko Haram members started, amongst them Kahlid al-Baranwi, the leader of Boko Haram splinter group Ansaru.

In November, the death toll increased to 219. The two most fatal incidents took place in Adamawa State. On November 6, a large group of Boko Haram militants raided the town Gulak, Madagali LGA, Adamawa, resulting in a shootout with military forces, vigilantes, and hunters, leaving 42 Boko Haram militants dead.

In December, the death toll decreased to 96 deaths. In a rare attack on foreign aid workers on December 17, a convoy of trucks hired by World Food Programme (WFP) came under attack near Ngala in Gamboru-Ngala LGA, Borno. Soldiers guarding the convoy repelled the attack and killed six Boko Haram members. In contrast to official statements by the Nigerian government, the WFP stated that one driver and three other civilians died. nre

SENEGAL (MFDC / CASAMANCE)

Intensity: 2 | Change: ▼ | Start: 1982

Conflict parties: MFDC vs. government

Conflict items: secession

The conflict over the secession of the Casamance region between the Casamance Movement of Democratic Forces (MFDC) and the government de-escalated to a non-violent crisis.

The situation in Senegal was significantly influenced by the events surrounding the forced resignation of Gambia's president Jammeh [→ Gambia (opposition)]. According to Gambian newspaper reports, Jammeh had gathered support from MFDC forces to oppose the ECOWAS Mission in Gambia in order to stay in power. On January 19, alleged members of MFDC fired warning shots at members of ECOWAS troops in Kanilai, Foni Kansala District, West Coast Region, near the Senegalese-Gambian border. On February 26, MFDC held a conclave in Ziguinchor, eponymous department, Casamance region. According to Oumar Ampoi Bodian, a MFDC representative, all factions of the movement, who do not usually cooperate, were present, including Salif Sadio, long-time leader of the Front Nord faction. Many observers believed that this conclave was a step toward a unification process of the various factions of the MFDC. On May 27, Sadio told the local radio station Zig FM that talks between the government and MFDC would resume under the mediation of the Sant'Egidio religious community from Rome, Italy. However, despite his assertions, it is unknown whether representatives of Sant'Egidio did arrive in Senegal by the end of the year. In July, however, Sadio said that the government's plans to grant a mining license to the Australian firm Astron for mineral sands in Niafarang, Casamance region, constituted a violation of the ceasefire deal between the MFDC and the government, because it would not benefit the Casamance region. On September 29, MFDC spokesman Oumar Ampoi Bodian said that he considered granting the license a declaration of war. joh

SOMALIA (ISS)

Intensity: 3 | Change: NEW | Start: 2015

Conflict parties: ISS vs. al-Shabaab vs. FGS
Conflict items: national power

The violent crisis over national power between the so-called Islamic State in Somalia (ISS) and the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) as well as al-Shabaab continued for the third consecutive year.

The FGS received military support by the US and security forces of the semi-autonomous region of Puntland.

ISS had appeared in 2015 for the first time, led by Abdulqadir Mumin who had formerly served as an al-Shabaab commander. ISS militants were mainly operating in Bari region, Puntland. According to Reuters and UN experts, the number of ISS militants increased from a few dozens to approx. 200 in 2017. Several former al-Shabaab militants had joined ISS in previous years, which led to tensions within al-Qaeda affiliated al-Shabaab, who frequently executed defectors publicly. On February 1, ISS beheaded three civilians and five Puntland soldiers in Af Karin, Puntland. One week later, they killed two civilians while attacking a hotel in Bosaso, Puntland. On May 23, ISS claimed responsibility for a suicide bombing in Bosaso, where at least five people were killed and twelve injured. This marked the first major attack in Puntland by ISS since the capture of Qandala town in October 2016. Militants shot dead one civilian and injured two in Bosaso on October 3. On October 24, ISS attacked a police station in Bosaso, injuring six people. Between November 3 and 27, US airstrikes killed more than 20 ISS fighters in Puntland. jtr

SOMALIA (SOMALILAND)

Intensity: 1 | Change: • | Start: 1991

Conflict parties: regional government of Somaliland vs. government
Conflict items: secession

The dispute over secession between the self-declared regional government of Somaliland and the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) continued.

On November 13, the de-facto independent state of Somaliland held its third presidential election since declaring secession from Somalia in 1991. On November 21, ruling Kulmiye party's candidate Muse Bihi Abdi, who was a commander in the Somali National Movement during the fight for secession, was elected with gaining 55 percent of the vote and was sworn in on December 13.

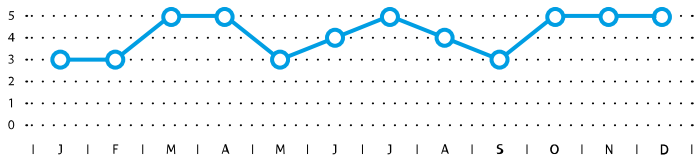
The defeated opposition candidate Abdirahman Mohamed Abdullahi Irro of the Waddani party criticized the transparency of the election and claimed there had been 'massive' polling irregularities. Somaliland's Electoral Commission Chairman denied these allegations, calling the election peaceful, free, and fair. In subsequent violent protests, one person was shot dead during riots in the capital, Hargeisa, Ma-

roodi Jeeh region, and another was killed in Burao, Togdheer region. Protesters clashed with police in Erigavo, Sanaag region.

The FGS did not release an official statement on the outcome of the Somaliland election. hss

SOMALIA, KENYA (AL-SHABAAB)

Intensity: 5 | Change: • | Start: 2006

Conflict parties: al-Shabaab vs. Somalia, Kenya
Conflict items: system/ideology, national power

The war over national power and the orientation of the political system between the Islamist militant group al-Shabaab, on the one hand, and the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) as well as the Kenyan government, on the other, continued for the twelfth consecutive year.

The Somali National Army (SNA) was supported by local government forces from the states of Galgaduud and Jubaland as well as from the semi-autonomous region of Puntland. It was further supported by the US and the EU as well as the AU Mission for Somalia (AMISOM), and Kenyan Defense Forces (KDF). The UN mandate for Somalia (UNSOM) was extended until March 2018. In Somalia, al-Shabaab was mostly active in the capital Mogadishu and in southern Somalia, Lower and Middle Shabelle regions, and in Puntland. Furthermore, the group conducted attacks in Kenya. According to estimates by the US military, between 3,000 and 6,000 al-Shabaab fighters operated in the country. Since 2015, around 250 fighters had defected to Islamic State in Somalia (ISS) forces [→ Somalia (ISS)].

Al-Shabaab continued its attacks on politicians, other officials, joint forces, and civilians in Somalia, and in Kenya's border region to Somalia. The group launched several attacks in the capital Mogadishu, using car bombs, mortar shelling, and gun fire. For instance, on January 25, at least 15 people were killed and 51 injured during an attack on the Dayah Hotel. Another attack on a restaurant on June 15 left at least 31 civilians dead and 40 injured. On October 14, 512 people were killed and 316 injured by a massive truck bombing in the city, allegedly conducted by al-Shabaab. Although the group did not claim responsibility for the incident, experts stated that no other armed group in the country had the capabilities to conduct an attack on this scale. Throughout the year, further suicide bombings and mortar shelling in the capital led to the death of at least 166 people.

Most attacks outside Mogadishu took place in Lower and Middle Shabelle in southern Somalia. Al-Shabaab repeatedly attacked SNA and AMISOM troops using IEDs and guns. Throughout the year, at least 76 people were killed and several wounded. For instance, on January 24 and 25, 13 people were killed and several wounded on both sides during attacks in Afgooye, Lower Shabelle. Furthermore, al-Shabaab also targeted civilians in Lower and Middle Shabelle. At the

end of May, militants attacked 14 villages in the area, setting houses on fire, abducting 25 youths, and stealing livestock. At least 10,000 Somalis were displaced in the regions during November due to the conflict.

Al-Shabaab also conducted various attacks in Puntland. On April 23, eight SNA soldiers were killed and three wounded near Galgala, Bari region, in an al-Shabaab roadside IED attack. Two weeks later, al-Shabaab killed a US soldier and wounded another two during clashes in Darusalaam village, Bari region. On June 8, militants raided an SNA base, killing up to 59 soldiers and causing severe destruction in Af Urur town. Between September and October, attacks in Bosaso, Bari region, killed at least 16 people and wounded 43.

In the first week of August, following splits in the leadership of the group, fighting between al-Shabaab and militants loyal to al-Shabaab leader Mukhtar Robow left at least 19 militants dead in Abal village, Bakool region. Subsequently, Mukhtar surrendered to the FGS on August 14.

Between January and September, further suicide and gun attacks as well as fighting between SNA and militants in central and southern Somalia, Galguduud, Hiran, and Bay, left at least 48 people dead. During attacks in Bakool, Gedo, and Lower Jubba regions between April and September, at least 50 people were killed and 20 injured.

On Kenyan territory, most attacks took place in Lamu and Garissa County. In total, at least 39 people were killed by al-Shabaab throughout the year. For instance, on May 24, al-Shabaab attacked police vehicles in two roadside blasts near Arabia and Kulan, Garissa county, killing 13 security personnel. Between July 8 and July 13, militants killed 14 people and wounded one person in Jima village and Milihoi town, Lamu County. In further fighting between KDF and al-Shabaab, nine people were killed between October and November. In Mandera County, al-Shabaab killed a police officer on August 3. Four weeks later, militants killed two civilians and injured several in Tana River County.

In Somalia, joint SNA and AMISOM forces, as well as US and KDF forces made substantial advances against al-Shabaab in 2017. In Gedo region, KDF operations led to the death of at least 16 militants in the towns of War Gaduud and Catamaa, in April. KDF airstrikes in Bardera district on June 12, and near Garbaharey town on July 16, left in total 40 militants and three civilians dead. Furthermore, SNA forces managed to recapture several towns near Bardera city on June 29 and December 11, respectively. Local forces of Puntland killed several militants in the Elmadow mountains on June 20. Between July 5 and 9, SNA killed 18 militants during an operation in the Galgala mountains and burnt down six militant camps.

In January and August, in the regions of Bakool and Lower Shabelle, joint SNA and AMISOM forces made territorial gains against al-Shabaab, including the strategically important town of Bariire. Between October 25 and November 9, SNA operations in Hudur town left at least twelve people dead. In March, joint operations in the Middle and Lower Jubba regions, including major KDF airstrikes and AMISOM ground offensives in Afmadhow city and Badhaadhe district, killed at least 88 militants. Continuing airstrikes and ground operations between June and September led to the death of at least 30 people in the same region. At least 81 militants were killed in Jilib, Middle Jubba, during two military operations

on November 12.

The US administration intensified its airstrikes, doubled its personnel to over 500, and deployed ground troops to the country for the first time since their withdrawal in 1993.

US airstrikes in Lower and Middle Jubba killed at least 50 militants between June and December. From July onwards, US offensives left at least 18 people dead, in the Lower Shabelle region. For instance, US special forces conducted a raid on August 25 near Bariire town that was backed by SNA troops. Reportedly, the attack left ten civilians dead. However, the US denied civilian casualties, stating that the dead were "enemy combatants." On November 21, manned US aircrafts killed more than 100 al-Shabaab fighters northwest of the capital Mogadishu. More US airstrikes targeted and killed at least four further militants in Mogadishu and at least five in the Bay region between September and December, forcing militants to leave some of their southern strongholds at the end of November.

Since the beginning of the year, up to 180,000 people have been internally displaced due to the conflict. jtr

SOUTH AFRICA (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 2015

Conflict parties: ANC vs. EFF, COSATU, DA, ANC factions, service delivery protesters, university students

Conflict items: system/ideology, national power

The violent crisis over the orientation of the political system and national power between President Jacob Zuma and his ruling party African National Congress (ANC), on the one hand, and opposition parties, civic groups and ANC factions, on the other, continued.

Throughout the year, the oppositional actors rallied for different policies and issues, but overall shared their discontent with the political situation and living conditions under the current government. The #FeesMustFall movement was replaced as the main opposition actor against the government by political parties and other protest movements.

On February 9, the reluctance of Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) MPs to listen to Zuma's yearly state of the nation address resulted in a fistfight, as security personnel tried to remove the EFF MPs from parliament. MPs belonging to the Democratic Alliance (DA) left the room before Zuma finished his speech. Increased police presence outside the parliament building prevented larger demonstrations and was criticized by the opposition. On February 23, more than 300 ANC supporters reportedly stormed a council sitting in Johannesburg, Gauteng province, to protest the cancellation of a jobs initiative programme by Johannesburg mayor and DA politician Herman Mashaba. The protesters allegedly threatened councillors and employees while trashing furniture and smashing glass doors. Police used stun grenades to disperse them. Following a cabinet reshuffle by Jacob Zuma on March 30, in which he dismissed popular Finance Minister Pravin Gordhan, mass protests occurred in many major cities. On April 7, an estimated total of 100,000 protesters in several

cities demanded Zuma's withdrawal in predominantly peaceful marches. On April 12, Zuma's 75th birthday, another 30,000 protesters joined a march in the capital Pretoria, Gauteng province, that was organized by otherwise rivaling DA and EFF. On July 8, a vote of no confidence was held against Jacob Zuma, and thousands of protesters took the streets in several cities, including Cape Town, Western Cape province, Johannesburg and Pretoria, urging parliament to vote against him. Zuma won the vote with 198 to 177 votes.

On September 28, roughly 20,000 members of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) marched and went on strike in ten cities to protest state capture and government corruption.

Violence in KwaZulu-Natal province against government officials increased in July and in following months. More than ten ANC officials had been gunned down by the end of the year, presumably due to infighting in the ANC.

Throughout 2017, service delivery protests were a very frequent phenomenon. Community residents, workers as well as high school and university students protested the lack of electricity, water, housing, jobs or valuable education. The protests often led to riots, arson and damage of property. In most of these cases the government was made directly responsible for the grievances. The south of Johannesburg and townships of KwaZulu-Natal saw a particular upsurge in violent protest actions between the police and residents in May. For example, on May 8, Residents of Banana City, the informal settlement on Varsity Drive, Reservoir Hills, Kwazulu-Natal province, protested after their requests for housing went unanswered. [len](#)

SOUTH AFRICA (XENOPHOBES)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 1994

Conflict parties: immigrants vs. xenophobes

Conflict items: system/ideology

The violent crisis over local labor market shares and cultural hegemony between xenophobes and immigrants, continued. As in previous years, a near-record unemployment and social inequality in the whole country had a severe impact on the living conditions of the black South African population. This led to several violent clashes between South Africans and various groups of immigrants, with the latter being accused of taking jobs from locals and involvement in crime. These clashes took place all over the country.

On January 7, a group of residents attacked foreign-born shop owners and looted 26 of their tuckshops in Bankhara Bodulong village, Northern Cape province. Consequently, approx. 50 foreigners fled the area. This clash followed the funeral of a teenage boy who allegedly had been killed by a Pakistani man on 2016/12/31.

In February, a series of attacks against Nigerian nationals took place in Gauteng province. It started on February 11 in Rosettenville, Johannesburg, when locals torched at least ten houses owned by Nigerians, who had allegedly been involved in drug dealing and prostitution. On February 20, at least 20 foreign-owned shops were looted and destroyed in Atteridgeville, Pretoria West, Pretoria. One day later, Nigeria

called on the African Union to intervene and halt xenophobic attacks on other African nationals in South Africa, claiming that the South African government had lost control over the situation. However, attacks against Nigerian as well as Somali and Pakistani shop-owning immigrants continued on February 23, again in Atteridgeville. On February 26, a shop belonging to a Nigerian national was looted in Jeppestown, Johannesburg. In Blydeville township in Lichtenburg, North West province, a protest over poor service delivery went violent, led to the shut-down of a border post to Botswana and the destruction of several foreign-owned shops on March 15. On May 29 and 30, xenophobic violence erupted in the townships KwaMashu and Lindelani, Northern Durban, KwaZulu-Natal province, following claims, circulated via social media, that foreign nationals had been abducting children from local schools. Foreign-owned shops were looted and torched, and several owners fled the area. One civilian was killed in a shootout, at least one other was injured.

Members of the South African Police Service were also accused of xenophobia. On January 6, police arrested a Congolese man who was beaten to death in police custody in Upington, Northern Cape.

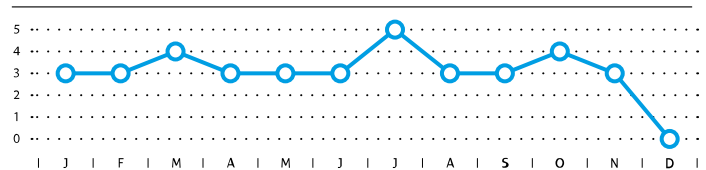
On February 24, a group of about 200 people armed with clubs, sticks and rocks, and calling themselves the Mamelodi Concerned Residents, formed an anti-immigrant march in Pretoria. Police averted a violent confrontation between this group and a group of immigrants, dispersing both sides using rubber bullets, tear gas and water cannons. 136 people were arrested. In March, around 300 people joined anti-xenophobia marches in Cape Town, Western Cape province, and Johannesburg. [mag](#)

SOUTH SUDAN (INTER-COMMUNAL RIVALRY)

Intensity: 5 | Change: • | Start: 2011

Conflict parties: Murle vs. Dinka vs. Ethiopian villagers

Conflict items: subnational predominance, resources



The war between various ethnic groups over subnational predominance and resources, especially cattle and arable land, continued.

Due to the rurality of the conflict and the lack of sources in South Sudan in comparison to other wars, it is to be expected that the actual number of violent incidents is substantially higher than reported.

In February, World Food Programme and other UN bodies declared famine in parts of Unity State in the northern-central part of South Sudan. According to UNICEF, more than one million children are estimated to be acutely malnourished across South Sudan. Against this backdrop, cattle raids between rival ethnic groups and their subgroups, especially between

Dinka groups and Murle, triggered an ongoing series of revenge attacks from both sides. In 2017, at least 646 people were killed in cattle-related violence. Moreover, attackers regularly abducted children from rivaling clans, reportedly to use them for domestic labor.

On January 16, during a cattle raid in Duk Payuel, Duk County, Jonglei State, unknown tribesmen stole about 2,000 cattle, killed twelve people and injured another 13. On March 5, reportedly thousands of tribesmen from eastern Jonglei, allegedly belonging to Bor Dinka, killed 55 Murle people and stole thousands of cattle in Coschar village, Boma State. Although it was reported that attackers wore uniforms, the army denied any involvement in the clash.

Jonglei was especially badly affected by cattle battles between Dinka Bor and Murle people in March. After Murle tribesmen had abducted children of the Dinka Bor tribe and had stolen thousands of cattle in early March in Jonglei, the Dinka Bor demanded the return of their children and cattle on March 10, giving the Murle an ultimatum. Instead of meeting this ultimatum, Murle attacked the Dinka Bor villages Baidit and Kongor villages in Jonglei. In a revenge attack, Dinka Bor stole 3,500 cattle and killed eight people.

On June 6, the Dinka Bor sub-clans Apuk and Aguok clashed in Agoth Mel, Gogrial State. 38 tribesmen were killed and three injured. Another clash between the two tribes took place two days later in Char-akau, Jonglei, leaving one person dead and another two injured. Several goats were stolen. On June 22, an inter-communal clash between the Atuot and Aliap clans in Yirol, Eastern Lakes State, left 30 people dead. Heavily armed gunmen, allegedly Murle, attacked Dinka settlements on July 16 in Jallo, Bor, Jonglei. At least 36 people were killed, 24 injured, thousands were displaced, 9,000 cattle were stolen, and several houses were torched. On August 5, the Waat and Ayiel sub-clans of the Dinka clashed in Cueibet, Gok State, leaving 41 people dead and 52 injured. A cattle raid between two rival clans in Lakes State killed 27 people and injured another 20 on September 14. Reportedly, machine guns and AK-47s were used in the raid. On the same day, cattle raiders abducted five children in Jonglei. On November 1, a violent encounter between members of the Murle and Dinka Bor in Juba left 14 people dead. Additionally, three children were abducted and 80 cattle stolen. Murle attacked Dinka Bor in a cattle raid in Duk Panyang and Duk Payuel, Duk county, Jonglei, on November 28. The attack left 50 people dead and 19 injured while dozens of children and women were abducted. Another cattle raid two days later in Juba left 19 people dead and 20 injured. On December 6, a Rup Dinka section clashed with the Pakam section of the Dinka tribe in Malek county, Western Lakes, leaving at least 200 tribesmen dead, approx. 80 injured, more than 1,800 people displaced, and 342 houses burned down.

After a peace conference in Marial Lou village, Tonj State, inter-communal clashes erupted on December 17 and left 30 people dead. Cattle was looted and houses burned. One week later, clashes arose in Panweel village, Jonglei, after debates between two communities about renaming the village, in which 20 people were killed and 18 injured. A fighting in Bor South, Jonglei, between rival clans left 22 people dead, 18 injured and many displaced.

Moreover, in 2017, Murle tribe members started to attack Ethiopian villagers living close to the border between

Ethiopia and South Sudan and to abduct their children. On January 15, Murle militants attacked a village in Gambella Province, Ethiopia, abducting 20 children and leaving eleven people dead. Another 19 children were abducted on February 3 by members of the Murle tribe during a raid in Gambella. In the Gog and Jor areas of Gambella Province, around one thousand Murle gunmen attacked villages on March 12, killing 28 people, and kidnapping 43 children. The Ethiopian army freed six of the children shortly thereafter. lib

SOUTH SUDAN (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 2011

Conflict parties: DC, Pan-African National Guard, the Popular Front for Democratic Reform,, United Democratic Front, South Sudan Liberal party, FD, Sudan African National Union, LPSS, CPSS vs. Government

Conflict items: system/ideology, national power

The violent crisis over national power and the orientation of the political system between various opposition groups and the government led by President Salva Kiir, leader of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), continued.

The government mainly acted through police, secret service (NSS) and the military (SPLM/A). The opposition comprised of Democratic Change (DC), including former members of SPLM, the Communist Party (CPSS) of South Sudan, the Labour Party South Sudan (LPSS), the Sudan African National Union, the South Sudan Liberals, the United Democratic Front, inter alia. However, the actor constellation changed over the course of the year. For example, on January 7, Joseph Bangasi Bakosoro, former governor of Western Equatoria, formed a new opposition movement, National Movement for Change (NMC). In another instance on June 20, MP Abraham Majak Maliab resigned in protest, citing insecurity on highways, and formed a new rebel movement, the Popular Front for Democratic Reform and Pan-African National Guard. In 2016, the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (ARCSS) had collapsed and violence had erupted again. In December 2016, Kiir had announced a National Dialogue in an attempt to resolve the various conflicts in South Sudan, which influenced the conflict dynamics in 2017. However, opposition parties such as CPSS and the Former Detainees remained sceptical of the initiative, complaining about a lack of neutrality and restraints for the opposition, as well as the exclusion of the main rival of Kiir, former vice president and leader of SPLM-IO, Riek Machar, who had left South Sudan in October 2016 and was not allowed to return to his country [→ SPLM/A-in-Opposition]. On February 9, Kiir dismissed the governor of the Imatong state, Nartisio Loluke Manir. The same day, the governor's bodyguards clashed with SPLM/A, leaving two dead and another three injured. In the beginning of 2017, the government released several opposition members, framing the measure as a sign of its serious commitment concerning the National Dialogue. However, various opposition members such

as Rebecca Nyandeng, Clement Janda, and Kosti Manibe declined their appointment into the National Dialogue committee, whereas the CPSS decided not to participate at all. On May 22, after being delayed for three months due to lack of funding, Kiir officially opened the National Dialogue, while simultaneously barring Machar to partake. On June 12, the heads of state of several countries of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) announced they would set up a Revitalization Forum where the rivals could discuss ways of restoring a ceasefire. On September 27, Kiir ordered the police to cooperate with the 4,000 men-strong Regional Protection Force (RPF) that had been established as part of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), although his government had been reluctant to accept the force for the previous months. In October, the Civil Society Taskforce also called for the inclusion of other countries in the mediation of the Revitalization Forum. On October 18, a group of opposition movements demanded a new comprehensive peace deal that would be supported by all the people of South Sudan. The same day, Festus Mogae from the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Committee (JMEC), a body established within ARCSS and tasked with overseeing the implementation of the peace deal, announced violations of the permanent ceasefire. Then, later in November, leaders of the Murle tribe signed a declaration to work towards peace and development. On December 2, the Troika, consisting of the three countries Norway, United Kingdom, and the US, who had been accompanying the peace process, called on all parties to participate in the Revitalization Forum. On December 7, unknown gunmen shot dead a MP who was in Uganda to consult on the National Dialogue initiative. On December 15, Human Rights Watch called on the African Union to finally establish a court that had been part of the peace deal in order to prosecute war crimes, also blaming the government to have obstructed its institution until today. The next day, three factions of the SPLM coalition signed a deal recommitting themselves to a ceasefire and a reunification of their own party. On December 21, various parties signed a new ceasefire agreement. However, the IGAD-brokered agreement was violated shortly after, when clashes were reported in Koch area, Unity state. A few days later, IGAD threatened punitive measures against violation of the peace process.

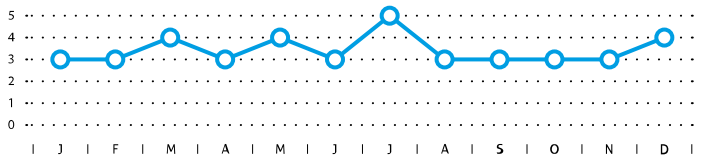
In some instances, the government restricted media access. On June 6, the South Sudan Media Authority banned over 20 foreign journalists from media coverage in the country, whereas in July the government shut down the access to several entire media outlets, including the prominent Radio Tamazuj and Sudan Tribune, accused of disseminating pro-opposition information. On November 1, South Sudan's media regulator suspended all press associations in the country, raising concerns among independent media.

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SOUTH SUDAN (SPLM/A-IO)

Intensity: 5 | Change: • | Start: 2011

Conflict parties: SPLM/A-IO vs. government
Conflict items: system/ideology, national power, resources



The war over national power, the orientation of the political system, and resources, particularly the control over oil fields, between the armed opposition faction Sudan People Liberation Movement in Opposition (SPLM/A-IO), on the one hand, and the government of SPLM/A, on the other, continued.

While SPLM/A was led by President Salva Kiir of the Dinka tribe, SPLM/A-IO's leader and former vice president Riek Machar was a Nuer. Ethnic affiliation had triggered the conflict in December 2013, when intra-SPLM/A clashes led to the formation of the SPLM/A-IO. In 2016, when Machar had been replaced for the second time as First Vice President, this time by Taban Deng Gai, the SPLM/A-IO had split into two factions. Throughout the year, Machar continued to operate from his South African exile. The SPLM/A-IO repeatedly threatened to disrupt oil production, accusing the government of using revenues to buy weapons, a claim supported by a UN report. Against this backdrop, the armed opposition captured at least three foreign oil workers over the course of the year.

As in previous years, personnel changes on both sides reinforced tensions. Most prominently, Lieutenant General Thomas Cirillo Swaka resigned from the SPLM/A and formed the National Salvation Front (NSF) on March 6, accusing the former of "spearheading ethnic violence". Like the SPLM/A-IO, Cirillo demanded a revival of the peace process [→ South Sudan (Opposition)]. Throughout the year, hundreds of SPLM/A-IO fighters allegedly defected to the NSF and clashes between the opposition groups erupted, concentrating in Yei River state. On May 9, Kiir dismissed long-time Army Chief of Staff Paul Malong after he had been suspected of fueling student protests in the capital Juba. Following his disputed decision in 2016 to establish 28 South Sudanese states largely along ethnic lines, the President issued a decree on January 15 to create a further four states. The opposition condemned this step.

Yei River state, located south of Juba, was most affected by clashes. On January 21, fighting between SPLM/A-IO and government troops in Mondikolok Payam, Kajo Keji county, killed at least six civilians and displaced thousands. At the beginning of February, an attack by Mathiang Anyoor, a Dinka-affiliated militia loyal to Kiir, on a position of SPLM/A-IO in Ombachi town, Yei River county, left 32 people dead. On June 4, a SPLM/A-IO faction based in Yei River signed a peace agreement with SPLM/A in Kampala, Uganda. Following a split among opposition fighters after some had declared alle-

giance to the NSF, different SPLM/A-IO forces clashed in Yori on July 31. On August 26, the SPLM/A-IO claimed to have captured the towns of Kaya, Bindu, Kimba and Bazi, leaving up to 56 dead and 15 injured. Further clashes erupted between SPLM/A-IO and NSF forces in Kajo Keji on October 17, with the former claiming to have killed 21 NSF fighters. Subsequently, more than 17,300 people fled the area. On November 4, the SPLM/A-IO announced to have recaptured Kajo Keji from NSF. Allegedly, 20 NSF fighters were killed and several others injured. Two days later, the SPLM/A-IO took full control of Ombachi after fighting had persisted for one week, leaving more than 50 soldiers dead.

Eastern and Western Nile states were also affected by violence. On January 27, fighting erupted between SPLM/A-IO and SPLM/A in Warjuok, Lelo, and Detang, all Eastern Nile. Three days later, in Kuek, Western Nile, SPLM/A-IO was allegedly attacked by SPLM/A, which was supported by the Sudanese Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) as well as by SPLM/A-North [→ Sudan – South Sudan, Sudan (SPLM/A-North/South Kordofan, Blue Nile), Sudan (Darfur)]. On February 9, the SPLM/A attacked SPLM/A-IO positions in Warjuok, Owach, and Wau Shilluk, Eastern Nile, leaving at least five people dead and 36 injured. Subsequently, at least 33,000 people were displaced in the area around Malakal, Eastern Nile. One day after two Indian engineers had been captured at the oil field Guel Guk, Eastern Nile, SPLM/A-IO and SPLM/A clashed near Guel Guk on March 10, allegedly leaving 33 soldiers dead. On April 26, soldiers reportedly took control of the Northern SPLM/A-IO headquarter in Kodok town, Western Nile, where over 50,000 people had sought refuge from the previous fighting in Wau Shilluk. On May 4, SPLM/A-IO claimed to have killed 141 soldiers in fightings that had erupted in Kaka town, Western Nile and Tonga town, Eastern Nile. The same day, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights called upon the army to stop military offences directed at Aburoc town, Western Nile, where up to 50,000 displaced people sought shelter. Four days later, UNMISS deployed peacekeeping troops to Aburoc. On June 11, SPLM/A-IO claimed that they took control over previously government-held Kuek. On July 18, Aguelek armed forces loyal to former SPLM/A commander Johnson Olony, fighting on SPLM/A-IO side, attacked soldiers around Kaka. Two soldiers and ten Aguelek fighters were killed and seven soldiers wounded.

On February 27, the SPLM/A-IO claimed to have repelled attacks by the SPLM/A in Tharwangyiela, Northern Liech, and Thonyor, Southern Liech, as well as on their bases in Jonglei state. The SPLM/A-IO stated they had killed 25 soldiers. Fighting intensified in Northern Liech in the second half of the year. Following clashes at Panakuach town between SPLM/A-IO and SPLM/A on July 20, hundreds of civilians fled the area. On August 3, the government claimed to have repelled several attacks in Kalja county, Northern Liech, allegedly carried out by SPLM/A-IO. On September 19, both sides clashed again in Nhialdiu near Bentiu, Northern Liech. According to reports, 19 of 25 killed people were soldiers. On December 21, the warring parties signed a ceasefire agreement in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Just three days later, fighting took place in Koch town, killing 13 soldiers, 19 SPLM/A-IO fighters, and injuring 15 from both sides. Towards the end of the year, fighting

spread to Southern Liech. On November 23, the SPLM/A-IO raided government positions in Rubkai, Mayendit county, and in Leer county, leaving at least 28 people dead. On December 1, soldiers attacked the SPLM/A-IO camp in Leer. Reportedly, up to 92 people were killed while at least 93 were injured.

In Eastern Bieh state, Yuai town was repeatedly under attack. On February 15, SPLM/A-IO and government forces clashed in Yuai and surrounding villages, with the SPLM/A afterwards claiming to have gained control over the town. Ten days later, government troops allegedly attacked an SPLM/A-IO position around Yuai, leaving at least 53 soldiers dead. Reportedly, the government forces were supported by JEM and SPLM-North. In another incident on March 12, SPLM/A-IO and SPLM/A clashed in the area around Yuai town. While SPLM/A-IO claimed they had killed 93 soldiers, an army spokesperson denied this, announcing in turn they had killed 23 SPLM/A-IO forces. On October 1, SPLM/A-IO and elements of the Nuer-affiliated White Army clashed with government troops at Waat, killing up to 91 people and injuring at least another 20.

Imatong state, located in the Equatoria region, was the site of several fatal attacks. On January 22, SPLM/A-IO forces killed six soldiers during an ambush on Magwi-Pajok road. Around 1,000 Mathiang Anyoor fighters, siding with the SPLM/A, reportedly attacked the headquarters of the SPLM/A-IO division in and around the state's capital Torit, on March 4. Allegedly, SPLM/A-IO killed 77 soldiers while Mathiang Anyoor looted and burned down a nearby village. When SPLM/A soldiers attacked Pajok town on April 4, they killed 16 people. Subsequently, over 3,000 people fled into neighboring Uganda. On June 9, SPLM/A-IO killed ten soldiers and five Ugandan citizens in an ambush at Nimule-Juba highway. On July 7, the SPLM/A-IO declared they had repelled attacks on the towns of Torit, Mangok, Mathiang, Malou and Biot. Allegedly, pro-government forces, supposedly Mathiang Anyoor, had tried to regain the areas controlled by the SPLM/A-IO. The clashes left 13 pro-government militia dead and two injured.

Latjoor state was also affected by heavy fighting. From early July onwards, SPLM/A-IO fighters loyal to Vice President Gai and now affiliated with the SPLM/A reportedly approached the major SPLM/A-IO stronghold in Pagak, a town close to the Ethiopian border. Due to subsequent fighting around Pagak and Mathiang that lasted for several days, more than 30,000 people were internally displaced or fled to Ethiopia. On July 27, government troops claimed they had gained access to Maiwut town, after days of fighting with the SPLM/A-IO. On August 6, government forces announced the successful capture of Pagak by using heavy artillery.

In Wau state, on January 30, clashes between SPLM/A-IO and SPLM/A in Wau town left three people dead and another two injured. On April 8, government forces claimed to have retaken control of Bagari town. Two days later, soldiers attacked SPLM/A-IO in Wau town, killing 16 civilians and injuring at least ten. Witnesses reported assassinations.

Other conflict-affected states included Jonglei, Lol, Boma, Fangak, and Amadi. Following clashes with the SPLM/A-IO in

Kulothok village, Pigi county, Jonglei, on February 22, government forces killed at least 30 civilians by locking them in a stable and setting it on fire. On April 14, SPLM/A-IO attacked government troops in Raja town, Lol, and took control of Raja. On May 5, government forces control of the town. According to army officials, 59 SPLM/A-IO fighters, five soldiers, and ten civilians were killed. During several attacks by the SPLM/A-IO in the areas of Nanam, Kongor, and Lukongole, Boma, opposition forces killed 55 civilians, injured 20, and displaced over 8,200 people on April 17. Following the attacks, 60 aid workers were relocated. Though the SPLM/A extended a unilateral ceasefire with the various armed groups in South Sudan at the beginning of November, renewed fighting erupted in Ayod county, Fangak, on November 21, leaving dozens of people injured. The same day, government troops attacked SPLM/A-IO positions and allegedly targeted civilians in Bari, Medewu, and Bangalo, Mundri county, Amadi, killing 15 people.

As in previous years, several areas of the country faced severe food crises. Against the backdrop of the deteriorating health situation, thousands of IDPs were endangered by a cholera outbreak in Jonglei.

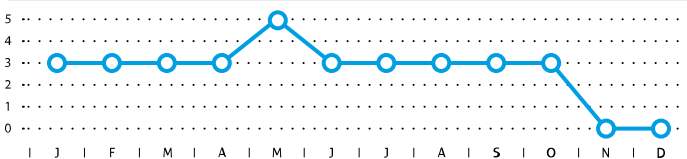
Reports account for at least 1,000 people killed in 2017. However, an estimated death toll of 50,000 to 300,000 since the start of the war in 2013 suggests a significantly higher number of fatalities. In addition, thousands of people were internally displaced with more than 200,000 seeking refuge in Protection of Civilians (PoC) sites at UNMISS bases. Approx. 700,000 people fled to neighbouring countries, 200,000 of them to Sudan. UNMISS renewed its mandate twice this year, last until 03/15/18. By the end of year, more than 17,000 personnel were operating under UNMISS. *ves, des*

SUDAN (DARFUR)

Intensity: 5 | Change: • | Start: 2003

Conflict parties: SRF, SLM-AW, SLM-MM, JEM, SLM-TC vs. government

Conflict items: subnational predominance, re-sources



The war over autonomy and resources, such as water and land rights as well as control over gold mines, between various armed groups, organized under the Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF), on the one hand, and the government, on the other, continued.

The SRF, an alliance between various Sudanese and mainly ethnic African armed groups, fought their perceived oppression by the mainly ethnic Arabic government. The alliance comprises the Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) and its two main factions, led by Abdul Wahid al-Nur (SLM-AW) and Minni Minnawie (SLM-MM), the Justice and Equality Movement, led by Gibril Ibrahim (JEM) as well as the Sudanese People's Lib-

eration Movement-North (SPLM/A-N), primarily active in the states of Blue Nile and South Kordofan [→ Sudan (SPLM/A-North / South Kordofan, Blue Nile)]. The government deployed the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and paramilitary forces, namely the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and the Popular Defense Forces (PDF). These militiamen were mainly recruited from nomadic Arab groups. SLM-AW was weakened by military setbacks and internal splitting. Clashes were limited primarily to the mountainous region of Jebel Marra, stretching along South and Central Darfur, and mostly involved the SLM-MM and the SLM-TC, led by Nimir Abdelrahman. The SLM Transitional Council (TC), a splinter group of SLM-AW, joined the SLM-MM in clashes with government forces.

The African Union / UN Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), established in 2007 to bring stability to the Darfur region, continued in 2017. However, in June, the UNSC decided to reduce military presence by 44 percent and police presence by 30 percent by 2018. According to UNAMID officials, the operating environment for the mission significantly improved compared to previous years. Notwithstanding, government troops occasionally hindered UNAMID peacekeepers to enter conflict-affected areas.

Following President Omar al-Bashir's unilateral ceasefire announcement in October 2016, Sudan's Council of Ministers extended the ceasefire for Darfur, Blue Nile, and South Kordofan on January 15 for another six months. The rebel alliance SRF also declared a unilateral ceasefire for six months and renewed it on May 3 for the same period. Despite these commitments, violence re-intensified in late April when government forces and the SLM-AW clashed in northwest Jebel Marra. Fighting on April 22 and 23 left 19 combatants dead. Subsequently, SAF conducted the first air raid since October 2016, targeting at least 15 villages in Jebel Marra. The bombardments destroyed houses, killed an unknown number of residents, and drove 71 families into the surrounding mountains. Tensions rose again at end of May when government forces and combatants of the SLM-MM and the SLM-TC clashed in the states of East and North Darfur. A first wave of heavy fighting broke out on May 19, when the paramilitary RSF intercepted rebel convoys allegedly on route from Libya and South Sudan. While the RSF accused the rebel groups of launching a coordinated incursion from Libya and South Sudan into Darfur, the SLM-MM and SLM-TC claimed that their groups had been stationed in Darfur. Fighting continued for four days, reportedly leaving up to 250 dead and 330 wounded. Several high-ranking commanders were killed and others arrested, among them the SLM-TC leader Abdelrahman. On May 28, a second round of fighting between government forces and the rebel groups SLM-MM and SLM-TC started in Kutum and Ain Siro area, North Darfur.

Great losses of live and equipment were reported but no exact numbers of casualties stated. In the following two days, RSF and other government-sponsored militias arrived in Ain Siro with more than 150 vehicles and raided and torched many villages that it suspected of serving as rebel bases. At least 19 civilians were killed and eleven injured. The attacks forced a large number of residents to flee to the surrounding mountains. In retaliation for these attacks, SLM-TC attacked government forces and their militias on May 30, leaving 16 dead and 25 wounded, including one high-ranking commander of the government forces. In the following days, the RSF

allegedly continued to raid villages and steal money, mobile phones, and livestock from the residents of Ain Siro. On June 8, a targeted operation by government militias in Um Baru town, North Darfur, led to the killing of two high-ranking SLM-MM commanders. One day later in nearby Uru, fighting occurred between government forces and the SLM-MM and resulted in eleven dead militants and three injured government personnel. In the second half of the year, no heavy fighting between government forces and rebel groups occurred.

While violence between government and rebel groups decreased significantly, paramilitaries and SAF soldiers continued to launch targeted attacks on civilians and IDPs in particular. The first of these attacks took place on January 1 in Nierteti, Central Darfur. In retaliation for the killing of a soldier, SAF members stormed the town with machine guns and raided the market and the northern refugee camp, leaving at least two dead and 48 injured. The SLM-MM and the SPLM-N publicly condemned the attacks and called on the UN, EU, and the US to confront President al-Bashir. Conversely, the Central Darfur Governor Jaafar Abdelhakam accused the SLM-AW of having started the violence. Five days later, clashes erupted between former RSF fighters and the Border Guards militia, on the one hand, and armed residents, on the other hand, in El Geneina, capital of Western Darfur. Reportedly, at least seven people were killed and 13 injured. Paramilitaries had reportedly been armed by the government. On April 9, government forces arrived in El Geneina, demolishing shops and houses. They allegedly killed three civilians and wounded nine. A similar attack occurred on May 7, when RSF allegedly raided twelve villages north of Nierteti, causing all residents to flee in the neighbouring mountains. According to reports, nine villagers were shot dead, eleven injured and four women gang-raped. The attack was accompanied by burning and looting. To make the place inhabitable, they destroyed crops and fruit trees. The Central Darfur government denied the incidents. Between June 14 and 15, RSF and unknown militias, attacked the villages Tor and Nierteti in Jebel Marra, raiding markets and homes, and stealing livestock. During these assaults, three residents were reportedly killed, eleven injured, and 17 abducted. Together with the incidents in Ain Siro, the African Center for Justice and Peace Studies estimated that about 35,000 residents were displaced between May 28 and June 15. On June 29, residents of Golo town in Jebel Marra killed one SAF officer, stating that, together with other officers, he had attempted to rape a group of ten girls. In retaliation, 50 SAF members raided the town and destroyed homes. Eleven residents were shot dead, 20 injured, and hundreds of people displaced from the village. Between September 28 and October 2, militiamen conducted five raids on villages in Jebel Marra, killing ten civilians, injuring 13, torching houses, and stealing property. In East Jebel Marra, South Darfur, militiamen attacked and robbed villagers on October 27, wounding five and stealing belongings as well as about 1,000 cattle. In October, the government started disarmament campaigns in Darfur and Kordofan. 12,500 RSF fighters were deployed to collect weapons from civilians through raids in conflict-prone areas. Most armed rebel groups rejected the disarmament process, triggering new tensions.

The year saw the first efforts to revive peace talks between the rebel groups and the government. In August 2016, re-

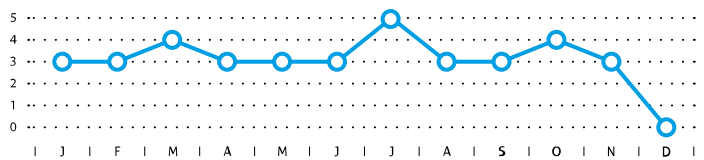
newed peace talks between the government and the JEM and SLM-MM under the auspices of the African Union High-Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP) had failed to reach an agreement. JEM and SLM-MM also held several bilateral meetings, discussing possible ways to resume the peace process. On May 19, leaders of JEM and SLM-MM and a delegation of the government conducted informal consultations in Berlin on invitation of the German government. While also being invited, the SLM-AW conditioned its participation in negotiations with the government on the full disarmament of militias and the guarantee for security in the region. At a peace mediation workshop from September 8 to 10 in Paris, JEM and the SLM-MM drafted a pre-negotiation agreement and discussed the agenda for future proceedings with the government. On October 6, the US decided to lift the sanctions that it had imposed on Sudan in 1997, due to its role as a state sponsor for terrorist groups including al-Qaeda. svb

SUDAN (INTER-COMMUNAL RIVALRY)

Intensity: 4 | Change: • | Start: 2007

Conflict parties: Rizeigat vs. Ma'aliya vs. Habaniya vs. Salamat vs. Gimir et al.

Conflict items: subnational predominance, resources



The conflict over subnational predominance and resources, especially cattle and arable land, but also over water rights and access to gold mines, between various tribes, continued on the level of a limited war. Fighting mainly took place along ethnic lines, but also between farmers and cattle herders.

Inter-communal clashes decreased in number, particularly due to the more effective involvement of traditional and local administrations and the impact of security measures implemented by state authorities, including the expedient deployment of security forces, the establishment of buffer zones in hot spots and a disarmament campaign which started in July. However, casualties increased in number with a total of at least 348 in 2017.

Inter- and intra-tribal fighting involved members of the Rizeigat, its sections, Awlad Zaid and Zaghawa, Ma'aliyan, its subclan Agarba, Salamat, Habaniya, Misseriya, Gimir, Hamar, Kababish, Massalit, Beni Hussein, Berti, Fellata, Hutiya, and Tunjur. As in previous years, most incidents of inter-communal violence took place in the region of Darfur, with some but fewer in Kordofan. In both regions, armed groups were fighting the government [→ Sudan (Darfur); Sudan (SPLM/A-North)].

The Rizeigat and Ma'aliya tribes clashed most frequently in 2017. Although they had signed a document of reconciliation in 2016, a cattle theft on February 5 in Tullus locality, South Darfur, led to a shootout, leaving two tribesmen dead. A further clash between the two tribes occurred in El Khamsat area,

East Darfur, on April 8, leaving eleven people dead and four Rizeigat members injured. Local forces established a buffer zone to calm the two parties. Two further clashes between the tribes on April 19, in Sabah al-Nima, and on May 7, in Okus, both in East Darfur, left seven tribesmen dead. Heavy fighting also broke out between Rizeigat and Ma'aliya in El Mejlid area, East Darfur, on July 21. The fight was caused by cattle theft, leaving up to 14 tribesmen dead and twelve injured. The next day, the tribes clashed again in Donki Umarag area, leaving up to 40 people dead and 17 injured. Security forces were deployed by the government on July 24 and 28 to establish a buffer zone between the two tribes. On the same date, the tribes agreed to promote peace. After the heavy clashes, the government started a disarmament campaign by the government in the Darfur and Kordofan region for the remaining year. Many tribal leaders were also arrested over the following months.

Clashes between other tribes also took place in South Darfur. On April 26, tribesmen from the Habaniya and Salamat clashed over 150 stolen cows in En Nadeef area, South Darfur, which killed eleven people and injured a further 17. Local authorities intervened and tried to contain the situation. The conflict between the two tribes escalated further in Buram locality, South Darfur, between May 8 and 10, leaving more than 100 people dead or injured and displacing a large number of people. Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) separated the two tribes. On October 30, the leaders of both tribes signed a peaceful coexistence agreement. Cattle-related incidents between the Gimir und Rizeigat tribes left five people dead and five injured in Sesabana, Katila locality, South Darfur, on June 9. After the incidents, leaders of both tribes signed an agreement to hold a reconciliation conference. On July 20, Fellata tribesmen attacked Salamat herders, who were moving their livestock, in Hashabah valley, South Darfur, and killed five Salamat. On July 30, in the Dawis area, South Darfur, Huttia Arabs attacked Tunjur over arable land, killing five of them. On October 28, 20 herders killed two farmers in a dispute over arable land in Mershing area, South Darfur. The next day, ten herders injured two farmers in Gireida locality, also South Darfur.

In Central Darfur, clashes between the tribes Misseriya, Rizeigat, and Salamat were predominant. In Um Dukhun locality, Central Darfur, a clash between Misseriya and Rizeigat tribesmen, on January 25, left three dead. On January 29, the Rizeigat tribe paid compensation to the Misseriya. An incident in the same region between the Misseriya and Salamat tribe, on April 10, left three Misseriya tribesmen dead. Fighting between the Misseriya and Salamat tribes took place mostly in Central Darfur, such as in Um Dukhun locality on May 16 and 17, where a clash left three dead, two injured, and three villages destroyed. One week later, on May 22 and 23, the conflict escalated again, leaving 50 people dead. The tribes clashed again in Bindisi area on May 19, leaving an unknown number dead and injured. Ten villages inhabited by Salamat were destroyed and 716 households displaced. On May 27, the parties agreed to cease hostilities. Despite the agreement, Salamat tribesmen attacked the Misseriya in Sure area, on June 12, killing one Misseriya. On August 21, two more incidents between the two tribes took place in Um Dukhun, resulting in the death of two people. Several disputes over cattle also turned violent in West Dar-

fur. For instance, on January 5, in El Geneina, a fight broke out between members of the Awlad Zaid and Massalit tribes, resulting in six dead Massalit. Another incident occurred on January 29, in Sileah locality, when members of the Rizeigat ambushed Zaghawa tribesmen, leaving four dead. On October 15, in Kereinik locality, three herders attacked and injured three farmers as well as burning four houses.

In East Darfur, members of the Ma'aliya subclan Agarba destroyed a Berti farm and killed seven Berti in Al Naeir, on February 19. Consequently, the Berti launched an attack on February 20, burning two Ma'aliya villages, killing three Ma'aliya tribesmen and losing ten of their own. In Karkadeh, also East Darfur, tribesmen of Ma'aliya and Hamar clashed over the theft of livestock despite a peace agreement from 2014 and killed three Ma'aliya as well as six Hamar, on June 26.

In North and West Kordofan, heavy fighting erupted over stolen cattle between the Hamar and Kababish tribes in Um Maharik, on April 1 and 2, and killed 53 people before government forces intervened. jow

SUDAN (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 2011

Conflict parties: NCF, Sudan Call Forces vs. Government

Conflict items: system/ideology, national power

The violent crisis over national power and the orientation of the political system between opposition groups and the government of the National Congress Party (NCP), led by President Omar al-Bashir, continued. As in the last year, the government's austerity measures and the restriction of civil liberties continued to be contested.

While the government mostly acted through the National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS), the opposition comprised of the National Consensus Forum (NCF), which included the National Umma Party (NUP), the Sudanese Communist Party (SCP), and the Popular Congress Party (PCP) as well as the Sudanese Congress Party (SCoP). The Sudan Call Forces, another oppositional umbrella, included the NUP, SCoP, and six other oppositional organizations.

Student protests were one of the most frequent conflict measures. On May 15, two Darfuri students were injured and 15 arrested in Khartoum during violent clashes between them and another student group backed by the police. On May 9, one policeman and one student were killed during clashes between police and demonstrating students on the campus of the University of Bakht al rida in Al Douiem, White Nile state. During these protests, 20 students were arrested, 40 students suspended and five banned from Bakht al rida university. On July 20, 1,500 students protested but were prevented to continue by the NISS. On September 1, two college students were killed and at least ten others injured during clashes between NCP affiliates and UPF affiliates in the capital Khartoum. On September 24, a Sudanese court sentenced a university student to death for the alleged killing of a policeman. The same day hundreds of students and opposition members demonstrated outside of the courthouse in Khartoum. The police

used tear gas and arrested some protesters. On October 4, ten students were injured in an attack by NCP student supporters during a gathering organised by students at the Faculty of Education in West Kordofan University in En Nahud, West Kordofan state. On October 18, police attacked students in Khartoum, injuring four and arresting five. In the beginning of November, at least ten students were injured in an attack by student supporters of the NCP in West Kordofan.

Throughout the year, the NISS detained various opposition members due to their alleged activities against the government. On April 25, the National Legislative Assembly passed constitutional amendments, expanding the power of NISS. Various opposition parties as the PCP and human rights groups condemned this and withdrew from the National Dialogue. On October 10, NISS prevented a NUP leader and two other politicians from attending the Revolutionary Front conference in Paris, France. On October 18, Sudanese activists and the NUP criticized the forceful closure of a church in Omdurman, Karthoum State, by the police, accusing the government of continued persecution of Christians. On November 1, the NUP and the SPLM/A-North agreed to coordinate efforts to overthrow the regime [→ SPLM/A-North / South Kordofan, Blue Nile].

Later, on November 15, journalists protested against draft amendments to the 2009 Press and Publications Act as it puts greater restrictions on the freedom of the press. The NISS detained a female journalist during the protest. On November 27, the NISS detained a further two opposition activists.

On November 30, the SPLM-N under Malik Agar called for a joint oppositional agenda for change and participation in the 2020 elections, a move which was welcomed by the NCP and opposition parties like the NUP but contested by others such as the SCP and the NCF that reject any solution involving the NCP and calls popular uprising. Then, on December 19, the PCP and SRF agreed to work together in line with the African Union-brokered roadmap and National Dialogue outcome.

The same day, the National Initiative of Youth Around the President (NIYAP) launched a campaign to re-nominate President Omar al-Bashir for a third term. Various newspapers criticized this possibility, after which the NISS seized newspapers from al-Tayyar, al-Jarida, al-Watan and Akhir Lahza on multiple days in November and December. Journalists from these newspapers protested against this shortly afterwards.

lvo

SUDAN (SPLM/A-NORTH / SOUTH KORDOFAN, BLUE NILE)

Intensity: 3 | Change: ↓ | Start: 2011

Conflict parties:	SPLM/A-N vs. government
Conflict items:	autonomy, resources

The war over autonomy and resources such as arable land and oil between the banned political party and armed group SPLM/A-North (SPLM/A-N) and the government under President Omar al-Bashir decreased to a violent crisis. SPLM/A-N continued to operate in the so-called Two Areas, comprising the states of South Kordofan and Blue Nile. Compared to

previous years, violence decreased significantly in 2017, due to ongoing peace negotiations between the government and SPLM/A-N and a split of the latter in March.

On January 9, the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) attacked positions of SPLM/A-N in Blue Nile, breaching a one-month ceasefire agreement that had been signed on 12/31/16. Six days later, the government extended the ceasefire agreement for another six months. However, on January 17, SPLM/A-N claimed that in another attack by SAF in Alrum, Blue Nile, one of their members had been injured. On, February 21, clashes between SPLM/A-N and SAF in Kaduqli, South Kordofan, left one soldier dead and several wounded.

In March, SPLM/A-N split into two sections. The original section continued to be led by chairman Malik Agar (SPLM/A-N-Agar), while former deputy chairman Abdelaziz al-Hilu took the lead of the new section (SPLM/A-N-al-Hilu), which was endorsed by political bodies Blue Nile Liberation Council and Nuba Mountains Liberation Council. Al-Hilu had accused Agar of not fully representing the movement in the peace talks led by the AU, concerning in particular the issue of self-determination of the Nuba Mountains. In the wake of the split, communal rivalries rose along ethnic lines, also triggering further tensions within the newly formed SPLM/A-N factions, and spreading to refugee camps across the South Sudanese border. In the last week of May, for instance, clashes erupted between Agar supporters and opponents in a Doro refugee camp, Maban county, Eastern Nile state, South Sudan, leaving at least 35 people dead and thousands displaced. On June 10, the government criticized the differences within the SPLM/A-N, claiming they would hinder peace talks.

SPLM/A-N-Agar claimed they had repulsed government attacks on June 26 in Taga, Blue Nile, and September 15 in Khour Jadad, Blue Nile, which had left several people dead and injured. SPLM/A-N-al-Hilu declared a unilateral cessation of hostilities on August 2. In September, 27,000 civilians were displaced in Blue Nile due to violence between SPLM/A-N and government forces, including the alleged looting and burning of houses and shops. On October 8, the government extended its ceasefire with SPLM/A-N until the end of the year. After a SPLM/A-N-al-Hilu general conference from October 8 to 12, the faction reiterated their demand for self-determination, which the government rejected. On November 3, the government stated their preferences to negotiate with a unified SPLM/A-N. On November 30, Agar encouraged the Sudanese opposition, which had boycotted elections since 1989, to participate in the 2020 elections, given that al-Bashir would not run again. The government welcomed Agar's call but stated that the SPLM/A-N-Agar had to participate in the peace process to transform into a political party. Between December 1 and 10, the government reportedly attacked SPLM/A-N positions in Blue Nile twice, which left at least four government troops dead. Meanwhile, SPLM/A-N stated they had attacked a military convoy on December 6 in Blue Nile, which killed seven soldiers and injured 28.

On December 19, the government stated its readiness to resume peace talks with the SPLM/A-N-Agar. SPLM/A-N-Agar declared a unilateral six-month ceasefire for Blue Nile on December 28.

Throughout the year, both SPLM/A-N and the government reportedly continued to target civilians and civilian infrastruc-

ture, including large-scale lootings of crops and villages. The government also continued its policy of cutting humanitarian access to conflict regions, thereby reinforcing an already strained food situation. coc

SUDAN, SOUTH SUDAN (ABYEI)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 2011

Conflict parties: Misseriya vs. Ngok Dinka
Conflict items: subnational predominance, re-sources

The violent crisis over subnational predominance and re-sources in the border region Abyei between the ethnic African Ngok Dinka people and the pastoralist ethnic Arab Misseriya tribe, continued.

Since the independence of South Sudan from Sudan in 2011, the area of Abyei has been disputed [→ Sudan – South Sudan]. The region has been of high strategic interest to governments, due to its significant oil reserves. Until further agreements, the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) has been administering the area. The Ngok Dinka, the majority of Abyei's inhabitants, has wanted the region to belong to South Sudan, while the nomadic Misseriya, who have been roaming between Abyei and Darfur, wanted Abyei to become part of Sudan. As a result of unresolved issues regarding Abyei, UNSC has decided to extend UNISFA's mandate three times in 2017, until 04/15/18. UNISFA continued to conduct operations to prevent violence, and promote peaceful coexistence within and between the two parties. The UN mission also urged the governments of both nations to engage in discussions and make an effort to convene regular meetings.

Fighting in the area remained mainly inter-ethnic with the majority of incidents being petty crime, carjacking or armed theft. On July 22, eight Misseriya were shot dead on a road close to the Amiet common market. The market had been established by UNISFA in 2016 in order to facilitate trade between the Ngok Dinka and Misseriya. Since then, it has grown to be the economic hub of Abyei, but also a hot spot for violent clashes. On July 27, Ngok Dinka people stole 141 cows of the Misseriya and killed three herders. UNISFA managed to mediate the return of 135 animals. After these clashes, the UN-backed Joint Peace Committee held a meeting with members of both tribes on July 30. Both sides agreed that the Ngok Dinka must pay restitution for the casualties. mta

TANZANIA (CHADEMA, CUF – CCM)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 1993

Conflict parties: government (CCM) vs. CUF, Chadema
Conflict items: system/ideology, national power

The violent crisis over the political system and national power between the opposition parties Civic United Front (CUF) and the Party for Democracy and Progress (Chadema), on the one hand, and the ruling Party of the Revolution (CCM), on the

other, continued. The CUF continued to challenge the national power of CCM in the semi-autonomous region of Zanzibar, while Chadema was active in the rest of the country.

The coastal Rufiji District, Pwani Region, was particularly affected by violence. On January 19, two men associated with the CCM were killed in the town of Kibiti, eponymous district, Pwani Region. On February 21, the head of the criminal investigation department along with two security guards was killed by unknown assassins. On April 13, eight police officers were gunned down on duty by unknown assailants at Jaribu Village, Kibiti District. On the following day, police forces killed four people that were suspected of carrying out the killings the previous day. One week later on April 22, a press conference held by the CUF in Daressalam, eponymous region, was attacked by masked men, leaving several journalists injured. Killings of government officials in Pwani Region continued over the following months. On April 29, a member of a local militia was killed at his home in Mgomba Kaskazini, Rufiji District. On May 1 and 5, two members of CCM were shot at their homes, both in Rufiji District. The opposition parties in the parliament called for a military intervention to stop the wave of killings after a civilian was shot dead on May 13 in Rufiji District. In June, more killings took place in Rufiji District. On June 7, a member of a local militia group was killed at his house. On June 21, two traffic police officers were killed by unknown assassins and on June 27, three local leaders were executed. On September 6, a Chadema member of parliament was wounded by a gunshot after leaving the parliament in the capital of Dodoma, Dodoma Region. On November 3, five men died after engaging in a gunfight with police forces in Kahama, Shinyanga region. Authorities suspected these men of involvement in the killings in Pwani Region. mge

UGANDA (BAKONZO / RWENZURURU)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 2014

Conflict parties: Kingdom of Rwenzururu vs. government
Conflict items: autonomy

The violent crisis over autonomy between the Kingdom of Rwenzururu, representing the region's ethnic majority of the Bakonzo, and the government, continued.

The government accused Charles Mumbere, king of the Kingdom of Rwenzururu, and his followers of plotting to overthrow the government. Moreover, the government continued to blame the Kingdom of Rwenzururu of supporting a secessionist movement and planning the so-called Yiira Republic by combining the region with neighboring districts in eastern DR Congo. In contrast, Mumbere consistently claimed that the kingdom neither had secessionist intentions nor links to militant groups. While more than 126 people had been killed during a two-day clash alone in November 2016, violence decreased significantly this year, resulting in a total of two deaths. On August 18, after a member of Kirumira Mutima militia attacked a soldier, he was shot dead by the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF) in Kasese district. Kirumira

Mutima is affiliated with the Bakonzo and allegedly loyal to the traditional King of Rwenzururu. Between November 26 and 27, UPDF killed a Bakonzo during protests against the government-led attack on the Rwenzururu Palace, in Kasese town, eponymous district. In 2016, 126 people died during the attack on the palace. Twice, on January 13 and February 6, Mumbere was released on bail. Just hours after the first release he was re-arrested on the yard of Jinja High Court. The conditions of bail set by the court prevented him from entering Rwenzururu region and dissolved the king's traditional guard and replaced it with government security officers. Mumbere was awaiting trial throughout the year. rrb

UGANDA (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 2001

Conflict parties: FDC, DP, UPC, Jeema vs. government

Conflict items: national power

The violent crisis over national power between various opposition parties, such as the main opposition party Forum for Democratic Change (FDC), the Democratic Party (DP), Uganda People's Congress (UPC), and Justice Forum Party (Jeema), and the government, continued.

Tensions arose between opposition members, journalists, and activists, on the one hand, and the police, on the other, over the bill to lift the age limit for the presidency. The bill would allow the acting president Yoweri Museveni to run for his fifth term in 2021. Police prohibited rallies against the bill and arrested oppositional politicians several times. Throughout the year, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, the U.S. ambassador, twelve European countries, and religious leaders called on the government to respect freedom of speech and assembly, and condemned police violence.

On December 20, the bill to remove the presidential age limit passed with a majority in parliament, succeeding three days of intense debates, suspension and arrest of opposition parliamentarians.

Throughout the year, government crackdown on demonstrations resulted in the death of three people and at least 30 injured.

On March 31, police arrested DP vice-president Namboze on her way to a prohibited party meeting in Nsambya, Central Region. Police injured two journalists who were filming the arrest. Further, police arrested FDC's leader Kizza Besigye, accused of unlawful assembly, in Isingiro district, Western Region on May 5. Five days later, professor Stella Nyanzi, charged with cyber harassment targeting the president, was released on bail after a month in jail.

On June 22, in the context of the investigation against Red Pepper newspaper editor Ben Byarabaha, the Committee to Protect Journalists demanded to end arbitrary media intimidation. On July 19, police arrested 56 activists who were mobilizing citizens in order to oppose the age limit amendment. On September 4 and 8, police blocked two FDC members and Besigye from appearing on radio talk shows in Kabale, Western Region. On September 21, police used tear gas and rubber bullets against hundreds of students demonstrating in the

capital Kampala, Central Region, resulting in the death of one student and several injured.

On September 26, after disagreement over the age limit amendment, politicians ended up in a chair and fistfight in the parliament in Kampala. One day later, after renewed clashes in parliament, the Special Forces Command arrested 25 members of the opposition. On September 28 and October 3, grenades were thrown into three houses of evicted politicians. The police failed to catch the attackers and Besigye accused Museveni for giving the order, which he denied. Between October 16 and 18, police dispersed demonstrations near Kampala and in Rukungiri, Northern Region, resulting in two deaths and at least 25 injured.

ceb

ZIMBABWE (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 2000

Conflict parties: ZRP, government (ZANU-PF) vs. MDC-T, MDC Alliance

Conflict items: system/ideology, national power

The violent crisis over national power and the political system between the opposition groups and the government of President Robert Mugabe, continued. The Zimbabwean Republic Police (ZRP) and supporters of the ruling party Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF), on the one hand, and especially supporters of the opposition union, led by Movement of Democratic Change – Tsvangirai (MDC-T), on the other hand, clashed frequently throughout the year.

For instance, on January 1, ZANU-PF supporters assaulted a MDC-T member in Epworth, a suburb of Harare, Harare Province, for wearing MDC-T clothing. On May 21, ZANU-PF members stabbed a MDC-T youth before the ZANU-PF primary elections at Gambiza Business centre in Mashonaland West Province. On October 22, ZANU-PF supporters and ZRP-officers beat three MDC-T members with sjamboks, while they were distributing registration flyers in Chitungwiza, Mahonaland East Province. Particularly during the by-elections before the election in 2018, ZANU-PF supporters threatened and assaulted opposition members and civilians. On January 4, ZANU-PF youths threatened to assault anyone who would not take part in a ZANU-PF campaign rally at Gwindingwi High School in Bikita district, Masvingo Province. On March 27, ZANU-PF supporters assaulted MDC-T members at Msika Market in Harare and forced them to close down a bar, accusing them of holding an MDC-T meeting. On June 24, in Gweru, Midlands Province, ZANU-PF members repeatedly forced village members to take part in meetings or to contribute financially, threatening to withdraw food aid or to commit violence and arson.

Throughout the year, the ZRP clashed with several anti-government protesters and arrested some of them. For instance, on January 16, Zimbabwean authorities temporarily arrested Pastor Philip Mugadza for predicting the death of President Mugabe. In mid-October, he withdrew his prediction, claiming that God had sent him another message, postponing Mugabe's death until an unspecified date. On February 2, police temporarily arrested Pastor Evan Mawarire at

Harare airport after six months of exile in the US and arrested him again on September 24 in Harare during a church service. On February 25, police assaulted and arrested several human rights activists during a demonstration at Parirenyatwa Hospital in Harare. On July 12, police broke up a demonstration by dozens of MDC-T members in Harare with use of water cannons and teargas. On October 28, ZRP officers arrested pro-democracy campaigner and lawyer Fadzayi Mahere during a

soccer tournament in Harare.

On November 14, the Zimbabwean Militia performed a suspected coup in Harare as a result of intra-party conflicts of ZANU-PF and the government. On November 21, Mugabe resigned. Three days later, the inauguration as President of Emerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa, former vice-president, took place. The military was positioned in Harare until December 18. mab

the Americas



The overall number of conflicts in the Americas increased by three to 57, including 39 violent conflicts. One conflict ended and three new conflicts erupted. In Colombia, the conflict between the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the government ended after over 50 years, as the FARC demobilized and formed a political party [→ Colombia (FARC)]. However, not all FARC members took part in the peace process, and a significant number of dissidents continued fighting the government, constituting a new violent conflict [→ Colombia (FARC dissidents)]. Another new conflict in Colombia erupted over mining rights in Antioquia between local miners and the government [→ Colombia (artisanal miners / Antioquia)]. Protests concerned legislative changes that would favor mining companies over local artisan miners. In the Dominican Republic, a violent conflict over corruption allegations erupted as protesters of the Marcha Verde movement and other social protest groups demanded the government to resign due to their alleged involvement in the Odebrecht corruption scandal. Although most of the nationwide protests remained peaceful, police forces were accused of killing one protester, of physical violence, and acts of intimidation [→ Dominican Republic (anti-corruption)]. In Mexico, the strategy to target drug cartels' leading figures applied by the government of President Enrique Peña Nieto led to an increasing fragmentation of drug cartels and to heavy fights over local predominance [→ Mexico (inter-cartel rivalry, paramilitary groups)]. Thus, America's only war between increasingly splintered drug cartels, vigilante groups, and the Mexican government continued [→ Mexico (drug cartels)]. For instance, between February and April, at least 30 people were killed in the cities of Reynosa, Río Bravo and Nuevo Laredo when navy forces launched an operation to capture Cartel del Golfo leader Juan Manuel 'Comandante Toro' Loaiza Salinas. Mexico recorded more than 29,000 homicides in 2017, the highest annual number since comparable records began in 1997.

In Colombia, despite the FARC's demobilization, indicators of violence remained high, as other armed groups, such as the now-largest guerrilla group National Liberation Army (ELN) and neo-paramilitary groups like the Gaitanist Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AGC), intensified their turf wars over subnational predominance and resources, particularly in areas that had previously been dominated by the FARC [→ Colombia (ELN); Colombia (neo-paramilitary groups, drug cartels); Colombia (inter-cartel rivalry, neo-paramilitary groups, left-wing militants)]. The number of displaced people increased in comparison to 2016, and in addition, homicides of social leaders and activists increased throughout the year. All three conflicts were fought at the level of a limited war.

In El Salvador, the limited war between the Barrio 18, the Mara Salvatrucha, and the government, continued but less intense than in the year before. Although the overall homicide rate dropped significantly compared to last year, the country had the second highest rate in the Americas region and the government continued its hardline security policies to fight gang violence [→ El Salvador (Maras)]. Anti-gang efforts also continued on a regional and transnational level as state agencies and security forces from El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala cooperated in joint missions.

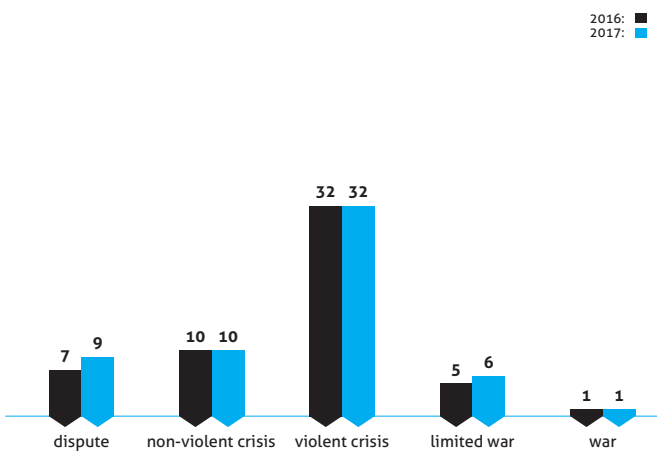
In Brazil, the limited war between several drug trafficking organizations and security forces continued [→ Brazil (drug trafficking organizations)]. Especially the favelas of Rio de Janeiro remained a hotspot of violence. Throughout the year, Brazilians expressed their discontent and demonstrated against President Michel Temer's socioeconomic policy and several corruption cases known as "Lava Jato" [→ Brazil (social protests)]. In Paraguay, several activists and farmers organizations continued to protest against the distribution of land, for a sustainable development model and the retirement of President Horacio Cartes [→ Paraguay (EPP, agrarian movements)]. In April, protesters clashed with the police after occupying and setting parts of the National Congress in Asuncion on fire. The EPP continued its armed attacks against security personnel, occasionally destroying forestry and farming equipment and kidnapped two farmers.

In several American countries, opposition conflicts were conducted violently. For instance, in Venezuela, the political, economic, and humanitarian crisis deepened. The newly-elected and government-controlled National Constituent Assembly, tasked with drafting a new constitution and resolving the country's political and financial crisis, assumed the powers of the opposition-controlled National Assembly. Since April, at least 134 people died during clashes between opponents and supporters of the government, with thousands being injured. Asylum petitions of Venezuelans in 2017 rose by 168 percent worldwide compared to 2016 [→ Venezuela (opposition)]. The presidential elections in Honduras led to violent protests as opposition groups accused the government of electoral fraud and contested President Hernández' narrow win. During the protests, up to 34 people died, more than 200 protesters were injured, and approx. 800 were detained [→ Honduras (opposition)]. In Nicaragua, clashes following the municipal elections between oppositional protesters and government supporters as well as security forces left seven people dead, about 40 injured, and several houses and government offices destroyed [→ Nicaragua (opposition)]. In Bolivia, opposition to socio-economic policies sparked protests, some of which turned violent. Issues of contention were a proposed bill to enlarge legal coca cultivation areas as well as a proposed change to the criminal law regarding doctors' malpractice and the creation of a new national health authority [→ Bolivia (socioeconomic protests)]. Following the general elections in Ecuador, tensions arose within the ruling PAIS Alliance party (AP) as Lenín Moreno took over the presidency from Rafael Correa. Issues revolved around Moreno's political agenda, a new anti-corruption initiative as well as the plan for a consultative referendum in 2018. Tensions peaked in October, as AP officials announced to remove Moreno as the party's president [→ Ecuador (opposition)].

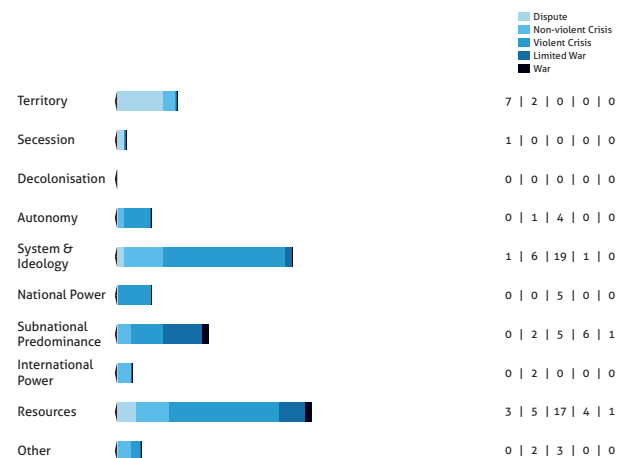
Conflicts between indigenous and environmental activists, on the one hand, and security forces, on the other, also remained violent in 2017. In Honduras, protests against hydroelectric projects in the country left several people injured as military police raided demonstration camps and detained a number of protesters. In Nicaragua's coastal autonomous regions, the indigenous Miskito continued to defend their ancestral land from illegal settlement and forestry [→ Nicaragua (indigenous groups)].

In Peru, indigenous people from the country's Amazon region took control over oil producing facilities and oil fields in late April and August to protest against environmental pollution and called on the government to respect their right of previous consultation. While the occupations saw no violence, the conflict between indigenous communities and loggers concerning land use left six people dead in 2017 [→ Peru (opposition)]. In Colombia, members of indigenous groups such as the Nasa continued to frequently clash with government security forces as they demanded land reforms and a reparation law as well as the inclusion of indigenous communities in the drafting of reforms in relation to the implementation of the FARC peace agreement [→ Colombia (indigenous groups)]. In Chile, the indigenous Mapuche continued to confront the government over claims to ancestral lands and the application of the anti-terrorism law against Mapuche activists. Numerous arson attacks, particularly in the La Araucanía region, were attributed to or claimed by Mapuche activists [→ Chile (Mapuche / Araucanía)]. In Brazil, the conflict over the demarcation of indigenous territories, the enforcement of indigenous rights, and autonomy escalated to a violent crisis. In several occasions, indigenous groups clashed with police and military police forces [→ Brazil (indigenous groups)]. In the wake of MINUSTAH's withdrawal from Haiti, the defense ministry of the Dominican Republic sent additional soldiers to the shared border to stop illegal immigration. Authorities of the Dominican Republic were also accused of deportations and assaults of people with Haitian descent as the conflict between the two countries concerning the status of citizenship of Haitians in the Dominican Republic continued [→ Dominican Republic - Haiti]. The interstate conflict between Mexico and the United States continued as a violent crisis [→ Mexico - USA (border security)]. During the fiscal year 2017, the United States Border Patrol apprehended more than 300.000 people at its southwest border. Of these, about 42 percent were Mexican. The conflict between the United States and Venezuela continued against the backdrop of the opposition conflict and the deepening economic and humanitarian crisis in Venezuela. US President Donald Trump stated to be considering a "military option" against Venezuela, while Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro held US sanctions responsible for Venezuela's economic crisis [→ USA - Venezuela]. The conflict between Belize and Guatemala over more than half of the Belizean territory de-escalated to a non-violent crisis. Both parties reaffirmed their 2008 agreement to hold referendums on whether the territorial dispute should be submitted to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) [→ Belize - Guatemala (territory)]. The dispute between Argentina and the United Kingdom over the Falkland Islands/Islands Malvinas continued as both countries continued to lay claims to the islands [→ Argentina - United Kingdom (Falkland Islands / Islas Malvinas)].

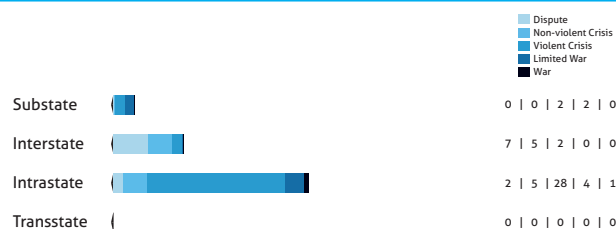
CONFLICT INTENSITIES IN THE AMERICAS IN 2017 COMPARED TO 2016



FREQUENCY OF CONFLICT INTENSITIES BY CONFLICT ITEM IN THE AMERICAS IN 2017



FREQUENCY OF CONFLICT INTENSITIES BY CONFLICT TYPE IN THE AMERICAS IN 2017



Overview: Conflicts in the Americas in 2017

Name of conflict ¹	Conflict parties ²	Conflict items	Start	Change ³	Int. ⁴
Argentina – United Kingdom (Falkland Islands / Islas Malvinas)	Argentina vs. United Kingdom	territory, resources	1833	•	1
Belize – Guatemala (territory)*	Belize vs. Guatemala	territory	1981	↘	2
Bolivia (socioeconomic protests)	societal groups vs. government	system/ideology, resources	1983	•	3
Bolivia – Chile (access to sea)*	Bolivia vs. Chile	territory, resources	1883	•	1
Brazil (drug trafficking organizations)	drug trafficking organizations, militias vs. government	subnational predominance	2010	•	4
Brazil (indigenous groups)	indigenous groups vs. government	autonomy, resources	1985	↗	3
Brazil (MST, MTST)*	MST, MTST vs. government	resources	1996	•	3
Brazil (social protests)	MPL et al. vs. government	system/ideology	2013	•	3
Chile (anarchist groups)*	anarchist groups vs. government	system/ideology	2014	↗	3
Chile (Mapuche / Araucanía)	Mapuche, CAM, WAM vs. government	autonomy, resources	2008	•	3
Chile (Rapa Nui / Easter Island)*	Rapa Nui vs. government	secession	2010	•	1
Chile (social movements)*	CONFECU, ACES vs. government	system/ideology	2006	•	3
Chile – United Kingdom (Antarctica)*	Chile vs. United Kingdom	territory	2007	•	1
Colombia (artisanal miners / Antioquia)	local miners, Mesa Minera vs. Gran Colombia Gold, government	resources	2017	NEW	3
Colombia (ASCAMCAT / Catatumbo)*	ASCAMCAT vs. government	autonomy, system/ideology, resources	2013	↑	3
Colombia (Cumbre Agraria)*	Cumbre Agraria vs. government	system/ideology	2013	↓	1
Colombia (ELN)	ELN vs. government	system/ideology, subnational predominance, resources	1964	•	4
Colombia (FARC dissidents)	FARC dissidents vs. government	system/ideology, subnational predominance, resources	2017	NEW	3
Colombia (FARC)	FARC vs. government	system/ideology, subnational predominance, resources	1964	END	2
Colombia (indigenous groups)	indigenous groups vs. government	resources	2005	•	3
Colombia (inter-cartel rivalry, neo-paramilitary groups, left-wing militants)	AGC vs. EPL vs. Los Rastrojos vs. ELN vs. FARC dissidents vs. et al.	subnational predominance, resources	2013	•	4
Colombia (neo-paramilitary groups, drug cartels)	drug cartels, neo-paramilitary groups vs. government	subnational predominance, resources	1983	↗	4
Colombia – Nicaragua (sea border)*	Colombia vs. Nicaragua	territory, resources	1825	•	2
Colombia – Venezuela (border security)*	Colombia vs. Venezuela	other	2015	•	2
Colombia – Venezuela (Monjes Islands)*	Colombia vs. Venezuela	territory, resources	1871	•	1
Cuba – USA (Guantanamo)*	Cuba vs. USA	territory	1959	•	1
Cuba – USA (system)*	Cuba vs. USA	system/ideology, international power	1960	•	2
Dominican Republic (anti-corruption)	Marcha Verde, social protest groups vs. government	system/ideology, other	2017	NEW	3
Dominican Republic - Haiti	Dominican Republic vs. Haiti	other	2009	•	3
Ecuador (opposition)	opposition groups vs. government	system/ideology, resources	1980	↘	2
El Salvador (inter-gang rivalry)	Barrio 18 vs. MS-13 vs. MS-503	subnational predominance	2003	•	3
El Salvador (Maras)	Barrio 18, MS-13 vs. government	subnational predominance	2012	•	4
Guatemala (drug cartels)*	drug cartels vs. government	subnational predominance, resources	2009	•	2
Guatemala (opposition)	CNOC, CODECA, CUC, indigenous groups et al. vs. government	system/ideology, resources	1985	•	3

THE AMERICAS

Name of conflict ¹	Conflict parties ²	Conflict items	Start	Change ³	Int. ⁴
Guyana – Venezuela*	Guyana vs. Venezuela	territory	2015	↘	1
Haiti (opposition)	Fanmi Lavalas, Pitit Dessalines, anti-government protesters vs. government	system/ideology, national power	1986	•	3
Honduras (Bajo Aguán)*	MUCA, MARCA, farmers of Bajo Aguán vs. landowners	resources	2012	•	3
Honduras (drug trafficking organizations, organized crime)*	drug trafficking organizations, organized crime vs. government	subnational predominance, resources	2012	•	3
Honduras (opposition)	Libre, PAC, PINU-SD, anti-government activists vs. government	system/ideology, national power, resources	2009	•	3
Honduras – El Salvador (Isla Conejo)*	Honduras vs. El Salvador	territory	2013	↘	1
Jamaica (drug gangs)*	drug gangs vs. government	subnational predominance	2010	•	3
Mexico (CNTE et al.)	CNTE et al. vs. government	system/ideology	2006	•	3
Mexico (drug cartels)	drug cartels vs. vigilante groups vs. government	subnational predominance, resources	2006	•	5
Mexico (EZLN / Chiapas)*	EZLN vs. government	autonomy, system/ideology, resources, other	1994	•	2
Mexico (inter-cartel rivalry, paramilitary groups)	CJNG et al. vs. Sinaloa et al. vs. CDG et al. vs. Los Zetas et al. vs. LFM et al. vs. LCT et al.	subnational predominance, resources	2005	•	4
Mexico (opposition)*	opposition vs. government	national power	2006	•	3
Mexico (public security)*	normalistas et al. vs. government	system/ideology	2014	•	3
Mexico – USA (border security)*	Mexico vs. USA	other	2005	•	3
Nicaragua (indigenous groups)	Miskito groups, YATAMA vs. government	autonomy, resources	2015	•	3
Nicaragua (militant groups)*	FASN-EP, CGN, FDC 3-80 vs. government	system/ideology	2012	•	3
Nicaragua (opposition)	opposition groups vs. government	system/ideology, national power, resources	2008	•	3
Paraguay (EPP, agrarian movements)	EPP, agrarian movements vs. government	system/ideology, resources	1989	•	3
Peru (opposition)	opposition movements vs. government	system/ideology, resources	2008	•	3
Peru (Shining Path)*	SL vs. government	system/ideology, subnational predominance, resources	1980	•	3
USA (racial tensions)*	BLM, NBPP, local protesters vs. right-wing groups vs. government	system/ideology	2014	↘	2
USA (right-wing extremists)	right-wing extremists vs. government	system/ideology	1990	•	3
USA – Venezuela	USA vs. Venezuela	system/ideology, international power	2001	•	2
Venezuela (opposition)	opposition (MUD) vs. government	system/ideology, national power	1992	•	3

^{1 2 3 4} cf. overview table for Europe

ARGENTINA – UNITED KINGDOM (FALKLAND ISLANDS / ISLAS MALVINAS)

Intensity: 1 | Change: • | Start: 1833

Conflict parties: Argentina vs. United Kingdom
Conflict items: territory, resources

The dispute over the territory and offshore oil reserves of the Falkland Islands/Islands Malvinas between Argentina and the United Kingdom (UK) continued. Both sides commemorated the 35th anniversary of the 1982 war over the islands, thereby renewing their respective claims of ownership

but refraining from escalatory measures such as troop deployments or verbal threats. While relations between the two countries had improved since the election of Argentine president Mauricio Macrí, sources from within the Argentine government however stated in April that plans to jointly exploit oil fields and fishing grounds near the islands were "at a dead point." On September 20, during a speech at the UNGA, the Argentine vice-president reiterated Argentina's claim to sovereignty over the islands, but also called for bilateral negotiations. On October 26, Argentina issued a formal protest note to the British embassy in Buenos Aires regarding plans of the British military to conduct exercises with Rapier anti-aircraft missiles on the disputed islands in early November. Referring to the 2013 referendum, British Prime Minister Theresa May stated in a Christmas radio message to the

islanders that she would not allow "anyone to compromise your right to self-determination" and expressed her intent to cooperate with Argentina on "non-sovereignty related areas." peh

BOLIVIA (SOCIOECONOMIC PROTESTS)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 1983

Conflict parties: societal groups vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology, resources

The violent crisis over the orientation of the political system and resources such as coca cultivation areas, continued. In 2017, involved parties comprised coca farmers, medical students, and doctors, on the one hand, and the government of President Evo Morales, on the other.

In the beginning of the year, the government suggested a new bill to enlarge legal coca cultivation areas. However, the Cochabamba department would have profited more from this extension than the area of the Yungas, La Paz department, which triggered protests among Yungas farmers, especially the local coccaleros' organisation Asociación Departamental de Productores de la Hoja de Coca (Adepcoca) and the Consejo de Federaciones Campesinas de los Yungas de La Paz (Cofecay).

After marching to the seat of government in La Paz City, La Paz department, hundreds of farmers clashed with the police on February 20. During the night, hundreds of policemen kept protesters from sleeping in the streets, using tear gas and dumping water on their sleeping accommodations. One protester was injured and at least 40 were detained. Violence continued into the afternoon of the same day. Protesters destroyed the external façade of the fire station and a police car with stones, and burned a motorcycle using Molotov cocktails. 145 coca farmers were detained and 111 released after one day, and a further 17 were released on February 24. The disputed law was promulgated on March 8.

Another socio-economic issue that led to confrontations between societal groups and the government concerned a proposed change to the criminal law regarding doctors' malpractice, and an executive decree that would create a new national health authority. On November 23, the medical association Medical College of Bolivia called for an indefinite strike to protest the changes in the law, as they allegedly led to the criminalization of doctors. Doctors and other medical staff participated in the strike, affecting the provision of medical services in the country, which led to a governmentally declared "emergency situation." According to the government, over 3,000 patients did not receive treatment per day, and some 10,000 surgeries were canceled.

The strike was accompanied by protests in various cities throughout the country, in which medical students also participated. On December 19, the protests turned violent when protesters and police clashed in La Paz, leaving at least four protesters injured. On the same day, protesters went on hunger strikes in the capital Sucre. One day later, over 1,000 people protested in the city of Cochabamba. On December 21, medical students clashed with police in La Paz, throwing Molotov cocktails and other objects such as tomatoes. Police

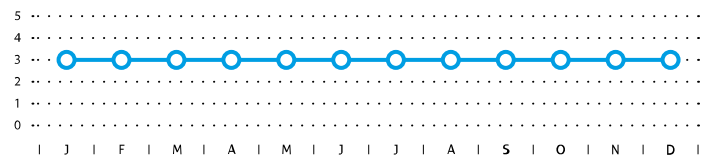
responded with tear gas. At least five people were injured. One week later, Morales announced there would be a meeting between societal organizations and the government to discuss reforms in the health sector. The Medical College agreed to enter the dialog, but did not call off the strike. cgu

BRAZIL (DRUG TRAFFICKING ORGANIZATIONS)

Intensity: 4 | Change: • | Start: 2010

Conflict parties: drug trafficking organizations, militias vs. government

Conflict items: subnational predominance



The conflict over subnational predominance between the main drug trafficking organizations (DTOs) Comando Vermelho (CV), Primeiro Comando da Capital (PCC), Amigos dos Amigos (ADA) and Família do Norte (FDN), and militias, on the one hand, and the government, on the other, continued as a limited war.

The favelas of Rio de Janeiro, capital of the eponymous state, remained a hotspot for violence. In 2017, numerous confrontations between DTOs and security forces led to the death of at least 134 police officers and hundreds of criminals. During the first six months of the year, police forces conducted approx. 311 operations in different favelas in Rio de Janeiro. In addition, the government deployed 8,500 military forces to the favelas in order to counter DTO activities in the second half of the year.

Between February 2 and 5, continuous shootings between DTO members and Military Police (PM) officers occurred in Complexo do Alemão, northern Rio de Janeiro, leaving around 10 people dead and 10 injured. On March 24, DTO members shot at police officers in Complexo do Alemão, killing one and injuring two. During a skirmish between DTO members and PM officers in Morro dos Macacos, Rio de Janeiro, on April 2, police agents killed two alleged drug traffickers. On June 17, during a PM operation in the favela Antares, Rio de Janeiro, a shooting between police officers and DTO members left two DTO members and one civilian dead.

In the second half of the year, violence also spread to the state of Rio Grande do Norte, where several shootings between DTO members and security forces occurred. For instance, on September 3, a shootout between PM officers and DTO members resulted in the death of four criminals in Campo Grande, Rio Grande do Norte.

Throughout the year, police officers arrested several high-ranking DTO leaders and members. For instance, on July 1, the Federal Police captured Luiz Carlos da Rocha alias Cabeça Branca, in Sorriso, Mato Grosso, one of the most wanted drug traffickers in South America. One month later, on August 15, PM officers detained the leading CV member Pinto Brum in Tramandaí, Rio Grande do Sul.

During the first months of the year around 130 inmates died

in turf wars between the Rio Grande do Norte-based FDN, and the São Paulo-based PCC. For instance, on January 2, a prison riot at Anísio Jobim prison complex in Manaus, Amazonas state left about 60 inmates dead.

Clashes between DTOs were recurrent. On January 21, a shooting between rival DTOs left two civilians dead in Cidade Alta, northern Rio de Janeiro. The next day, a shooting between a DTO and a militia in Carobinha, western Rio de Janeiro, left four people dead and 16 injured. At the beginning of May, CV members organized itself to recover the favela Cidade Alta, Rio de Janeiro, controlled by Terceiro Comando Puro. During the confrontations DTO members set nine busses and two trucks on fire, police killed two alleged DTO members and arrested about 45 people, and three police officers were injured.

From April 2 to April 8, the government deployed 900 soldiers to conduct its annual "Operation Ágata" against human, drug and weapon trafficking across the respective borders with neighboring Paraguay and Bolivia. Despite these countermeasures against DTO connections to other countries, PCC further expanded its activities to Paraguay. For instance, on April 24, about 60 heavily armed PCC members robbed US\$10 million from a security company in Ciudad del Este, Alto Paraná department, killing one person, leaving four persons injured, and destroying dozens of cars. In the subsequent operation led by Paraguayan and Brazilian police, state forces killed three alleged PCC members and arrested four.

cpn

BRAZIL (INDIGENOUS GROUPS)

Intensity: 3 | Change: ↗ | Start: 1985

Conflict parties: indigenous groups vs. government

Conflict items: autonomy, resources

The non-violent conflict over autonomy and the demarcation of indigenous territories between various indigenous groups and the government escalated to a violent crisis. Over the course of the year, indigenous groups staged protests and land occupations predominantly in the states of Mato Grosso do Sul, Pará, and the Federal District.

Several indigenous groups such as the Guaranies, Mundurucus and Tupinikims, among others, continued to urge the government to guarantee their rights. On April 24, about 3,000 indigenous people gathered in the government district in Brasília to express their dissent against the government's policies concerning the enforcement of indigenous rights. After the protesters had approached the National Congress, Military Police (PM) threw tear gas bombs to disperse the crowd. Indigenous peoples responded by shooting arrows and throwing spears. PM injured one indigenous person and arrested four others. On October 18, about 100 indigenous people protested in front of the Congress in Brasília. Police dispersed the demonstration using tear gas bombs and pepper spray, and arrested four indigenous persons.

Tensions between indigenous people and police officers continued throughout the year. During a PM strike on February 4, in Aracruz, Espírito Santo, PM used pepper spray and rubber bullets to expel indigenous people, injuring at least four

Tupinikims. Subsequently, Tupinikims protested in front of the National Indian Foundation (FUNAI) building in Aracruz, Espírito Santo and demanded the dismissal of five PM officers.

In several occasions, indigenous persons blocked roads and bridges. For instance, on April 3, a group of 200 indigenous people blocked the Ayrton Senna bridge between Paraná and Mato Grosso, demanding political action to ensure their access to health and education. On April 26, about 100 Mundurucus blocked the roadway Transamazônica in Itaituba, Pará, to demand the demarcation of their lands and to demonstrate against hydroelectric projects and staff cuts within the FUNAI.

Throughout the year, attacks on indigenous communities in rural areas of Brazil by unknown armed groups were recurrent. For instance, on May 2, several armed men attacked a group of Gamelas with machetes in the Amazonas region, injuring 13.

In April, due to cuts in public funding FUNAI closed five out of 19 bases used to protect indigenous communities. Furthermore, at the end of August, a presidential resolution dissolved a 46,000 square km conservation area in Amapá and Pará. Five days later, however, a court decision suspended it, arguing that only Congress had the power to decide on demarcation issues.

cpn

BRAZIL (SOCIAL PROTESTS)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 2013

Conflict parties: MPL et al. vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology

The violent crisis over the orientation of the political system between different social groups such as the Movimento Passe Livre (MPL) and the government continued.

Throughout the year, the rising discontent with the current government of the President Michel Temer and its socio-economic policy triggered mass protests across the entire country. For instance, on January 12 and 19, more than 2,000 persons participated in a MPL-led march against increasing public transport fees in São Paulo, capital of the eponymous state. Protests mainly organized by left-wing social movements and trade unions against privatization measures were recurrent. For instance, on February 14, about 10,000 people took to the streets against the privatization of water in Rio de Janeiro, capital of the eponymous state. Military Police (PM) deployed tear gas bombs and fired rubber bullets to disperse the crowd, injuring at least two demonstrators. Subsequently, protesters set a bus on fire.

At the end of April, the first general strike in 20 years involved about 40 million people and took place in more than 150 cities in Brazil. For instance, in São Paulo, demonstrators blocked roads, highways, and other parts of the public infrastructure, thereby disrupting much of the public transit network. Tensions escalated on May 24, when approx. 45,000 people protested against Temer's government in the capital Brasília. PM officers used tear gas bombs to disperse the protesters, injuring at least 49 and arresting seven of them.

In the second half of the year, investigations revealed more corruption cases involving several MPs and allegedly the president himself. Within the scope of Petrobras investigations, the attorney general accused Temer of corruption. The parliament decided not to repeal Temer's presidential immunity twice during the year thereby hindering an impeachment process to be initiated. Further the parliament did not send the case to the Supreme Court. Investigations into the case "Lava Jato" linked to the construction firm Odebrecht revealed more corruption cases, allegedly involving former presidents Dilma Rousseff and Lula da Silva, other politicians as well as contractors. These incidents led to mass protests. For instance on August 2, dozens of political actors, such as the Homeless Workers' Movement (MTST) [→ Brazil (MST, MTST)], burned tires and blocked the streets in São Paulo. During the first months of the year, police forces went on strike to express their discontent over – inter alia – delayed salary payments, working conditions, and equipment. For instance, in the beginning of February, PM officers laid down their work in Vitória, Espírito Santo state. Subsequently and amid the rising crime level in Vitória, Temer announced the deployment 1,200 armed forces and national guards to reinforce security within the state. After two weeks on strike, 1,200 police officers resumed work, 700 of them now facing charges by the state of Espírito Santo. The strike finally ended on February 25. cpn

CHILE (MAPUCHE / ARAUCANÍA)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 2008

Conflict parties: Mapuche, CAM, WAM vs. government
Conflict items: autonomy, resources

The violent crisis over resources and autonomy between the Mapuche indigenous people and associated organizations, on the one hand, and the government, on the other, continued.

The Mapuche people confronted the government over claims to ancestral lands and the use of the anti-terrorism law. Although the number of casualties was low in 2017, material damage was considerable. Throughout the year, in protest against forestry companies operating on lands claimed by the Mapuche, Mapuche resistance groups such as the Coordinadora Arauco-Malleco (CAM) and Weichan Auka Mapu (WAM) staged several arson attacks. In total, over 80 forestry trucks and machines, dozens of houses, several churches and a storehouse were destroyed. Perpetrators of violent actions were not identified in all cases, although pamphlets alluding to the Mapuche cause were often found near the scene. For example, on May 24, in an attack on several trucks on a road in La Araucanía region, one person was injured and a pro-Mapuche pamphlet was found. The months from June to September were particularly tense due to the killing of two Mapuche, who were shot dead by a retired Carabineros officer on June 10 in Malleco, Araucanía, after having assaulted him. These deaths sparked numerous protests, most notably arson attacks, culminating in the destruction of 29 trucks of the forestry company Sotraser in San José de la Mariquina, Los

Ríos region, on August 28. WAM claimed responsibility for the attack. In response to the series of attacks, the government launched "Operation Hurricane". Eight Mapuche, including CAM leader Héctor Llaitul, were arrested for their alleged involvement in several attacks. Mapuche accused the police of violence, including against family members of the detainees. On October 9, thousands of people gathered on the streets of the capital Santiago to demonstrate for the Mapuche. They accused the government of using the anti-terrorism law, a remnant of the Pinochet administration, as a pretext to arrest indigenous people. Moreover, four Mapuche carried out a 118-day-long hunger strike in order to protest against the law, on the basis of which they had been jailed for over a year without further conviction. On October 6, the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples and the Special Rapporteur on counter-terrorism called on the Chilean government to refrain from prosecuting Mapuche under the anti-terrorism law. On October 25, a Chilean court announced the acquittal of eleven Mapuche who had been accused of involvement in the 2013 arson attack on the Luchsinger-McKay landowner couple. However, on December 29, a court of appeals annulled the decision and reopened the case. In June, President Michelle Bachelet officially apologized to all Mapuche people in the name of the state. While Bachelet sought dialogue with the Mapuche community, president-elect Sebastian Piñera announced that he would not abolish the anti-terrorism law and indicated during the election campaigns that he would take a tougher stance on the issue of security in La Araucanía. He was set to enter office in March 2018.

cae

COLOMBIA (ARTISANAL MINERS / ANTIOQUIA)

Intensity: 3 | Change: NEW | Start: 2017

Conflict parties: local miners, Mesa Minera vs. Gran Colombia Gold, government
Conflict items: resources

A violent crisis over mining rights in Segovia and Remedios, Antioquia department, erupted between local artisanal miners, represented by the Mesa Minera of Segovia and Remedios, and supported by indigenous people and Afro-Colombians from the region, on the one hand, and the government and the Canadian mining company Gran Colombia Gold, on the other.

The conflict started when the Mesa Minera staged a strike on July 21. Local merchants and employees from various sectors joined their call. The purpose of the strike was to protest a legislative change that would provide advantage to mining companies like Gran Colombia Gold over local artisan miners, as well as the insufficient progress in the legalization of artisanal mining in the region. In Antioquia, approximately 78 percent of the mining rights were not formalized. Generally, the country's average of non-formalized mining titles was high, at 62 percent. Over the course of the strike, various protests took place in the two municipalities, of which several ended in violence. Violence during these clashes left three people dead and at least 25 injured. Additionally, the access to food, livelihoods, public services such as education, wa-

ter, and energy, as well as mobility, was restricted for at least 22,000 further persons. About 150 people were displaced. While violence was limited to the municipalities of Segovia and Remedios, peaceful demonstrations by strike supporters also took place in Antioquia's capital Medellín. For instance, on August 4, about 150 supporters demonstrated in Medellín against the way in which the government's was dealing with the situation. While the Mesa Minera reaffirmed the peaceful nature of their protests, the Governor of Antioquia, Luis Pérez Gutiérrez, and Gran Colombia Gold denounced the involvement of armed groups like the Army of National Liberation (ELN) and Gaitanist Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AGC) on the side of the miners [→ Colombia (ELN); Colombia (neo-paramilitary groups, drug cartels)].

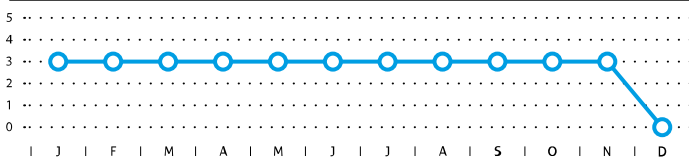
Protests turned violent in La Cruzada, Segovia, on July 31. In clashes between protesters and the police's Mobile Anti-Disturbances Squadron (ESMAD), the use of explosives, guns, and tear gas left 24 people on both sides injured. On July 3, two unknown gunmen killed a participant of the demonstrations in Segovia in a drive-by shooting on a motorbike. During clashes in El Reversadero, Segovia, on August 15, a protester was shot dead. While the police stated that their forces had not been present during the attack, the Mesa Minera blamed the ESMAD. Three days later, in clashes in Guanανά, in which explosives and tear gas were used, one protester died and a further protester and two policemen were injured. As with the previous incident, the Mesa Minera blamed ESMAD for the fatality. The conflict parties declared the end of the strike on September 1 after 43 days, and staged several meetings to reach an agreement. They announced – inter alia – the institutionalization of an Office for Mining Solutions, which should provide a forum for discussions of the parties regarding legalization of mining rights. They also agreed upon limiting zones of industrialized mining in the two municipalities. On October 24, the Mesa Minera threatened to resume its strikes if ten informal mines were closed. In their statement, they further denounced the government as well as Gran Colombia Gold for not having observed their agreement. vs

COLOMBIA (ELN)

Intensity: 4 | Change: • | Start: 1964

Conflict parties: ELN vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology, subnational pre-dominance, resources



The limited war over the orientation of the political system, subnational predominance, and resources between the National Liberation Army (ELN) and the government continued. In comparison to the previous year, government airstrikes against the ELN were reduced in quantity and intensity. Nevertheless, the conflict remained highly violent with at least 56 people killed throughout the year. Within its conflict with the

government, the ELN was responsible for displacing an estimated 32,000 people. The ELN was furthermore involved in a substate conflict with other armed groups, which continued to affect the civilian population [→ Colombia (inter-cartel rivalry, neo-paramilitary groups, left-wing militants)]. The Marxist-Leninist ELN predominantly financed itself through involvement in the production and commercialization of narcotics, extortion, illegal mining, and kidnapping. The group was estimated to consist of about 2,000 armed members, and was primarily active in Arauca, Cauca, César, and Norte de Santander departments. In the context of the demobilization of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the ELN expanded its presence in areas previously dominated by the FARC [→ Colombia (FARC)]. According to a November OAS report, these included several municipalities in the departments of Nariño, Antioquia, and Bolívar. The military subsequently denied the expansion of the ELN into former FARC territories.

After the ELN had released their high-profile hostage and former Congress member Odín Sánchez on February 2 after ten months, the group and the government started formal peace negotiations in Quito, Ecuador, on February 7. On October 1, the ELN and the government began their first bilateral ceasefire, which was set to last three months. Both parties largely upheld the terms of the ceasefire, although several violations were reported. For example, on October 24, the ELN killed an indigenous leader in Alto Baudó, Chocó. This incident, as well as continuous threats against the local indigenous community, led to the displacement of 1,142 people. On November 15, the ELN allegedly wounded a soldier in an attack in El Tarra, Norte de Santander. The fourth round of the peace negotiations was concluded on December 1, with the fifth scheduled to commence on 01/08/18.

Throughout the year, the government upheld military pressure on the group. In El Carmen, Norte de Santander, on April 1, ten ELN members were killed in an operation that included airstrikes with Kfir and Supertucano planes and ground troop deployment. As a result of the airstrikes, water sources were damaged and 292 people were displaced.

Over the course of the year, the ELN conducted various attacks on security forces. For example, in Tame, Arauca department, the ELN allegedly killed a police officer and injured another in a drive-by shooting on January 17. On February 19, the ELN killed one police officer and injured 26 people in a bomb attack in Bogotá's La Macarena neighborhood. The ELN also conducted attacks, particularly assassinations, against civilians. On March 25, the ELN allegedly killed five people in El Carrá, Litoral de San Juan, Chocó, which led to 52 people fleeing their homes.

The ELN was further blamed for various attacks on the Cano Limón Covenas Pipeline, which led to environmental damages. For example, in El Carmen, on April 27, some 4,000 people were affected by an oil spill, caused by an alleged ELN attack on the pipeline, as access to water was restricted. Intoxication syndromes were reported among the population and classes were temporarily suspended. kgr

COLOMBIA (FARC DISSIDENTS)

Intensity: 3 | Change: NEW | Start: 2017

Conflict parties: FARC dissidents vs. government
Conflict items: system/ideology, subnational pre-dominance, resources

A violent crisis between dissidents of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the government, supported by the FARC, erupted over Marxist-Leninist ideology, subnational predominance, and resources, including the production and commercialization of drugs.

Significant parts of several FARC fronts abandoned the peace process with the government at different stages, claiming to be "the real FARC" [→ Colombia (FARC)]. According to Defense Minister Luís Carlos Villegas, the dissidents represented 5 to 7 percent of the over 7,000 FARC members, whereas independent organizations estimated that some 10 to 15 percent of FARC members had not demobilized. There was a particularly high number of dissidents in the departments of the Eastern Plains, especially in Guaviare, Guainía, and Meta, with up to 600 FARC members not demobilizing. The 1st Front was the wealthiest and strongest group of dissidents, with up to 400 members. As dissident fronts, they acted more independently than they had while they had been integrated into the structure of the FARC's Eastern Bloc.

The 1st Front had already abandoned the peace process in 07/2016 and allied with the dissident 7th, 16th, and 43rd Front. They carried out several attacks on state security entities and social activists in the Eastern Plains, leading to at least three deaths and over ten injuries. For example, on April 9, the 1st Front killed a civil society activist in Barranquillita, Guaviare, leaving a pamphlet, in which they accused him of having collaborated with the military. In the same municipality, on May 3, the 1st Front kidnapped the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNDOC) member Harley López while he was promoting a coca substitution program for coca growers. They released him after 62 days. Throughout the country, the eradication of illicit drugs was contested between local coca farmers and the government. On December 24, an IED installed by the 7th Front wounded four Marine soldiers on a routine patrol on the Guayabero River in Guaviare.

The government and the FARC also accused the dissidents of killing and threatening demobilizing FARC members. In Caquetá department, on January 10, a demobilizing FARC member and a civilian died during clashes between the dissident 14th Front and the demobilizing Teófilo Forero Mobile Column.

In response to the attacks, the government declared FARC dissidents a military target and conducted continuous military and police operations, killing and arresting several dissidents. On May 16, for example, the 1st Front member Mauricio de Jesús Medina alias Morrudo was killed during a police operation in San Vicente del Caguán, Caquetá.

Luis Alfonso Lizcano alias Euclides Mora, one of the dissidents' commanders, was killed in a military operation in Guaviare on September 29.

Miguel Santillana alias Gentil Duarte, leader of the 7th

Front, Gener García alias John 40 and Néstor Vera alias Iván Mordisco, leader of the 1st Front, had been declared the highest-value targets. On October 31, the government officially authorized the use of airstrikes against FARC dissidents, although the first airstrike had already occurred on March 11 in Guaviare. Apart from the collective dissidence of the aforementioned fronts, individual FARC members also abandoned the peace process, and joined or formed other criminal organizations. For example, former FARC members formed Gente del Orden, active in drug production and trafficking, extortion, and illegal mining in Tumaco and Buenaventura, Valle del Cauca department, where they entered into the turf war between existing criminal organizations and armed groups [→ Colombia (inter-cartel rivalry, neo-paramilitary groups, left-wing militants)]. In the department of Antioquia, members of the FARC's 18th Front joined the neo-paramilitary group Gaitanist Self-Defense Forces of Colombia [→ Colombia (neo-paramilitary groups, drug cartels)].

mkr

COLOMBIA (FARC)

Intensity: 2 | Change: END | Start: 1964

Conflict parties: FARC vs. government
Conflict items: system/ideology, subnational pre-dominance, resources

The conflict over the orientation of the political system, subnational predominance, and resources between the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the government ended as the FARC transformed into a political party. The conflict, considered the longest lasting violent conflict in modern South America, had caused tens of thousands of deaths and millions of displacements during over 50 years of confrontations. Significant parts of both parties complied in key parts with the peace accord signed on 11/24/2016, which was supervised by the UN Verification Mission to Colombia, although the implementation of several points remained pending.

The Marxist-Leninist FARC agreed to hand over their weapons to the UN and to end their armed fight. Furthermore, the FARC promised to end their "relation" with illicit drugs and to contribute to resolving the issue of illicit drugs in Colombia. Besides extortion and illegal mining, involvement in drug trafficking had been the FARC's main source of income.

The government of President Juan Manuel Santos, in return, committed itself to the protection and support of the demobilized FARC members while they reintegrated into civil society. The government granted amnesty to FARC members accused of political crimes and crimes related to armed conflict, and established a Special Justice System (JEP) for those who had committed war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Starting in 12/2016, FARC members gathered in 26 transitory demobilization camps (ZVTN) in various regions of the country. The deadline for completing the transition into the zones was extended as the government admitted failures and delays in constructing the camps. After 6,900 members had arrived, Santos declared the transition complete on February 20.

FARC members injured an army captain on May 30, after he

and at least one subordinate came too close to a demobilization camp in Guaviare department. According to the peace agreement, demobilization camps had to be surrounded by a one-kilometer demilitarized zone. Officials, however, stated that the military personnel had entered the demilitarized zone by accident. This incident marked the only violent action between the FARC and state forces throughout the year, with neither party framing the incident as a conflict measure. On June 27, Santos and FARC leaders celebrated the completion of the arms' surrender in a ceremony in a ZVTN camp in Mesetas, Meta department. During the ceremony, the FARC's Commander-in-chief Rodrigo Londoño alias Timochenko declared the day to be the end of the "uprising" although not of the organization as such. According to the UN mission, the FARC had handed over 7,132 personal weapons in total and revealed the location of 660 arms caches. The weapons were shipped out of the country to be transformed into monuments, which would be erected in the capital Bogotá, in Cuba's capital Havana, where the peace negotiations had taken place, and in New York City, USA.

On September 1, the FARC announced the formation of a political party called Common Alternative Revolutionary Force (FARC). The new party's national council elected Londoño as its first president and as candidate for the presidential election on 05/27/2018. Other FARC leaders, such as Luciano Marín alias Iván Márquez, Jorge Torres alias Pablo Catatumbo, and Seusis Pausias alias Jesús Santrich, were designated candidates for the 03/11/2018 parliamentary elections. As part of the peace agreement, the FARC was guaranteed five seats in each chamber of Congress for the next two terms of office, but the party still had to participate in the elections.

Government presence in and control over former FARC-controlled areas remained limited after the FARC demobilization. As a consequence, other armed groups intensified their turf war in these regions [→ Colombia (inter-cartel rivalry, neo-paramilitary groups, left-wing militants)]. This led to protection concerns for the population in the affected regions. The research organization Indepaz stated for example that 170 social leaders had been killed in 2017, a 45 percent increase in comparison to the previous year.

Demobilized FARC members were also subject to threats and homicides. According to the government's Office of the High Commissioner for Peace, 34 former FARC members and 13 of their family members had been killed since April, most of them in the departments of Nariño, Antioquia, and Cauca.

Another threat to the peace process were dissident FARC members who refused to demobilize and continued to fight, claiming to be "the real FARC", as well as other ex-FARC members who joined or formed criminal organizations [→ Colombia (FARC dissidents)]. The UN mission mainly attributed the dissidence to administrative and political problems in implementing the peace accord, as the latter slowed the reintegration progress and disillusioned former fighters.

The government especially struggled to pass the necessary laws in Congress as it lost its majority because former allies left the coalition committed to the peace process to run as independent candidates in the 2018 presidential elections. Although a total of eleven laws, including six constitutional reforms, were approved, eight laws did not pass, including legislation on political participation and rural development. On October 11, the Constitutional Court approved a new consti-

tutional article in the constitution to protect the provisions of the peace agreement against changes from new governments for twelve years. On November 14, it declared the law for the Special Justice System (JEP) in major parts in accordance with the constitution.

mkr

COLOMBIA (INDIGENOUS GROUPS)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 2005

Conflict parties: indigenous groups vs. government
Conflict items: resources

The violent crisis over resources between several indigenous groups including Nasa, Paez, Coconuco, and Awá on the one hand, and the government, on the other, continued. Protests had started in 2005, when members of the Nasa had occupied private properties to demand a land reform and reparation law that recognized expansion of indigenous preservation areas.

Throughout the year, various confrontations between the Mobile Anti-Disturbance Squadron (ESMAD) and indigenous activists took place, resulting in injuries to members of both sides. Local media reported the use of IEDs, rocks, and machetes, while the indigenous denounced the use of teargas, helicopters, and firearms by police members. The highest number of clashes occurred in the Cauca department. For instance, on May 9, nearly 200 indigenous, who were occupying a hacienda, clashed with ESMAD in Corinto. As a result, one protester died, and two officers and a journalist were injured. On October 30, the National Organization of Indigenous People of Colombia (ONIC) called for a national protest in order to demand inclusive participation of indigenous communities in development of environmental reforms, land restitution, and the implementation of the peace agreement with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia [→ Colombia (FARC)]. Protests took place in different departments, including Cauca, Risaralda, and Chocó, with estimates of the number of participants varying from 4,000 to 100,000. Protesters blocked main and secondary roads throughout the country, including the Pan-American Highway. Other incidents included the retention of 17 police officers by a group of protesters on November 2 in Risaralda. One day later, media reported another group of three police officers being held in Caldono, Cauca. Both government and indigenous groups expressed their gratitude to the Mission to Support the Peace Process in Colombia of the OAS, UN delegations, and the local Ombudsman Offices for their permanent mediation during the national protests. However, indigenous representatives declared their intentions to decline further negotiations, accusing the government of systematically failing to fulfil the agreements reached in previous years.

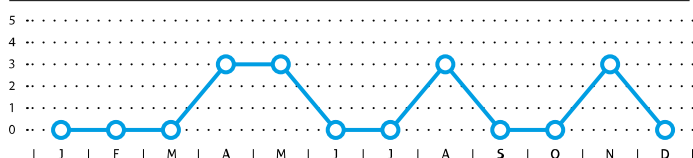
Indigenous communities' claims to land also led to confrontations between indigenous activists and small farmers. On March 22, an indigenous activist died during a skirmish with a group of workers of the occupied properties in Corinto, Cauca.

ago

COLOMBIA (INTER-CARTEL RIVALRY, NEO-PARAMILITARY GROUPS, LEFT-WING MILITANTS)

Intensity: 4 | Change: • | Start: 2013

Conflict parties: AGC vs. EPL vs. Los Rastrojos vs. ELN vs. FARC dissidents vs. et al.
 Conflict items: subnational predominance, re-sources



The limited war between several neo-paramilitary groups, drug cartels, as well as the National Liberation Army (ELN), and dissident elements of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) over subnational predominance and resources continued. The groups were also involved in a conflict with the government [→ Colombia (neo-paramilitary groups, drug cartels), Colombia (ELN)]. The main objectives of these groups were to command key strategic areas in order to secure the exploitation of resources, such as gold, to control drug production and trafficking, and to extort the population. Actors involved in the conflict included both groups with a national reach such as the ELN and the Gaitanist Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AGC), and smaller groups that operated on a regional level, often affiliated with larger actors. Civilians were often affected by the confrontations, for example by being displaced.

At least 893 homicides were attributed to turf wars in the Antioquia's capital Medellín and in the Valle del Cauca department. According to UNOCHA, in 2017, an estimated 38,000 people were displaced by neo-paramilitary groups, with a breakdown for the two conflicts involving these groups being unavailable.

In the context of the FARC's demobilization, various other armed groups moved in to claim former FARC territories and expand their presence in areas where the FARC had been active, clashing particularly in the departments of Chocó, Nariño, Valle del Cauca, and Norte de Santander [→ Colombia (FARC)]. According to UNDOC, 63 percent of increases in coca cultivation were concentrated in the departments Nariño, Norte de Santander, and Putumayo.

In Chocó in the first four months of the year, confrontations between AGC and the ELN caused mobility restrictions for more than 4,000 civilians. On March 25, the ELN killed five people under suspicion of being AGC collaborators in Litoral de San Juan.

In Nariño, various armed groups, which often could not be identified, clashed over the key region for criminal activities. On November 27, ten people were killed in Magüi Payán, allegedly in confrontations between the ELN and Guerrillas Unidas del Pacífico (GUP). Between August 27 and 31, 489 people left their homes in the hamlets of Puerto Rico and Mata de Plátano, Tumaco municipality, fleeing clashes between two unidentified groups. Between November 7 and 11,

clashes between unidentified groups left one civilian dead and led to the displacement of 146 people in Barbacoas and Tumaco.

Confrontations also led to intra-urban displacement. For instance on October 6, 1,500 inhabitants of various Tumaco neighborhoods left their homes due to armed confrontations between unidentified groups. Groups present in Tumaco included GUP, the FARC dissident group Gente del Orden, the ELN, and La Empresa.

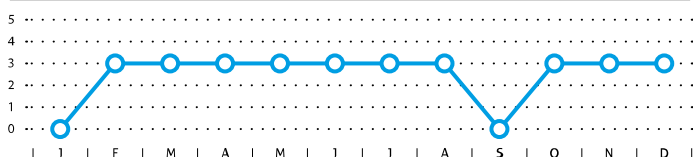
In Norte de Santander, the Popular Liberation Army (EPL) consolidated its presence in the Catatumbo region, occasionally clashing with AGC, the ELN, and Los Rastrojos. On August 24, the Ejército Paramilitar de Norte de Santander, consisting of splinter groups of AGC and Los Rastrojos, was engaged in several shootouts with rival organizations, including AGC, Los Rastrojos, and the ELN around the Simón Bolívar international bridge to Venezuela. Between May 4 and 11, confrontations between AGC and Los Rastrojos left five dead and three injured near the city of Cúcuta.

The turf wars between neo-paramilitary and criminal groups led to high numbers of homicides in cities and regions strategically important to the trafficking of drugs and other criminal activities. For example, in Medellín, the turf war caused 318 homicides. In Valle del Cauca, police attributed at least 565 homicides to rivalry between various groups. In Buenaventura, Valle del Cauca, the AGC-affiliated Banda Local reportedly fought La Empresa over control in key neighborhoods. Furthermore, the incursion of AGC, ELN, and Gente del Orden was reported in rural areas of the municipality. The presence of these groups and the turf war were associated with increasing homicide rates, forced displacement, and the establishment of so-called "invisible borders" between disputed neighborhoods. osv

COLOMBIA (NEO-PARAMILITARY GROUPS, DRUG CARTELS)

Intensity: 4 | Change: ↗ | Start: 1983

Conflict parties: drug cartels, neo-paramilitary groups vs. government
 Conflict items: subnational predominance, re-sources



The violent crisis over subnational predominance and resources between various neo-paramilitary groups, including the Gaitanist Self-Defence Forces of Colombia (AGC), the Popular Liberation Army (EPL), Los Rastrojos, Bloque Meta, and Libertadores del Vichada, on the one hand, and the government, on the other, escalated to a limited war. The main objectives of these groups were to command key strategic areas in order to secure the exploitation of resources, such as gold, to control drug production and trafficking, and to extort the population. According to UNOCHA, in 2017, an estimated

38,000 people were displaced by neo-paramilitary groups, with a breakdown for the two conflicts involving these groups being unavailable.

The neo-paramilitary groups had been founded by and largely consisted of ex-members of paramilitary groups that had demobilized in the mid-2000s, as well as remnants of drug cartels dismantled during the 1990s. The EPL was rooted in dissident elements of the guerrilla group of the same name that had demobilized in 1991.

The government classified major groups as "criminal gangs" (BACRIM), including AGC, also known as Los Urabeños, and EPL, Bloque Meta and Libertadores del Vichada. The government referred to the latter two as "Los Puntilleros", to AGC as "Clan del Golfo", and to EPL as "Los Pelusos." These groups were additionally classified as Organized Armed Groups (GAOs) and were thus potential targets of governmental airstrikes. The research institute INDEPAZ further considered Los Rastrojos and Aguilas Negras groups with paramilitary heritage. The largest group was AGC, present in 211 municipalities, with estimates of the number of members varying from 1,800 to 3,500.

On May 2, AGC set up a "Plan Pistola" which promised a reward of approx. 700 USD for every police officer killed. According to the police, the scheme left at least 14 police officers dead by mid-September. For instance, on May 8, two police officers were killed by AGC members in Acandí and Pie de Pepe, Chocó department.

On June 1, the government launched "Agamemnon II", expanding and modifying its "Agamemnon" operation, which had been active since 2015 with the task of apprehending AGC leader Dairo Úsuga alias Otoniel. The government increased the number of police and army personnel by 1,500 and added five Black Hawk helicopters donated by the US government.

On August 31, a 40-strong police operation with air support killed AGC's second-in-command Roberto Vargas alias Gavilán, in Turbo, Antioquia department. Luis Eduardo alias Inglaterra, Gavilán's successor, was killed in Chinácota, Norte de Santander department, on November 23. Shortly after Gavilán's death, Otoniel released a video offering to surrender the group to the government.

In spite of his acknowledgement of the offer, President Juan Manuel Santos refused any possibility for political negotiation and demanded AGC's unconditional surrender to the criminal justice system. On December 13, AGC announced a national unilateral ceasefire. However, on December 29, two AGC members threw a hand grenade into a nightclub in Caucasia, Antioquia, injuring 31 people. The government welcomed the ceasefire but stated that government forces would continue operations against the group until a formal surrender.

Throughout the year, AGC, EPL, and Los Rastrojos expanded operations into Venezuela's Táchira department. During Venezuelan military exercises on August 26, a confrontation with members of Los Rastrojos left six dead and two injured. In Zulia department, between August and October, joint operations between the Colombian and Venezuelan police also dismantled 50 cocaine processing labs and impounded 11,526 kg of cocaine that had belonged to the EPL. In Norte de Santander, EPL clashed with state security forces on several occasions. For example, on March 3, a police of-

ficer was shot dead in Betania, Tibú municipality, as he was conducting an intelligence operation against EPL.

In Meta department, the police captured Arnulfo Guzmán alias El Tigre, the alleged founder and leader of Libertadores del Vichada on September 22. One week later, the police captured his successor, who operated under the alias Caratejo, as part of the "Cronos II" operation.

In the context of the demobilization of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), various other armed groups, particularly AGC, moved in to claim several former FARC territories [→ Colombia (FARC)]. Furthermore, AGC reportedly offered money to demobilized FARC members to join their ranks.

The incursions of AGC into former FARC territories led to several instances of mass displacement, particularly in the departments Chocó and Nariño. For example, on March 12, more than 500 people fled their homes in Alto Baudó, Chocó, due to the alleged incursion of 200 armed persons, commanded by AGC's alias Furia. Furthermore, UNOCHA estimated that neo-paramilitary groups were responsible for 27 percent of all forced displacements throughout the year.

Throughout the year, several organizations denounced the increased number of assassinations of community leaders and activists allegedly carried out by neo-paramilitary groups. On November 17, UNHCR reported 78 assassinations of social leaders in 2017, while the research organization INDEPAZ counted 170 for the whole year. Although the government denied the systematic targeting of social leaders, it launched "Plan Orus" on December 11, to establish control of areas previously held by the FARC and to guarantee the safety of civil society activists.

osv

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC (ANTI-CORRUPTION)

Intensity: 3 | Change: NEW | Start: 2017

Conflict parties: Marcha Verde, social protest groups vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology, other

A new conflict over the orientation of the political system and corruption allegations between the movement Marcha Verde and other social protest groups, on the one hand, and the government, on the other, erupted in 2017.

In December 2016, the US Justice Department announced its investigation into the corruption scandal concerning the Brazilian construction company Odebrecht, which is accused of having bribed politicians and officials in the Dominican Republic and eleven other countries with approx. USD 785 million. Throughout 2017, people took to the streets to protest against government corruption, after it had been revealed that Odebrecht had co-funded the campaigns of the current president, Danilo Medina, and two of his predecessors, in exchange for granted construction contracts since 2001.

On January 22, civil, student and religious groups organized the first march against corruption and impunity in the capital Santo Domingo de Guzmán, National District, in which approx. 200,000 protesters participated. The protesters demanded the cancellation of all contracts between Odebrecht and the

Dominican Republic, the payback of the bribes, and prison sentences for the suspects. Police dispersed the protesters before they could reach their destination. On February 27, Medina insisted that the Attorney's General Office would face no restrictions when investigating the corruption allegations. By the end of February, about 300,000 people had signed the so-called Green Book demanding an independent commission for the investigations. The government accused the protesters on multiple media platforms of "destabilizing the country" and trying to "usurp power". Although several civil society groups continued to stage anti-corruption protests, the newly-formed movement called Marcha Verde mobilized most of the participants and attracted the majority of media attention. While the marches remained largely peaceful, protesters reported incidents of security forces using physical violence, detaining demonstrators unlawfully, and planting illegal drugs into the car of one demonstrator, as well as of further acts of intimidation. As of July, 13 former and current government officials and the president of the main oppositional Modern Revolutionary Party (PRM) had been indicted in the corruption allegations awaiting trial. On July 8, six of them paid their own bail. Eight days later, the largest of seven protest marches since January took place in Santo Domingo de Guzmán, with tens of thousands of protesters dressed in green demanding the resignation of the government. In a press release on July 24, activists also called upon the Attorney General to proceed with prosecution on the Odebrecht allegations. Furthermore, they stated irregularities in the report of a special commission set up by the government concerning the 2013 awarded coal-fired electricity project in Punta Catalina, Peravia province. Following the death of an activist on August 1, leaders of various protest groups staged a demonstration in Santo Domingo de Guzmán on August 3, accusing the police of having shot the activist and demanding investigations. On December 17, Marcha Verde and other protest groups held the Green Forum of Greater Santo Domingo and announced the presentation of their institutional and political transformation program in January 2018.

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC - HAITI

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 2009

Conflict parties: Dominican Republic vs. Haiti
Conflict items: other

The violent crisis between the Dominican Republic (DR) and Haiti over the status of citizenship and deportations of persons of Haitian descent.

In December 2017, the DR's General Directorate of Migration (DGM) reported that more than 110,000 Haitian migrants and their descendants were expelled from the DR in 2017. An additional 52,034 Haitians who tried to enter the DR were also turned back at the borders because of "irregular paperwork". NGOs such as MENAMIRD and SEHRD criticized human rights violations committed by the DR military during deportations. For instance, migrants and unaccompanied minors were allegedly physically abused by DR security forces and imprisoned without food or water. Moreover, they were

deported despite having legal documents or their enrolment in the National Regularization Plan for Foreigners (PNRE) program, which would have led to DR residence permits. International organizations such as the NGO Amnesty International repeatedly called for a solution concerning the statelessness crisis and support for Haitian descendants in the DR.

On January 17, during his visit to the DR, Haitian President Jovenel Moïse announced a move to provide Haitians in DR with official documents, declaring his aim to improve relations with the neighboring country. On April 21, in the course of the withdrawal of MINUSTAH, DR defense minister Rubén Darío Paulino Sem announced further strengthening the border protection by sending additional soldiers to the shared border. On June 29, a delegation of the DR met with representatives of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) in Washington, D.C., USA, to discuss discrimination against people of Haitian descent and other human rights violations. Both sides agreed on a working visit of the IACHR to the DR as part of the outline for a joint action plan. On July 13, DR authorities assaulted and imprisoned one member of the NGO SEHRD. Four days later, five Haitians were killed when trying to bypass the DR border patrol. On July 21, Haitian police and the DR defense ministry met to discuss border security, organized crime, trafficking, and illegal migration. Four days later, the PNRE program's deadline to submit necessary documents was extended for another 12 months. On July 29, a DR soldier reportedly injured a Haitian during an arrest. On August 16, DR foreign minister Manuel Vargas denied any abuse of Haitians during deportations, emphasizing the DR's "excellent relations to Haiti." On September 24, a Haitian was injured during a repatriation. Two days later, a deportation by DR police left one civilian dead and five injured.

Throughout the year, DGM also carried out several hundred migration control operations in the DR, arresting foreigners and later expelling them. For instance, in early December, DGM arrested 555 undocumented Haitians in the province Puerto Plata in a raid on various communities and homes. Supported by DR's armed forces and the Attorney's General Office, DGM used government intelligence to locate and capture Haitian migrants. lju

ECUADOR (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: 2 | Change: ▼ | Start: 1980

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

The conflict over the orientation of the political system and natural resources between various opposition groups and indigenous communities, on the one hand, and the government, on the other, de-escalated to a non-violent crisis.

On February 19, general elections were held, in which former president Rafael Correa of the PAIS Alliance party (AP) could not run for re-election. On April 10, the country's national electoral council (CNE) announced the AP candidate Lenín Moreno as the winner, with 51 percent in the second round of the vote. Due to a partial recount and delayed election results, the opposition, especially the party Creating Oppor-

tunities (Creo) and their presidential candidate Guillermo Lasso, accused the AP of fraud. In the aftermath of the elections, several protests took place throughout the country with no violent incidents reported.

Since his inauguration on May 24, tensions within the AP increased over Moreno's political agenda. On June 5, Moreno announced a new anti-corruption initiative to investigate corruption allegations concerning former government administrations including Correa's. One month later, Moreno invited 60 representatives of the umbrella organization Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE) in the presidential palace to participate in his newly-implemented "national dialogue initiative". The representatives called for land and water law reforms as well as amnesties for imprisoned activists. Shortly after, Correa stated his dissatisfaction over Moreno's meeting with CONAIE members. On August 3, Moreno removed Vice president Jorge Glas of all his powers and duties due to allegations of corruption.

In mid-September, Moreno announced a consultative referendum in 2018, which would include voting on indeterminate re-election of presidents and former presidents. On October 31, AP officials declared at a press conference in the capital Quito that Moreno would be removed as the AP's party president accusing him of having promoted the political agenda of the opposition and therefore undermining the "Citizens' Revolution" agenda of Correa. On November 7, the president of the national assembly declared that the majority of the AP would still support Moreno and his proposed referendum. On November 25, Correa returned to the country declaring his return would mark the beginning of a new "Citizen's Revolution" without Moreno as president.

In 2017, the conflict between indigenous groups and the government over natural resources and ancestral land also continued. After last year's violent forced evictions of members of the Shuar community by security forces, former President Correa extended the state of emergency for the Morona Santiago province on January 12. CONAIE accused the government of this "clear provocation", and pointed out that the Shuar community was not responsible for the death of a policeman. Throughout the year, the Chinese mining company Explorcobres in Morona Santiago province remained guarded by the military as Shuar tribes continued to peacefully protest the destruction of the region's ecosystem.

In July, CONAIE took the case of the forced evictions to the Inter-American Court for Human Rights, accusing the government and Explorcobres of human rights violation. However, the government did not attend either of the two requested hearings. At the end of August, the Shuar tribe held a meeting in Galaquiza, Morona Santiago province, formulating accusations against the government and Explorcobres, which remained unanswered.

cae

EL SALVADOR (INTER-GANG RIVALRY)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 2003

Conflict parties: Barrio 18 vs. MS-13 vs. MS-503
Conflict items: subnational predominance

The violent crisis over subnational predominance between the country's main gangs continued. Although the overall homicide rate dropped significantly, inter-gang fighting increased [→ El Salvador (Maras)]. In the last years, control over departments had mainly been contested between Barrio 18 and Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13).

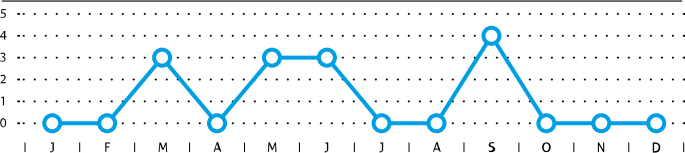
In 2017, the MS-503, a MS-13 splinter group, emerged and started to systematically target members of their former gang alliance and vice versa. The MS-503 reportedly split from the MS-13 after some gang leaders had allegedly received money during the 2012 gang truce negotiations with the government in exchange for electoral support. The two major gang cells Fulton and Normandis formed the MS-503. MS-503 reportedly controlled parts of the departments of Chalatenango, Ahuachapán, Sonsonate, and San Miguel. In several instances between January and July, spokesmen of the MS-503 declared war on the leaders of the MS-13 via video tapes and press releases. They also called on MS-503 members to stop attacks on police, soldiers, and civilians, and forbade them to negotiate with any politicians or parties. Violence between the two groups took place inside as well as outside of the country's prison facilities. Due to inter-gang rivalry, prisons have generally been segregated by gang membership. For instance in January, authorities transferred imprisoned gang members to the Ciudad Barrios prison, San Miguel department, after they had identified themselves as members of the MS-503. According to media outlets, the government allegedly supported the dissidents of the MS-13 to weaken the gangs. In January, a leader of the MS-503 was killed in the prison of Izalco, Sonsonate department, allegedly at the order of MS-13 leaders. On March 24, a self-constructed grenade exploded in the Ciudad Barrios prison, San Miguel, injuring three MS-13 members, and one alleged MS-503 leader. According to prison authorities, the MS-13 also began to target families of MS-503 members thereby breaking an informal gang code, which implied sparing other family members' lives.

sen

EL SALVADOR (MARAS)

Intensity: 4 | Change: • | Start: 2012

Conflict parties: Barrio 18, MS-13 vs. government
Conflict items: subnational predominance



The limited war over subnational predominance between the country's main gangs, namely the Barrio 18 and the Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13), on the one hand, and the government, on the other, continued. Although the overall homicide rate dropped significantly compared to the last year, the country had the second highest rate in the Americas region and the government continued its hardline security policies to fight gang violence. As in previous years, this conflict was also intertwined with violent clashes between the gangs regarding control over departments [→ El Salvador (inter-gang rivalry)]. According to the head of the National Police (PNC), Howard Cotto, 3,947 homicides were committed in 2017, with 413 alleged gang members killed by security forces as well as 46 police officers and 23 soldiers killed by gang members. In January, following a proposal of spokesmen for the MS-13 to re-enter negotiations with the government, the Sureños faction of the Barrio 18 also expressed their willingness to enter negotiations with authorities under the supervision of the Catholic Church or the UN. However, Vice president Óscar Ortiz declared on January 12 that the government would not negotiate with gang members and that security measures would stay in place. In early February, the Commission for Public Security and the Fight against Drug Trafficking decided to extend the hardline anti-gang measures until next year. On March 16, a shootout over extortion payments between gang members and private security forces in the capital San Salvador left six people dead. On the same day in the San Martín municipality, San Salvador department, units of the Special Reactionary Forces (FES) shot dead six alleged members of the Barrio 18. In a press conference shortly after, Cotto, announced a decrease in homicides by 62 percent in the first quarter of the year, which he attributed to extraordinary security measures of the government. On September 12, Cotto stated that 420 suspects, including ten leading members mainly of the MS-13, had been arrested in Operation Regional Shield, the latest joint anti-gang initiative of the Northern Triangle countries. On September 18, the government deployed a large military unit equipped with tanks to San Salvador. In the same month, the nationwide murder rate rose again with more than 400 homicides recorded, mainly in San Salvador.

As in previous years, security forces were accused of human rights abuses and their involvement in so-called death squads. On June 21, the PNC arrested four police officers, including one high-ranking official, ten soldiers, and 34 civilians for allegedly committing extrajudicial killings of gang members. The Attorney General's Office declared that the individuals had mostly targeted members of the MS-13 and would be charged with murder in more than 36 cases. On August 10, 18 state officials were put on trial for smuggling communication tools into prisons, conspiracy, and further illegal activities during the implementation of the gang truce in 2012. Three weeks later, the judiciary dismissed all 18 suspects. On August 28, Cotto announced internal PNC investigations after four FES officers had been accused of extrajudicial killings in three cases and possible sexual assault. In September, several civil society organizations appealed to the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights to accuse the Salvadoran government of lacking commitment to prosecute allegations of death squads and abuse by security forces.

International efforts to combat gang violence were spearheaded by the US. On July 27, US Attorney General Jeff Sessions met with Salvadoran President Salvador Sánchez Cerén and top law-enforcement officials in San Salvador to talk about transnational cooperation in the Northern Triangle countries as well as the activities of MS-13 cells in the US. sen

GUATEMALA (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 1985

Conflict parties: CNOC, CODECA, CUC, indigenous groups et al. vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology, resources

The violent crisis over the orientation of the political system and resources between various farmers' associations, such as the Peasant Development Committee (CODECA) and the Peasant Unity Committee (CUC) as well as various indigenous groups and other civilian protesters, on the one hand, and the government, on the other, continued.

On January 18, residents and activists protested against the construction of the Pojom II hydroelectric power plant in San Mateo Ixtatán, Huehuetenango department. The protesters gained control of the plant and burned down machinery. Police forces expelled the protesters from the area, killing one protester. On November 13, tensions surrounding the Pojom II hydroelectric plant escalated, when protesters first attacked a National Civil Police (PNC) station and subsequently vandalized the area of the power plant. According to the PNC, the protesters were armed with shotguns, assault rifles, stones, and machetes. During the clashes, seven PNC officers were injured.

On June 22, protesters blocked the access route to the El Escobal silver mine in San Rafael Las Flores, Santa Rosa department. The protesters threw stones at PNC forces, while they dispersed the crowd using teargas, wounding at least eleven. Furthermore, PNC forces arrested four protesters. One month later, on July 21, protesters tried to deny passage to a truck directed towards the El Escobal silver mine. Again, PNC forces used teargas, leaving at least four people injured.

During CUC-led protests of mostly senior citizens demanding to receive health and pension benefits on June 23 in Coatepeque, Quetzaltenango department, one protester was killed by gunfire and two more injured, when an unknown gunman opened fire on the protesters.

On August 27, President Jimmy Morales sparked local and international outrage when he declared Ivan Velasquez, head of the UN-backed International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG), a "persona non grata". After Velasquez had called for Morales to be stripped of his immunity and to be investigated for illegal campaign financing, Morales sought to terminate CICIG's mandate and ordered Velasquez to leave Guatemala. This sparked mass protests throughout the country initiated by several activist groups such as CODECA. Three days later, Guatemala's Constitutional Court ruled that Morales could not expel CICIG. On September 20, another wave of protests culminated in a national strike with 148,000 participants. Protesters demanded the resignation of 107 congressional deputies, including Morales, and ac-

cused them of corruption. tle

HAITI (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 1986

Conflict parties: Fanmi Lavalas, Pitit Dessalines, anti-government protesters vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology, national power

The violent crisis over national power between several opposition parties, including Fanmi Lavalas and Pitit Dessalines as well as anti-government protesters, on the one hand, and the government, on the other hand, continued.

After PHTK's Jovenel Moïse had won the elections in 2016, a provisional electoral council ruled out fraud allegations and confirmed his victory in January 2017. The opposition parties Fanmi Lavalas and Pitit Dessalines stated their non-recognition and called for civil disobedience. On January 5, Guy Philippe, supporter of former President Martelly, senator-elect, and leading figure during the violent protests in 2016, was arrested and extradited to the US after ten years on the DEA's wanted list. One day later, violent protests erupted in Grand'Anse department when Philippe sympathizers burned tires and set mayor offices in the cities of Jeremie and Dichtie on fire. Protesters shouted slogans during the inauguration of the new senators a few days later, blaming provisional president Jocelerme Privert for the extradition. Moïse took office on February 7 and nominated doctor Jack Guy Lafontant as prime minister on February 22. On March 20, gunmen dressed as police shot at a convoy of former president Jean-Bertrand Aristide in the capital Port-au-Prince, Ouest department, injuring two people. The new government, consisting of many different parties, was confirmed by parliament on March 21. On April 7, a group of people threw stones at Moïse's convoy in Arcahaie, Ouest Department, without causing casualties. The presidential office condemned the act as massive threat of "extremists". On April 13, the UNSC voted unanimously to end MINUSTAH by October and to replace the mission with the new UN Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH). On May 18 and May 22, protests by merchants in Delmas, Ouest, and by industry workers in Port-au-Prince concerning the minimum wage were reportedly stopped by police using tear gas. On June 26, textile workers peacefully demonstrated for higher salaries and against the president. Further demonstrations were held in Port-au-Prince on July 27, after Moïse had increased the minimum wage by 0,79\$, as protesters claimed the increase was too low. During a confrontation, in Pétienville, Port-au-Prince, on July 13 between merchants and local police, one person died. In August, Moïse was criticized by the opposition and civil society organizations for not publishing the results of the July elections for the country's municipal assemblies. On September 12, a demonstration against the government and its new budget plan took place in Port-au-Prince. Protesters blocked streets, burned tires, threw stones, and damaged shops. Reportedly, a private car driver killed a person. A public transport strike notably affected the capital on September 18. On September 27, at

least ten people were injured in a demonstration of workers in Ouanaminthe, Nord-Est department, when police fired warning shots and used tear gas to disperse them. Three days later, another demonstration was held in Port-au-Prince with approx. 2,000 participants. While the latter blocked roads, police used teargas, injuring some protesters. On October 15, the gradual departing of the more than 2,300 UN personnel began, with 1,275 UN police forces remaining for another six months. lju

HONDURAS (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 2009

Conflict parties: Libre, PAC, PINU-SD, anti-government activists vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology, national power, resources

The conflict over the national power, the orientation of the political system, and resources between opposition parties such as Libre and anti-government groups, on the one hand, and the governing National Party (PNH), on the other, continued on a violent level.

The general elections on November 26, indigenous and environmental as well as student protests caused several violent events in 2017.

On January 15, the left-wing party Libre formed an alliance with the two left-wing parties Partido Anti Corrupción (PAC) and Partido Innovación y Unidad-Social Demócrata (PINU-SD) under the slogan "opposition alliance against the dictatorship" to candidate for the upcoming presidential elections. On January 25, the country's supreme court allowed President Juan Orlando Hernández to run for presidential elections for a third time, with the opposition declaring the decision as unconstitutional. On November 26, the general elections were held mostly peaceful. The first projections announced a lead in votes by 5 percent for the opposition candidate Salvador Nasralla, with nearly 70 percent of the votes counted. After a failure of the EDV-system of the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE), the results indicated a one percent lead of president Hernández. Protests against potential electoral fraud started among the supporters of the opposition parties. Human rights organizations reported multiple human rights abuses by military police units. During the ongoing protests, between 14 and 34 people died, more than 200 protesters were injured and more than 800 were detained. Although the EU and the Organisation of American States (OAS) expressed concerns about the legitimacy of the electoral process, the TSE announced Hernández to be the winner on December 18, after partial recounts of the votes.

Fights between indigenous and environmental activists, on the one hand, and security forces, on the other, also remained violent. On February 17, five heavily armed men killed the leader of the indigenous Tolupan community in his house in the region of Montaña de la Flor, Francisco Morazan department. The Civil Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (COPINH) accused the government of complicating the investigative authorities' work and demanded protective measures for the Tolupan community which are

fighting against mining and illegal forestry in their region. According to COPINH, groups of masked men attacked three of their members, which had participated in protests against the Agua Zarca hydroelectric project, while driving in their car on June 30 in La Paz department. On August 10 and 15, military police raided two roadblock camps and evicted demonstrators protesting the new planned hydroelectric dam Los Planes on the Mezapa River in Tela municipality, Atlántida department. According to police, one police officer was injured and further six people were detained. Local civil society groups stated that the military police used tanks and patrol vehicles, and fired teargas at community members. Furthermore, student protests at the National Autonomous University of Honduras (UNAH) turned violent as security forces dissolved several blockades set up by members of the protesting group Movimiento Estudiantil Universitario (MEU). On January 10, science minister Marlon Escoto declared his resignation in reaction to the student protests that went on for 53 days. On August 5, Luis Joel Rivera, student and member of the MEU, was killed by unknown suspects using automatic fire arms. A leading member of the MEU described the homicides as a way of intimidating the protesting student groups. On September 13, officers of the national police, military police, and special forces dissolved student protests at the UNAH, detaining 26 people and injuring several more. mwo

MEXICO (CNTE ET AL.)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 2006

Conflict parties: CNTE et al. vs. government
Conflict items: system/ideology

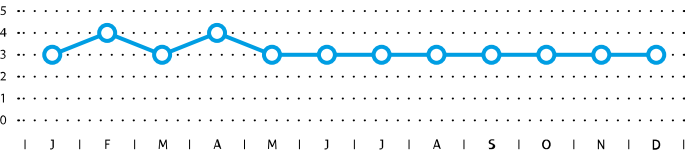
The violent crisis over the orientation of education policies between the teachers' union National Coordination of Education Workers (CNTE), supported by several smaller groups, and the government led by President Enrique Peña Nieto, continued. Throughout the year, CNTE blocked roads, staged protests, and took control of toll booths. However, contrary to the previous year, no fatalities were reported. Marches predominantly took place in the states of Chiapas, Guerrero, Oaxaca, and the Federal District. On February 1, state police dissolved a railroad blocking by CNTE members in Lázaro Cárdenas, Michoacán state. They dispersed the protesters by using tear gas while protesters threw Molotov cocktails and incendiary devices. Two protesters and two policemen were injured; police arrested six unionists. After the clash, medical staff reported one protester dead. However, this remained unconfirmed by the government. During a ceremony with Governor Alejandro Murat in Oaxaca City, Oaxaca, on March 21, CNTE attempted to block the central plaza. State police dispersed the crowd using teargas; one policeman and one teacher were injured. On May 1, the International Workers' Day, CNTE staged a three-day-protest including roadblocks, the occupation of the Oaxaca state presidential palace and commercial centers as well as strikes in several states. Thus, in Oaxaca state alone, classes were canceled for around one million students.

On June 19, the first anniversary of the massacre in Nochixtlán, Oaxaca, with a death toll of eight CNTE members, the unionists in Oaxaca City took to the streets. The State Institute for Public Education in Oaxaca (IEEPO) announced it would sanction those teachers that were absent from school due to their participation in marches. In Tuxtla Gutiérrez, Chiapas, about 40 unionists demanded their several months overdue wages by protesting outside of the Sub-Secretariat of Education Planning on August 28. They damaged windows and doors, painted walls, and burned tires. During a visit by Peña Nieto in Oaxaca City, on September 7, CNTE clashed with municipal as well as state police, leaving around five policemen and six teachers injured. A protester threw an incendiary device at the Air Force's helicopter transporting governmental reporters, however nobody was injured. Throughout the year, several teachers were attacked or killed by unknown gunmen. While CNTE held the government accountable, the latter denied any involvement in these incidents. For instance, on February 17, unknown gunmen killed a teacher near Juchitán, Oaxaca. jok

MEXICO (DRUG CARTELS)

Intensity: 5 | Change: • | Start: 2006

Conflict parties: drug cartels vs. vigilante groups vs. government
Conflict items: subnational predominance, resources



The war over subnational predominance and the production, trade, and trafficking of illegal drugs between various drug cartels, vigilante groups, and the government under President Enrique Peña Nieto, continued. The most active and extensive drug cartels were the Gulf Cartel (CDG), Sinaloa Cartel (CDS), their respective splinter groups, as well as Los Zetas and Cartel Jalisco Nuevo Generación (CJNG). Tamaulipas, Sinaloa, Veracruz, and Guerrero were the most affected states. Furthermore, drug cartels fragmented and claimed opposing territories [→ Mexico (intercartel rivalry, paramilitary groups)]. The country's homicide rate reached its 20-year high, influenced by the drug-related conflicts in the country. Additionally, 2017 was marked by the highest number of fatalities since the beginning of the conflict in 2006. In Tamaulipas, where most violence took place, Los Zetas and the Gulf Cartel (CDG) contested federal security. Between February 21 and April 22, when naval forces launched an operation to capture the CDG leader Juan Manuel "Comandante Toro" Loaiza Salinas, at least 30 people including the local cartel leader were killed in the highly-contested cities of Reynosa, Río Bravo and Nuevo Laredo. In April, the government deployed 717 police officers in Tamaulipas to support the operation against CDG. From October 13 to 23, a further

34 people died in clashes between federal police and CDG members in Reynosa and Río Bravo. Additionally, on March 5, soldiers killed 13 Zeta members during a street riot in Nuevo Laredo.

Turf wars between CDS splinter groups continued to cause clashes with security forces in Sinaloa after the detainment of cartel leader Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán Loera in 01/08/2016. In Culiacán on February 7, a shootout between cartel members, armed with AK-47 and AR-15 assault rifles, and navy forces, supported by a helicopter, left one marine and five CDS members dead. From February 17 to 22, marines carried out an operation in Culiacán and Navolato to capture high-ranking CDS members, leaving ten people dead and two injured. On June 30, marines intervened after an internal confrontation between CDS splinter groups and killed 17 cartel members in the following chase in Mazatlán.

In the coastal state Veracruz, CJNG emphasized its presence on February 28 by leaving eleven corpses and a message to the government in a truck in Boca del Río. On March 18, an attack on a civilian's house led to a confrontation between the assailants and policemen, leaving five policemen and three attackers dead, among them the head of Los Pelones, a CDG splinter group.

Guerrero continued to be a hotspot of violence between the cartel La Familia Michoacana (LFM), local cartels, and federal security forces. On September 17, LFM attacked a military convoy in Teloloapan. One soldier was killed with high caliber weapons and eight cartel members died in crossfire.

Of the 31 states of Mexico, at least 20 were reportedly affected by conflict-related violence in 2017. For instance, in Tepic, Nayarit state, 100 soldiers killed two high-ranking Beltrán Leyva cartel members and 13 other members on February 8. The military deployed helicopters, while the cartel used fire weapons and a fragmentation grenade. Two days later, marines continued the operation in the same city and shot a third leader of the cartel and another member dead. In Chihuahua, after inter-cartel fights had led to the death of the head of La Línea, the armed wing of the Juárez Cartel, violence evolved between the latter and the military. On March 22, they clashed in Mineral de Dolores, where eight cartel members were killed and four soldiers were wounded. On July 20, marines killed eight members of the Tláhuac cartel, among them their leader, in the capital Mexico City.

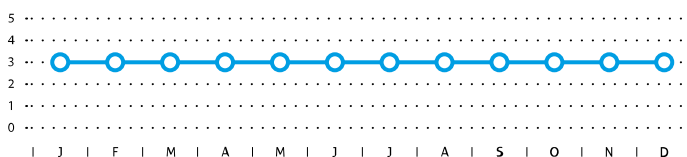
Despite numerous arrests, drug cartels continued to show a strong presence in illegal businesses apart from drug trafficking, especially oil theft centered in the states Puebla and Veracruz. In March, a 500 men-strong operation was deployed in Puebla against Los Bukanas, a Huachicoleros group connected to Los Zetas. Five people died in shootouts between soldiers and Los Bukanas in Vicente Guerrero on July 21. Soldiers killed another five Bukanas after a failed arrest in Esperanza on July 24. Los Toñín, linked to CJNG, attacked marines and killed four of them as well as six civilians and injured further 14 in Palmarito on May 3. As in the previous year, Mexico remained one of the world's most dangerous countries for journalists. According to Reporters Without Borders, 2017 was the deadliest year for journalists reporting on drug-related violence since 2010. tk

MEXICO (INTER-CARTEL RIVALRY, PARAMILITARY GROUPS)

Intensity: 4 | Change: • | Start: 2005

Conflict parties: CJNG et al. vs. Sinaloa et al. vs. CDG et al. vs. Los Zetas et al. vs. LFM et al. vs. LCT et al.

Conflict items: subnational predominance, re-sources



The limited war over subnational predominance and the production, trade, and trafficking of illegal drugs between various drug cartels, continued. The most involved groups were those of the Cartel Jalisco Nueva Generación (CJNG), Gulf Cartel (CDG) and its splinter groups, as well as Los Zetas and the Sinaloa Cartel (CDS) and its splinter groups. Veracruz, Tamaulipas, Guerrero and Sinaloa were the most contested states. A strategy of targeting drug cartels' leading figures applied by the Mexican government resulted in increased fragmentation of cartels and heavy fights over local predominance [→ Mexico (drug cartels)].

CJNG, the cartel with the largest territory under its control, continued its turf wars with Los Caballeros Templarios (LCT), Los Zetas, CDS, and La Familia Michoacana (LFM). In the state of Michoacán, CJNG members killed eight opponents in Múgica on February 22. Confrontations between CJNG and LFM left nine cartel members dead in Churumuco on April 22. In the state of Veracruz, authorities recovered the corpses of five Zetas members next to a message signed by CJNG in Juan Rodríguez Clara on May 26. Clashes between Zetas and CJNG left nine dead in Coatzacoalcos on September 30. Territorial fights expanded to Puebla, where CJNG executed 17 Zetas members and left them with a message claiming responsibility in Puebla on October 30. CJNG also declared its ambition to fight for predominance in Guerrero due to the state's geographical importance for trafficking routes by leaving nine dead bodies and a claim of responsibility in Guanajuato on September 28. In clashes involving CJNG and the Beltrán Leyva splinter groups Los Ardillos and Los Rojos, 19 militants were killed in shootings in Chilapa between March 7 and 13.

Splintergroups of the Sinaloa Cartel and the Beltrán Leyva cartel caused most violence in Sinaloa, the state with the highest number of conflict-related deaths. Internal fights between Sinaloa Cartel's Chapitos, a splinter group led by Jesús Alfredo and Iván Archivaldo Guzmán – the sons of former CDS leader Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán Loera – and the Dámasos, led by Guzmán's former right hand Dámaso López Núñez, heavily weakened the cartel in personnel and presence. On February 4, Dámasos group allegedly ambushed and wounded the Chapito leaders in Badiraguato. Subsequently, the Chapitos publicly accused Dámasos group to be responsible for the attack and their one week kidnapping in 2016. From February 5 to 9, confrontations between the two groups in the states Sinaloa and Jalisco left at least 18

members dead and two wounded. After Mexican authorities had captured Dámaso López Núñez in the capital Mexico City on May 2, 17 CDS members were killed in the following encounters in Sinaloa on May 6 and 7. In the neighboring state Chihuahua, CDS clashed with La Línea, the armed wing of the Juárez Cartel. On July 5, 26 were killed in confrontations in Las Varas. On October 15, clashes left six opponents dead in Uruachi.

Internal rivalries within the Gulf Cartel turned the northern state Tamaulipas into a hotspot of violence. After soldiers had killed Gulf Cartel's local head in Reynosa, Tamaulipas, on April 22, splinter groups installed road blockades with burning vehicles and set houses on fire. Subsequent confrontations until June 16 caused at least 40 casualties, military operations curfew, and infrastructure damage. In Reynosa, on September 24, 16 CDG cartel members were killed in internal clashes and another two on the following day.

Out of the 31 states of Mexico, at least 22 were reportedly affected by conflict-related violence in 2017. From January to April, violence spread to the tourist area Cancún, Quintana Roo state, when 16 cartel members from CDG, CJNG and local cartels were killed in confrontations. In Acapulco Prison, 28 people were killed in a riot between the two prison-based gangs Los Juanitos and Los Arnolds on July 4. tk

NICARAGUA (INDIGENOUS GROUPS)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 2015

Conflict parties: Miskito groups, YATAMA vs. government

Conflict items: autonomy, resources

The violent crisis over autonomy and resources in the coastal regions of the North Caribbean Coast Autonomous Region (RACCN) between members of indigenous groups and the party Yapti Tasba Masraka Nanih Aslatakanka (YATAMA), on the one hand, and the government as well as Nicaraguan settlers, called colonos, on the other, continued. Habitation and agricultural use of autonomous indigenous land was the central conflict issue, which was contested between indigenous people and colonos. On January 5, 70 Miskito people armed with machetes, harpoons, and pistols killed two colonos and took another five hostage in Isnawás, North Atlantic Autonomous Region (RAAN). Twelve days later, the Miskito released the hostages after negotiation talks with the government. The latter promised the withdrawal of the colonos from indigenous land in RACCN within the next six months, as well as the enactment of the law that fully recognizes the ownership of the indigenous groups over their land. On March 16, 20 families were forced to flee from violent colonos in Waspam, RAAN. An indigenous was held hostage for a few hours. Colonos defended their settlements using force, hindering indigenous women in Esperanza, RAAN, to reach their land to seed beans, which led to a food shortage among the indigenous population. On August 9, Brooklyn Rivera Bryan, the head of YATAMA, called upon the presidents of Honduras and Nicaragua to fulfil their promises to guarantee the autonomy of the coastal regions. On September 9, the local court charged three men for

illegally selling and damaging indigenous land. The communal leader of Santa Clara, Felipe Pérez Reymundo, was killed by colonos on November 29. On the same day, the indigenous leader Felipe Pérez Gamboa was assassinated by a colono. On December 6, a clash between colonos and indigenous people in the indigenous territory Mayagna Sauni As left two colonos dead. Emilio Bruno, president of Mayagna Sauni As, denied this. mbo

NICARAGUA (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 2008

Conflict parties: opposition groups vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology, national power, resources

The violent crisis over national power, the orientation of the political system, and resources such as water and ancestral land, between various opposition groups and the government of President Daniel Ortega's Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN), continued.

On January 10, Ortega was sworn in as president for his third consecutive five-year term. Due to the absence of independent international observers, the opposition criticized the FSLN-administered electoral process by considering the government illegitimate, and continued to fight the latter through civil disobedience. On January 20, the government and the Organization of American States (OAS) agreed on a joint three-year plan to strengthen the country's electoral institutions and on an OAS monitoring mission of the municipal elections in November 2017. The alleged connections of the mission's head Wilfredo Penco to the government was criticized by oppositional parties. On April 26, the Nicaraguan Investment Conditionality Act (NICA) was reintroduced to US congress. The act threatened to apply economic sanctions if the Nicaraguan government would not improve its democratic processes and fight corruption more effectively. On May 3, the country's supreme electoral court granted admission to two new political parties to the municipal elections, namely the Ciudadanos por la Libertad (CxL) and Partido de Restauración Democrática (PRD). On August 31, the National Assembly controlled by the FSLN approved a reform of the country's electoral law, allowing those not included in the electoral register to vote by presenting their identity card on election day. Alleged CxL activists killed the mayoral candidate Zeneyda Patricia Salgado Matus, member of the oppositional Liberal Constitutionalist Party (PLC), in San José de Bocay, department of Jinotega, on September 2. Two days later, PLC's local directive Fidel Rodríguez was also killed in El Tortuguero municipality, South Caribbean Coast Autonomous Region (RAAS). The CxL denied the party membership of the individuals involved in these actions. On November 5, the FSLN won 134 out of the 153 mayoralities in the municipal elections. Despite oppositional protest, the observer mission of the OAS declared the overall validity of the electoral results although recognizing occasional irregularities and weaknesses in the electoral system. After the elections, clashes between oppositional protesters, on the one hand, and government supporters and police, on the other, left seven peo-

MEXICO (INTER-CARTEL RIVALRY, PARAMILITARY GROUPS)



ple dead, about 40 injured, and several houses and government offices destroyed. On November 6, two CxL members were killed in Yali, Jinotega department and one PLC member in Wiwili, Jinotega during clashes with FLSN members. Furthermore, police killed two protesters in Bilwi, department of North Caribbean Coast Autonomous Region. During and after the elections, FSLN supporters and members of the YATAMA party clashed in Sandy Bay Sirpi, RAAS, two members of the latter were killed.

YATAMA also clashed with government supporters over land and autonomy rights of the Miskito indigenous people throughout 2017 [→ Nicaragua (indigenous groups)]. Further protests concerning the inter-oceanic canal project in the RAAS and the La India gold mining project in Santa Rosa del Peñón municipality, León department, left no casualties.

cb

PARAGUAY (EPP, AGRARIAN MOVEMENTS)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 1989

Conflict parties: EPP, agrarian movements vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology, resources

The violent crisis over land reform between several farmer organizations, the left-leaning People's Army of Paraguay (EPP), indigenous groups, and landless people on the one hand, and the government on the other, continued for the 29th consecutive year. These groups continued to express their demands for integral agrarian, social, and political reform.

In the first quarter of the year, various cooperative, farmer, and activist groups staged several protest marches in the capital Asunción and other parts of the country. The distribution of land, a sustainable development model and a fair taxation of cooperative groups were contentious issues. However, protesters predominantly expressed their dissent against constitutional amendments allowing the President Horacio Cartes to seek a second five-year term. On March 31, protesters and police forces clashed after the former had occupied and torched parts of the National Congress in Asunción. During the clashes protesters threw stones at police forces, who fired rubber bullets and used teargas, killing one protester and injuring 30. Subsequently, on April 1, Cartes replaced the interior minister and the police commander. On April 18, Cartes met the demand of the protesters and declared he would not run for a second term under "any circumstances".

On July 18, thousands of peasant farmers led by the farmers' organization Coordinadora Nacional Intersectorial (CNI) took to the streets of Asunción, demanding relief from their debts. Contrary to previous announcements on August 2, Cartes vetoed a legislative bill calling for the farmers' debt relief on August 4. This prompted hundreds of farmers, primarily members of the CNI, to set up an "indefinite" protest camp outside the National Congress one month later.

Throughout the year, EPP activity was less violent than in the previous year. On February 25, the EPP released one of their hostages, after his family met the EPP's demand of distributing food supplies to indigenous communities in Río Verde,

San Pedro department. On April 26, six members of the EPP ambushed and killed a security guard at a farm in Arroyito, Concepción department. They left a CD, on which they declared their opposition to the deployment of security personnel on farms and the cultivation of soy. On May 29, Cartes dismissed the head of the Joint Task Force, a military unit deployed to counter EPP's activities, amid increased public pressure regarding perceived inefficiency. Subsequently, he appointed Héctor Alcides Grau, making him the seventh commander within four years. Between August 21 and September 1, EPP members kidnapped two farmers in San Pedro department. By the end of the year, the group held five people hostage. mah

PERU (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 2008

Conflict parties: opposition movements vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology, resources

The violent crisis over the orientation of the political system and resources related to socio-environmental issues such as environmental pollution and land rights, predominantly in the extractive sector, between various opposition movements and the government, continued.

In 2017, miners, teachers, and members of indigenous communities staged numerous strikes and protests throughout the country. As in previous years, workers in the mining sector continued to protest against labor reforms and for better working conditions. On February 6, miners started a five-day protest in the town Challuahuacho near the MMG's Las Bambas copper mine, Apurímac region demanding new public work projects. They blocked roads used by the MMG to transport copper concentrate for shipments from port of Matarani. The government suspended civil liberties with an emergency degree and agreed to build a sewage system and a hospital. On March 10, approx. 1,200 miners staged a strike at the US-owned copper mine Cerro Verde, demanding special benefit payments as well as family health benefits. Cerro Verde is the country's largest mine which made up the third-largest ore reserves in the world. The government under President Pedro Pablo Kuczynski pushed to expand its mining industry to stimulate economic growth and to reduce poverty. In August, the conflict in the Las Bambas mine flared up again. Miners blocked the transport roads, demanding that MMG or the government pay for the usage. The government declared a 30-day state of emergency in districts Challuahuacho, Haquira, and Mara. On July 19, unionized mining workers at 56 mines began striking nationwide over proposed labor reforms. The following two days, riot police used tear gas to disperse the protestors, who stopped traffic in the capital Lima. Union leaders called off the strike as a task force that included Labor Minister Alfonso Grados and union representatives was agreed.

In the second half of the year, teachers began to strike to demand better working conditions and fight educational reforms. Starting on June 15 and organized by the Unitary

Union of Peruvian Education Workers (SUTEP), thousands of teachers took to the streets in various cities of the country. After teachers' protests blocked transportation to Machu Pichu and the airport of Juliaca, San Roman province, the government declared a state of emergency on July 21 for twelve regions with police and the armed forces employed to enforce public order. After several failed negotiations, the government and SUTEP reached an agreement on August 3 which led to an increase in teachers' salary.

Indigenous people from the country's Amazon region took control over oil producing facilities and oil fields in late April and August to protest against environmental pollution and for compensation for land use. In August, indigenous people in the Marañón, Pastaza, Corrientes and Tigre river basins took over the oil producing facilities in the oil block Lote 192, Loreto region. Indigenous leaders accused the government of refusing to carry out a consultation process regarding the use of their ancestral land, despite awarding a new 30-year contract for Lote 192 with Frontera Energy, a Canadian firm. They threatened direct action to prevent extrication from the oilfield if their demands were not met, and set an ultimatum of September 11.

According to the UN's special rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples, the oil producing activities have appalling impacts on the communities of the Achuar, Kichwa, Kukama, Quechua, and the Urarina, and highlighted the government's inadequate efforts to offer compensation for oil spills, environmental damage, and health problems caused by hazardous substances and wastes. Although first declaring the accusations to be unfounded, the government agreed to implement a consultation process on October 31.

Violence between members of indigenous communities and loggers concerning land use also continued in 2017. On September 1, a group of 30 to 40 people carrying shotguns killed six peasant farmers of an indigenous community in Ucayali region. As in previous years, the indigenous Shipibo community in Santa Clara de Uchunya stated they were being forced by palm oil growers to leave their land. mgm

USA (RIGHT-WING EXTREMISTS)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 1990

Conflict parties: right-wing extremists vs. government
Conflict items: system/ideology

The violent crisis over ideology and the orientation of the political system between various right-wing extremists groups and the government continued.

The extremists were mainly comprised of white supremacist groups and of anti-government extremists, who consider themselves "sovereign citizens", rejecting federal authority and legitimacy. Although pre-existent throughout American history, the number of right-wing extremist organizations and their activities increased in the early 1990s. According to the South Poverty Law Center and the Anti Defamation League, an interpretation of the vision of a "New World Order", outlined in 1990, led to the formation of conspiracy-minded right-wing extremists groups, like the "Patriot Movement". In the follow-

ing years, several attacks by right-wing extremists culminated in the Oklahoma City Bombing in 1995, which was carried out by militia movement sympathizers, leaving 168 people dead and 680 people injured.

Throughout 2017, right-wing extremist groups repeatedly organized nationwide demonstrations, which regularly resulted in clashes with police forces and counter-protesters. Most notably, right-wing extremists held a rally on August 12 under the banner "Unite the Right" in Charlottesville, Virginia state, protesting the removal of a statue of confederate General Robert E. Lee. The rally was organized and joined by white supremacist and neo-Nazi groups like the Ku Klux Klan, and the Nationalist Front, consisting of the National Socialist Movement, the neo-confederate League of the South, the Traditionalist Workers Party, and Vanguard America, as well as several militia movements like the Oath Keepers and the Three Percenters.

On the evening of August 11, one day before the rally, around 100 white supremacists marched with lit torches through Charlottesville, chanting slogans like "Blood and Soil" and "Jews will not replace us", and eventually clashed with 30 local counter-protesters. The use of pepper spray on both sides resulted in minor injuries among the protesters.

On August 12, an estimated 500 right-wing extremists clashed with around 1,000 counter-protesters before the official start of the rally at noon. The clash left at least 14 people injured, mostly due to fist fights, batons, smoke bombs, and pepper spray. Participants of the rally as well as some counter-protesters were heavily armed with guns and semi-automatic rifles. Two protesters were detained by police. An hour before the start of the rally, the City of Charlottesville declared a state of emergency and police forces began to disperse the crowds shortly after. A right-wing protester drove into a group of counter-protesters with his car, killing one and injuring 19 others. The driver was subsequently arrested and charged with murder.

Throughout the year, further violent and non-violent encounters between right-wing extremists, police forces and counter-protesters took place, leading to several state of emergency declarations.

For instance, on April 15, right-wing extremists, among them 50 members of the militia movement Oath Keepers, clashed with police forces and counter-protesters at the campus of Berkeley University, California state, leaving at least eleven people injured. On March 20, a white supremacist stabbed to death Afro-American Timothy Caughman in New York with a sword, claiming he wanted to prevent black men from having relationships with white women. Similar attacks by individual perpetrators occurred on May 20 at the University of Maryland, Washington D.C., and on May 26 in a train in Portland, Oregon state, leaving three people killed and one injured.

pen

USA – VENEZUELA

Intensity: 2 | Change: • | Start: 2001

Conflict parties: USA vs. Venezuela
Conflict items: system/ideology, international power

The non-violent crisis over international power and clashing political-ideological orientations between the USA and Venezuela continued. On January 13, then-US President Barack Obama signed a one-year extension of an executive order declaring Venezuela a threat to US national security. In reaction to the violent clashes between opposition demonstrators and security forces starting in April amid an ongoing political and economic crisis in Venezuela, on August 11 US President Donald Trump stated he was considering a "military option" against the country if necessary [→Venezuela (opposition)]. Following his remarks, Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro ordered nationwide civic-military exercises from August 26 to 27 to defend the national territory from external military threats. In his address to the UNGA on September 19, Trump lobbied for further international action against Venezuela, calling the Maduro administration a "socialist dictatorship".

On August 25, the US imposed its first ban on trade with several dollar-denominated Venezuelan bonds, thereby preventing Venezuela from restructuring the majority of its debts. The Maduro government repeatedly called the US economic sanctions responsible for the economic crisis and accused the US of generating a humanitarian emergency to justify a military intervention.

Over the year, the US imposed sanctions on 41 current and former senior Venezuelan government officials for their purported involvement in violent crackdowns on anti-government protests, human rights abuses, and corruption. On February 13, the US Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (Ofac) designated Venezuela's vice president Tareck El Aissami an international narcotics trafficker. On July 26, further sanctions *inter alia* targeted the country's interior and justice minister Nestór Reverol Torres and Tibisay Lucena, the head of the national electoral council. Five days later, Ofac announced sanctions against Maduro himself to have all of his financial assets under US jurisdiction frozen, and prohibiting US citizens from engaging in commercial activities with him. Via decree President Trump subjected several government officials and their families to US travel bans on September 25. In response to the regional elections held in Venezuela on October 15, which the US deemed fraudulent, on November 9 Ofac imposed new economic sanctions on a further ten officials for the alleged undermining of democratic rule in Venezuela. [asm](#)

VENEZUELA (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 1992

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

The violent crisis over national power and the orientation of the political system between the opposition, led by the multi-party alliance Democratic Unity Roundtable (MUD), and the government under President Nicolás Maduro, continued. As Venezuela's economic, humanitarian, and financial situation deteriorated, the MUD increasingly resorted to street

protests to demand the opening of a humanitarian corridor for food and medicine supply, the holding of elections, the release of alleged political prisoners, and the restitution of powers of the opposition-controlled National Assembly (AN), ruled in contempt by the Supreme Court (TSJ) since 08/01/16. According to Foro Penal Venezolano and opposition figures, 134 people died and approx. 15,000 were injured since the start of protests in April in almost weekly clashes between MUD-affiliates and both security forces and supporters of the ruling United Socialist Party (PSUV). Neighboring Colombia and Brazil were most affected by an increasing number of Venezuelan migrants. Additionally, Venezuelan asylum petitions in 2017 rose by 168 percent worldwide compared to 2016.

Violence first erupted over the TSJ's constitutional chamber's decision on March 29 to dissolve the AN, to remove the deputies' parliamentary immunity, and to assign itself all legislative powers. Subsequently, the MUD accused the TSJ and PSUV of imposing a dictatorship. Three days later, and following harsh international condemnation, the TSJ backtracked on its decision. On April 2, the MUD stated that the AN would begin to remove the constitutional chamber magistrates. Security forces and government-sponsored, armed militants attacked several hundred MUD members in the capital Caracas, Capital District, on April 4, to prevent the opposition members from reaching the AN building to begin the proceedings. Security forces fired rubber bullets, teargas and deployed tanks and water cannons, injuring 32 and arresting 15 people. Between April 4 and 12, anti-government protests turned violent in six other states, leaving a total of six protestors killed, 19 injured, and 30 arrested. On April 19, around one million people protested nationwide against the Maduro administration. Pro-government militants shot dead one protester in Caracas and in the city of San Cristóbal, Táchira state, respectively, while protestors shot dead a National Guard officer in the city of San Antonio, Miranda state. Overall, up to 100 people were injured and 521 protestors were arrested. On July 5, Venezuela's Independence Day, 200 pro-government militants stormed the AN, attacked and injured at least twelve legislators, journalists, and guests with pipes, sticks, batons, and rocks.

On May 1, Maduro announced the convening of a National Constituent Assembly (ANC) tasked with drafting a new constitution and resolving the country's political and financial crisis. The MUD stated that it would neither acknowledge nor participate in the ANC elections and repeatedly insisted on the government to suspend the process. On July 16, it held an informal plebiscite in which an alleged 98 percent of the 7.2 million participants voted against the ANC initiative. July 30, the day of the ANC election, overseen by 232,000 soldiers, recorded 15 protestors killed nationwide on MUD figures, the highest number of deaths since the start of the protests. Whereas the government indicated a turnout of 42 percent, the MUD cited a participation of merely twelve percent. After being sworn in on August 4, the PSUV-controlled ANC seized the powers of the AN on August 18, imposing itself as supreme legislative power. On August 29, it approved the opening of judicial proceedings against leading MUD-politicians for "immoral actions against the interests of the Venezuelan people".

After regional elections were held on October 15, the National

Electoral Council (CNE) declared the PSUV winner in 17 of 22 states. On the grounds of purported, ongoing legal disputes, it had previously banned the MUD from participating in seven states. The MUD denounced the result as fraudulent, accused the PSUV of vote buying and the removal of polling stations, and called for a full audit of the elections with international oversight. Two days later, a government decree declared any elected official who refused to recognize the ANC ineligible for political posts and to be replaced. Amid rising tensions within the MUD and internal accusations of immorality and treason, four of the five MUD governors-elect were sworn in before the ANC on October 23.

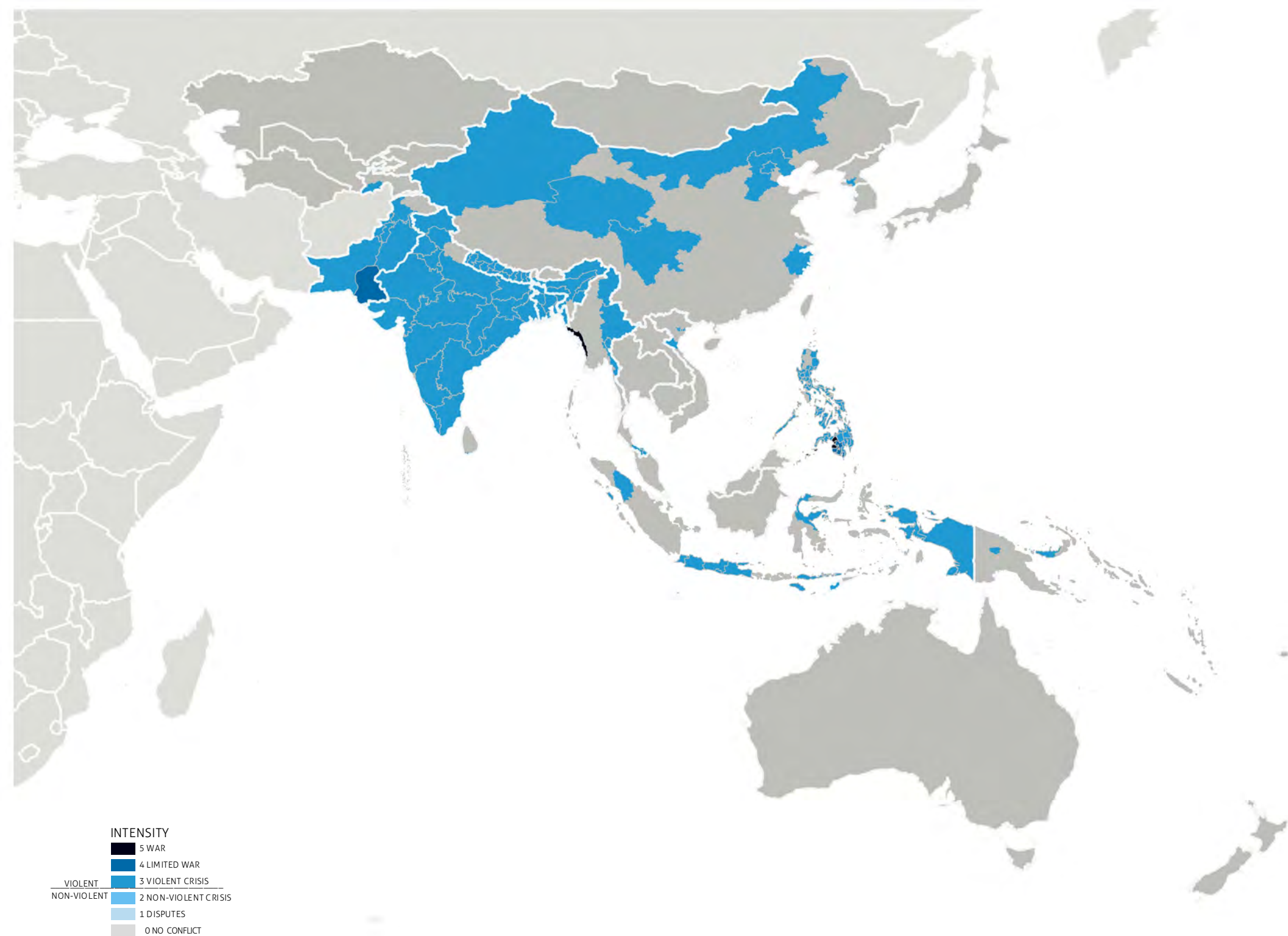
In municipal elections on December 10, boycotted by the main MUD parties, the PSUV triumphed in 308 of 355 municipalities. The ANC subsequently declared that all parties that intended to put forward candidates for ensuing elections, including the 2018 presidential elections, had to do so in the municipal elections.

Throughout the year, several national and international dialogue efforts failed. On January 26, the MUD formally withdrew from the dialogue mediated by the Vatican and sponsored by UNASUR which had started on 10/30/16 in Caracas,

accusing the government of not having fulfilled its commitments. On September 13, the Dominican Republic's President Danilo Medina announced that both conflict parties had accepted his invitation to the capital Santo Domingo to explore a re-opening of the dialogue. After the MUD had abandoned the dialogue on September 26 over the government's failure to adopt the measure agreed upon during the talks, the dialogue resumed on December 1 and 2, followed by a second round two weeks later, without significant progress.

The violence in Venezuela triggered international condemnation and sanctions. On April 27, after increasing critique of the Maduro administration by several OAS member states, the country announced its withdrawal from the organisation. On August 5, MERCOSUR applied the organization's democratic clause on Venezuela, thereby suspending the country's membership until the restoration of full democratic order. On August 11, US President Donald Trump stated he was considering a "military option" against Venezuela [→ USA – Venezuela]. The US government imposed its first targeted economic sanctions on Venezuelan government officials on August 25, followed by Canada on September 22 and an army embargo by the EU on November 13. ^{asm}

Asia and Oceania



With 120 conflicts in total, Asia and Oceania continued to be the region with the highest number of conflicts, accounting for more than a quarter of conflicts worldwide. The number of violent crises increased from 56 to 59, whereas the number of disputes and non-violent crises decreased by seven to 53 conflicts in total. Four conflicts were closed and one conflict was inactive. In 2017, four conflicts were conducted on a war level, a decrease by three compared to last year.

Four limited wars de-escalated to violent crises. The war in Pakistan between Islamist militant groups and the government de-escalated to a limited war for the first time in ten years [→ Pakistan (Islamist militant groups)], while in Myanmar, the conflict between the predominantly Muslim minority of Rohingya and the Buddhist government escalated to a war [→ Myanmar (Rohingya)]. In the Philippines, clashes between the Islamist militant groups Abu Sayyaf as well as Maute and the government led to approx. 1,430 deaths and 400,000 internally displaced people [→ Philippines (Islamist militant groups)].

US President Donald Trump and DPRK leader Kim Jong-un's exchange of insults and threats to employ nuclear weapons received widespread media attention. [→ North Korea – USA, South Korea, Japan].

Eight of 14 conflicts in or involving China were conducted violently. In the South China Sea, the People's Republic of China continued its military exercises and building up of military infrastructure near contested islands. Violent maritime clashes between the parties occurred several times, with allegedly four people injured and two killed [→ China – Vietnam et al. (South China Sea)]. In the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, violence between the government, alongside the Han Chinese majority, and the Mongolian minority continued, mostly regarding land grabbing and the payment of subsidies [→ China (Inner Mongolia)]. Moreover, the conflict between ethnic Uyghurs and the Chinese government as well as the Han Chinese majority remained violent [→ China (Uyghurs / Xinjiang)]. Local regulations restricting Uyghur rights, including surveillance, were passed.

In Myanmar, seven of eleven conflicts were conducted violently. Throughout the year, ethnic armed groups in several regions continued fighting against the government and sometimes against each other, while at the same time trying to establish peace through various negotiations. The ongoing talks between the United Nationalities Federal Council (UNFC) and the government were impeded as three member groups tried to leave the UNFC. Moreover, the formerly peaceful conflict turned violent when members of the Karen National Progressive Party, one of the UNFC parties continuing its negotiations, were detained and killed by government soldiers [→ Myanmar (UNFC et al.)]. Throughout March, clashes between government forces and the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army in Shan State killed at least 41 people and injured at least six. Explosions also had an impact on Chinese locations across the border where around 20,000 people fled from Shan State [→ Myanmar (MN-DAA / Shan State)]. Besides the UNFC, a second coalition of non-signatories of the 2015 Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement was formed in April in Shan State to represent common interests during peace talks [→ Myanmar (UWSA, NDAA / Shan State)]. In Rakhine State violence between the Rohingya minority and the Buddhist majority alongside the government erupted once again at the end of August after attacks by the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army on bases of government troops and police [→ Myanmar (Rohingya)]. In subsequent operations by the Burmese Armed Forces, violence escalated to war level, destroying at least 354 villages, killing at least 6,700 Rohingya and led to approx. 620,000 Rohingya and at least 27,000 non-Rohingya fleeing their homes. The situation of the refugees predominantly seeking shelter in Bangladesh was an issue that received international attention and was widely discussed. It remained unsolved until the end of the year.

At least 73 people were killed and 173 injured in Thailand in the conflict between separatists and the government over autonomy of several mainly Muslim provinces near the southern border [→ Thailand (Islamist separatists / Southern Border Provinces)].

While no violent measures were observed in Cambodia this year, the government silenced any form of protest, detained important opposition figures, and dissolved the main opposition party Cambodia National Rescue Party [→ Cambodia (opposition)]. The conflict in the Philippines between Islamist militant groups such as Maute and Abu Sayyaf and the government escalated to a war, due to the months-long occupation of the city Marawi by Islamists [→ Philippines (Islamist militant groups)]. The conflict accounted for at least 1,430 deaths and 400,000 internally displaced people. Moreover, Abu Sayyaf abducted at least 25 civilians, of which four were killed in captivity. The limited war between the Moro Muslim groups BIFM and BIFF, on the one hand, and the government in cooperation with MILF, on the other, over secession of the Mindanao region continued as a limited war [→ Philippines (BIFM, BIFF – MILF, government)]. In Sri Lanka, communal tensions between the Buddhist majority and religious minorities such as Muslims and Christians arose with physical attacks and destruction of places of worship [→ Sri Lanka (inter-religious tensions)]. The conflict over national power in Maldives de-escalated to a non-violent crisis [→ Maldives (opposition)]. In Papua New Guinea, the opposition and the conflict between various tribes remained violent [→ Papua New Guinea (opposition); Papua New Guinea (tribal tensions)]. In Indonesia, the violent crisis over the secession of the provinces of Papua and West Papua and resources continued [→ Indonesia (Papua)].

The government and the opposition in Bangladesh clashed in numerous incidents, which together with intra-opposition clashes left more than 49 dead and 806 injured [→ Bangladesh (opposition)]. Opposition parties, human rights organizations and journalists criticized the government for increasing authoritarian practices and the violation of human rights. While attacks by Islamist militants decreased significantly in comparison to 2016, security forces continued their intensified countrywide operations against alleged Islamist groups and arrested many members linked to last year's attacks [→ Bangladesh (Islamist groups)].

In India, the limited war over ideology and the political system between Naxalites and the government de-escalated to a violent crisis, accounting for at least 308 deaths, a significant decrease to more than 360 deaths in the previous year [→ India (Naxalites)]. Incidents of communal violence between Hindus and Muslims continued [→ India (Hindus – Muslims)]. Several cases of violence occurred against Muslims in connection with cattle trade or the consumption of beef. Furthermore, several

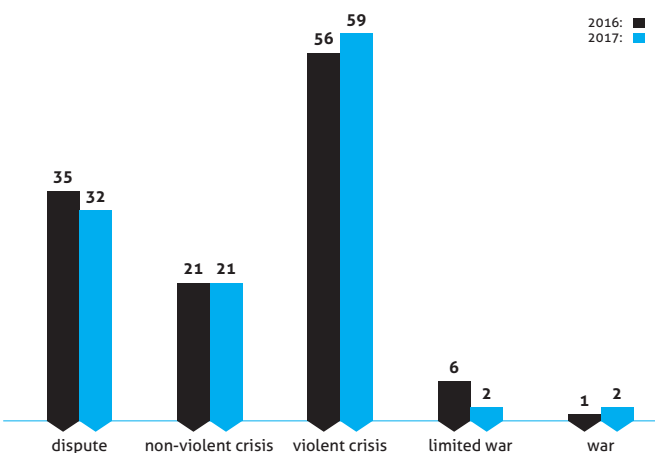
Hindu attacks as well as police discrimination against Christians were reported [→ India (Hindus – Christians)]. Demands for socio-economic benefits under the Indian reservation system raised by several communities continued, leading to protests which often turned violent [→ India (Patels et al.)]. In the run-up to Punjab's state elections, alleged pro-Khalistan militants had detonated a car bomb at a Congress party rally [→ India (Sikhs)]. In Kashmir, security forces killed at least 20 high-ranked HM, LeT and JeM commanders, while the militant organizations apparently started to operate closer together. Army skirmishes in the contested border area of Jammu and Kashmir state continued, causing thousands of civilians to flee their homes [→ India – Pakistan]. Moreover, various militant groups continued their violent struggle for secession [→ India (GNLA et al. / Meghalaya); India (Manipur); India (Nagalm); India (ULFA-I et al. / Assam)]. Due to the announcement to introduce Bengali as a compulsory language subject in schools in West Bengal, protests erupted, which led to an escalation of the conflict between the Nepalese-origin Gorkha groups and the government in June, leaving at least 15 people dead and over 120 injured [→ India (GJM et al. / West Bengal)]. Furthermore, two other autonomy conflicts escalated to a violent crisis [→ India (NLFT factions et al. / Tripura); India (TJAC / Telangana)].

In Nepal, violence between different parties and ethnic groups continued. Government coalitions changed often throughout the year and clashes at polling stations turned violent when supporters of the different parties attacked each other, leaving at least nine people dead and 118 injured [→ Nepal (right-wing Hindu groups); Nepal (opposition)].

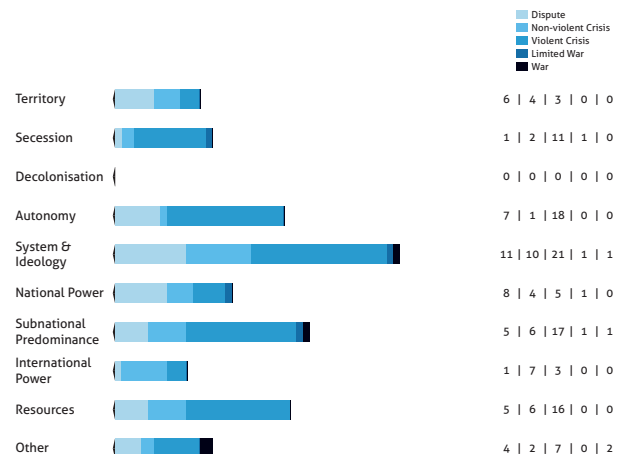
In Pakistan, after investigations of several months, PM Nawaz Sharif was removed by the Supreme Court in July over corruption allegations reported in the so-called Panama Papers of 2016 [→ Pakistan (opposition)]. Throughout the year, 35 mostly TTP-affiliated militants were executed in KP and Punjab after being charged with terrorism by military courts. Sunni militants continued to attack security forces and civilians, especially religious minorities, in Pakistan. In the middle of February, an IS-affiliated suicide bomber killed 88 people and injured another 343 at the shrine of a Sufi saint in Sehwan, southern Sindh province [→ Pakistan (Sunni militants – religious groups)]. The conflict over secession in Balochistan province continued. Militants specifically targeted civilians from other provinces or laborers working on construction sites linked to the China Pakistan Economic Corridor, which is opposed by separatists for allegedly exploiting the Baloch province and its people [→ Pakistan (Balochistan)].

In Fergana Valley, a clash between Kyrgyz and Tajik residents in January left four people injured [→ Kyrgyzstan – Tajikistan – Uzbekistan (border communities / Fergana Valley)]. However, the Kyrgyz and Uzbek Presidents signed an agreement on the demarcation of 85 percent of the 1280km long Kyrgyz-Uzbek border. In Tajikistan, security guards killed four suspected members of an Islamist group trying to illegally cross the border to Afghanistan in July [→ Tajikistan (Islamist groups)]. In Kazakhstan, the government continued to persecute Islamist groups and detained individuals for allegedly propagating terrorism [→ Kazakhstan (Islamist groups)]. Moreover, government action against opposition groups were reported from Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan [→ Kazakhstan (opposition); Uzbekistan (opposition)].

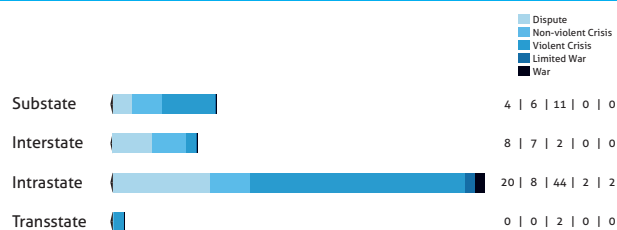
CONFLICT INTENSITIES IN ASIA AND OCEANIA
IN 2017 COMPARED TO 2016



FREQUENCY OF CONFLICT INTENSITIES BY CONFLICT ITEM
IN ASIA AND OCEANIA IN 2017



FREQUENCY OF CONFLICT INTENSITIES BY CONFLICT TYPE
IN ASIA AND OCEANIA IN 2017



Overview: Conflicts in Asia and Oceania in 2017

Name of conflict ¹	Conflict parties ²	Conflict items	Start	Change ³	Int. ⁴
Australia – Timor-Leste*	Australia vs. Timor-Leste	resources	2002	•	1
Bangladesh (Chittagong Hill Tracts)	Bengali settlers vs. PCJSS, UPDF, indigenous peoples of the Chittagong Hill Tracts vs. government	autonomy, subnational predominance	1971	•	3
Bangladesh (Islamist groups)	Hindus, Christians, Buddhists vs. ABT, AAI, JMB, Hel, HuT, HuJI-B, IS, et al. vs. government	system/ideology, subnational predominance	1971	•	3
Bangladesh (opposition)	BNP, Jel vs. government	system/ideology, national power	1991	•	3
Bangladesh (RMG workers)*	RMG workers vs. government, factory owners	other	2006	•	3
Cambodia (opposition)	CNRP, civil society groups vs. CPP	system/ideology, national power, resources	1997	↘	2
Cambodia – Thailand (border)*	Thailand vs. Cambodia	territory, international power	1954	•	1
Cambodia – Vietnam*	Cambodia vs. Vietnam	territory	1969	•	1
China (Christians)	Christians vs. government	system/ideology	1949	•	3
China (Falun Gong et al.)*	Falun Gong vs. government	system/ideology	1999	•	3
China (Han – Hui – Tibetans)*	Tibetans vs. Han vs. Hui	subnational predominance	1949	•	1
China (Hong Kong)	pro-democracy groups, pro-independence groups vs. government, SAR government	autonomy, system/ideology	1997	•	3
China (Inner Mongolia)	Mongolian ethnic minorities vs. Han Chinese, government	autonomy, subnational predominance, resources	1981	•	3
China (opposition)*	opposition groups vs. government	system/ideology	1978	•	1
China (socioeconomic protests)*	environmentalists, factory workers, peasants, civilians vs. government	resources, other	1978	•	3
China (Taiwan – opposition)*	opposition vs. ROC government	system/ideology	2014	↗	2
China (Taiwan)	ROC vs. PRC	secession, system/ideology	1949	•	2
China (Tibet)*	CTA, Tibetans, TYC vs. government	autonomy, system/ideology, resources	1950	•	3
China (Uyghurs / Xinjiang)	TIP, ETIM, Uyghurs vs. government, Han	secession	1949	•	3
China – India	PRC vs. India	territory, international power, resources	1954	•	2
China – USA	PRC vs. USA	system/ideology, international power	1949	•	2
China – Vietnam et al. (South China Sea)	China vs. Vietnam vs. Brunei vs. ROC vs. Malaysia vs. Indonesia vs. Philippines	territory, international power, resources	1949	•	3
Fiji (Indo-Fijians – indigenous Fijian ethnonationalists)*	Indo-Fijians vs. indigenous Fijians	subnational predominance	1970	•	1
Fiji (opposition)*	opposition vs. government	national power	1987	↘	1
Fiji – Tonga (Minerva Reefs)*	Fiji vs. Tonga	territory	2005	•	1
India (Nagas – Kukis)*	NSCN-IM, Nagas vs. KIM, Kukis	subnational predominance	1992	↘	2
India – Pakistan	India, Pakistan	territory, international power, resources	1947	↘	3
India (GJM et al. / West Bengal)	GJM, GNL, CPRM, JAP, GMCC vs. government	autonomy	1907	↗	3
India (GNLA et al. / Meghalaya)	GNLA, ASAK, AMEF, ARA, HNLC, ANVC-B vs. government	secession	1992	•	3
India (Hindus – Christians)	Hindus, RSS, Bajrang Dal, Hindu Yuva Vahini, Hindu Makkal Katchi vs. Christians	subnational predominance	1999	•	3
India (Hindus – Muslims)	Hindus vs. Muslims	subnational predominance	1947	•	3
India (HPC-D factions / Mizoram, Manipur, Assam)*	HPC-D Zosangbera faction, HPC-D Sanate faction vs. government	autonomy	1986	•	1
India (inter-ethnic rivalry / Assam)	Assamese, ULFA-I, AASU vs. NIBBUSS, Bangladeshi immigrants vs. Adivasis, AASAA et al.	subnational predominance, other	1979	•	3

ASIA AND OCEANIA

Name of conflict ¹	Conflict parties ²	Conflict items	Start	Change ³	Int. ⁴
India (Islamist militant groups)*	SIMI, LeT, JeM, HM, TuM, IS vs. government	system/ideology	2000	•	3
India (Kashmir)	LeT, HM, JeM, HuM, TuM, APHC, local protesters vs. government	secession, autonomy	1947	•	3
India (Mafia Raj)*	sand mafia, timber mafia vs. civil society actors vs. government	subnational predominance, resources, other	1986	•	3
India (Manipur)	Meiteis, KNF, KRA, Kukis, KYKL, KCP, PREPAK-Pro, PLA, UNLF, ZRO et al. vs. government	secession, autonomy, subnational predominance	1964	•	3
India (Nagalim)	NSCN-IM, NSCN-K, NSCN-R, NNC, NNC-NA et al. vs. government	secession, autonomy	1947	•	3
India (Nagas – Assamese Adivasis)*	Nagas, UNTABA, NSF vs. Assamese Adivasis, AANLA, AASU et al.	subnational predominance	1988	↘	2
India (Naxalites)	CPI-M, CPI-ML-RF, PLFI, CPI(ML), CP, TPC, CPI-ML (New Democracy) et al. vs. government	system/ideology	1967	↘	3
India (NLFT factions et al. / Tripura)*	NLFT, NLFT-BM, NLFT-NC, IPFT, ATTF vs. government	secession, autonomy	1978	↑	3
India (Patels et al.)	Patel community, Jat community, Kapu community, Rajput community, Maratha community vs. government	other	1981	•	3
India (Sikhs – DSS)*	Sikhs vs. DSS	subnational predominance	2007	•	3
India (Sikhs)	SAD, KLF, KCF, BK/BKI, AISSF/ISYF vs. government	secession, autonomy	1947	•	3
India (TJAC / Telangana)*	TJAC, bar associations vs. government	autonomy, system/ideology	1969	↗	3
India (ULFA-I et al. / Assam)*	ULFA-I, NFFB, NSCN-K, KPLT, MULTA, UNLFW, KLO, NDFB-S, UDLA, UKDA vs. government	secession	1979	•	3
Indonesia – Timor-Leste*	Indonesia vs. Timor-Leste	territory, other	2002	•	1
Indonesia (Aceh regional government – opposition / Aceh)*	Aceh regional government vs. opposition	subnational predominance, resources	2006	•	2
Indonesia (Aceh)*	Aceh regional government, PA, KPA vs. government	autonomy, resources	1953	•	1
Indonesia (Ahmadi)*	Ahmadi vs. Muslims	subnational predominance	1980	•	2
Indonesia (Islamist militant groups)	MIT, JAD et al. vs. government	system/ideology	1981	•	3
Indonesia (Muslims – Christians)	Muslims vs. Christians	subnational predominance	1998	•	3
Indonesia (Papua)	OPM, ULMWP, KNPB, FRI-West Papua, PRPPB, TPN, APM vs. government	secession, resources	1961	•	3
Indonesia, Philippines – Malaysia (immigrants)	Malaysia vs. Indonesia, Philippines	other	1998	•	1
Japan – Russia*	Japan vs. Russia	territory, international power	1945	•	2
Japan – South Korea*	Japan vs. ROK	territory, other	1951	•	1
Japan – China (East China Sea)*	Japan vs. PRC vs. ROC	territory, international power, resources, other	1971	•	2
Japan, South Korea, USA – North Korea	Japan, South Korea, USA vs. North Korea	system/ideology, international power, other	1990	•	2
Kazakhstan (Islamist groups)*	Islamist groups vs. government	system/ideology, national power	2011	↓	1
Kazakhstan (opposition)	opposition vs. government	system/ideology, national power	2004	•	2
Kyrgyzstan (Kyrgyz – Uzbeks)*	ethnic Kyrgyz vs. ethnic Uzbek	subnational predominance, resources	1990	•	1
Kyrgyzstan (opposition)*	opposition vs. government	system/ideology, national power	2005	•	2
Kyrgyzstan – Tajikistan – Uzbekistan (border communities / Fergana Valley)	Kyrgyzstan vs. Uzbekistan vs. Tajikistan	territory, international power	2000	•	3

ASIA AND OCEANIA

Name of conflict ¹	Conflict parties ²	Conflict items	Start	Change ³	Int. ⁴
Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan – Uzbekistan*	Uzbekistan vs. Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan	international power, resources	2010	•	2
Laos (Christians)*	Christians vs. government	system/ideology	1975	•	1
Laos (Hmong, royalists)*	Hmong, royalists vs. government	system/ideology, national power	1975	•	1
Malaysia (Malay – Chinese, Indian, Indigenous Malaysians)*	Malay Malaysians vs. Chinese Malaysians, Indian Malaysians, Indigenous Malaysians	system/ideology, subnational predominance	1946	•	1
Malaysia (opposition)*	Bersih, various opposition groups vs. government	system/ideology, national power	1969	•	1
Malaysia (Sulu Sultanate Supporters / Lahad Datu District)*	Royal Security Forces of the Sultanate of Sulu and North Borneo vs. government	secession	2013	↘	1
Malaysia – Singapore*	Singapore vs. Malaysia	territory	1963	•	1
Maldives (opposition)	MDP, AP, MUO vs. government	national power	2003	↘	2
Myanmar (KIA, KIO / Kachin State)*	KIA, KIO vs. government	autonomy, resources	1961	↘	3
Myanmar (KNU, KNLA, DKBA et al. / Karen State, Kayah State)*	KNU, KNLA, DKBA, DKBA-splinter group vs. government	autonomy	1948	•	3
Myanmar (MNDAA / Shan State)*	MNDAA vs. government	subnational predominance, resources	1989	•	3
Myanmar (opposition)*	opposition vs. government	system/ideology, national power	1962	•	1
Myanmar (Rohingya)	Rohingya, ARSA vs. government, Buddhists	subnational predominance, other	2012	↗	5
Myanmar (socioeconomic protests)*	local protesters vs. resource companies, government	resources	2012	↓	1
Myanmar (SSA / Shan State)*	SSA-N, SSA-S vs. government	autonomy	1953	↗	3
Myanmar (TNLA / Shan State)	TNLA vs. government	subnational predominance, resources	2013	↘	3
Myanmar (TNLA, RCSS / Shan State)*	TNLA, PSLF vs. RCSS, SSA	subnational predominance	2015	↘	2
Myanmar (UNFC et al.)	WNO, KIO, SSPP/SSA, NMSP, KNPP, LDU, ANC vs. government	autonomy	2011	↑	3
Myanmar (UWSA, NDAA / Shan State)	UWSA, NDAA vs. government	autonomy	1988	↘	1
Nepal (Kiratis / Kosi, Mechi, Sagarmatha)*	FLSC, KNF, SLRM vs. government	autonomy	1992	•	3
Nepal (Madhesis, Tharus / Terai)*	UDMF, JTMM, NLF, RJPN vs. government	autonomy	2004	•	3
Nepal (opposition)	CPN-UML, UDMF, Federal Alliance, RRP et al. vs. government	system/ideology, national power	2008	•	3
Nepal (right-wing Hindu groups)	RPP, Shiva Sena Nepal, RPP-D et al. vs. government	system/ideology	2006	•	3
North Korea – South Korea*	North Korea vs. South Korea	territory, system/ideology, international power	1948	•	2
North Korea, China (defectors)	DPRK vs. Christian aid groups, defector support networks, ROK	system/ideology, other	2000	•	3
Pakistan (Balochistan)	BLA, BRA, UBA, LeB, BNP, BLF, BNM vs. government	secession, resources	1948	•	3
Pakistan (Islamist militant groups)	TTP, JuA, LeJ, al-Qaeda, IS vs. government	system/ideology, national power	2001	↘	4
Pakistan (opposition)	PTI, PAT, TLY, Tehreek-e-Khatme-Nabuwwat, Sunni Tehreek Pakistan vs. government	system/ideology, national power	1973	•	3
Pakistan (Sindh)*	MQM, Mohajirs vs. PPP, Balochs, Sindhis vs. ANP, Pakhtuns vs. government	subnational predominance, resources	1947	•	3
Pakistan (Sunni militants – religious groups)	TTP, LeJ, IS, JuA vs. Shiites, Ahmadiis, Sufis, Hindus, Christians	subnational predominance	1985	•	3
Pakistan (Taliban – tribes)	TTP, LI, JuA vs. various tribes, tribal militias, peace committees	system/ideology, subnational predominance	2001	•	3

ASIA AND OCEANIA

Name of conflict ¹	Conflict parties ²	Conflict items	Start	Change ³	Int. ⁴
Pakistan – USA*	Pakistan vs. USA	other	2003	•	1
Papua New Guinea (Bougainville)*	civil society groups, MDF, Bougainville Hardliners vs. Meekamui Tribal Government, PMALA, MGU vs. ABG, BCL, government	autonomy, resources	1964	•	1
Papua New Guinea (opposition)	opposition vs. government	system/ideology, national power	2011	•	3
Papua New Guinea (socioeconomic protests)*	customary landowners vs. government, resource companies	autonomy, resources	1995	↗	3
Papua New Guinea (tribal tensions)*	Kukurin vs. Yapetalin vs. Wapiago vs. Tapamu vs. et al	subnational predominance, resources	1975	•	3
Papua New Guinea (urban tensions)*	highlanders vs. lowlanders vs. ethnic Chinese	subnational predominance	1975	•	2
Philippines (BIFM, BIFF – MILF, government)	BIFM, BIFF vs. MILF, government	secession, subnational predominance	2008	•	4
Philippines (CPP, NPA)	CPP, NPA vs. government	system/ideology	1968	•	3
Philippines (Islamist militant groups)	Abu Sayyaf Group, Maute Group vs. government	system/ideology, other	1991	NEW	5
Philippines (MILF – MNLF)*	MILF vs. MNLF	subnational predominance	2009	•	3
Philippines (MILF)*	MILF vs. government	autonomy, system/ideology, resources	1977	•	3
Philippines (MNLF)*	MNLF vs. government	secession, system/ideology, resources	1969	•	2
Sri Lanka (inter-religious tensions)	Sinhalese Buddhists, BBS, Sinhala Ravaya, Sinhala Jathika Balaya vs. Muslims, SLMC, Christians	system/ideology	1948	↑	3
Sri Lanka (Northern Province, Eastern Province)*	Sinhalese Nationalists, JHU, BBS, JVP vs. Tamils, TNA vs. government	autonomy, system/ideology	2009	↘	2
Tajikistan (Gorno-Badakhshan)*	government vs. drug traffickers, Pamiri people	autonomy, subnational predominance	2012	•	1
Tajikistan (Islamist groups)	various Islamist groups vs. government	system/ideology, national power	1997	•	3
Tajikistan (opposition)*	opposition vs. government	system/ideology, national power	1997	•	1
Thailand (Islamist Separatists / Southern Border Provinces)	BRN, PULO vs. government	secession, system/ideology	1902	•	3
Thailand (opposition)*	PTP, UDD vs. PAD vs. RTAF	system/ideology, national power	2006	•	1
Uzbekistan (opposition)	opposition vs. government	system/ideology, national power	1991	•	1
Vietnam (Montagnards)*	Montagnards vs. government	autonomy, system/ideology	1958	•	1
Vietnam (socioeconomic protests)*	factory workers, peasants, civilians vs. manufacturing companies, government	resources, other	1986	•	3

¹ ² ³ ⁴ cf. overview table for Europe

BANGLADESH (CHITTAGONG HILL TRACTS)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 1971

Conflict parties:	Bengali settlers vs. PCJSS, UPDF, indigenous peoples of the Chittagong Hill Tracts vs. government
Conflict items:	autonomy, subnational predominance

The violent crisis over autonomy, subnational predominance and arable land in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) between indigenous Jummas and their militant groups, the government

and Bengali settlers, continued. Jumma militants, mainly organized into two wings, the Parbatya Chattagram Jana Samhati Samiti (PCJSS) and the United People's Democratic Front (UPDF), reinforced their demand to implement the 1997 CHT Peace Accord that granted autonomy to the districts Kha-grachhari, Rangamati, and Bandarban in the Chittagong division.

Furthermore, communal tensions between Jumma groups and Bengali settlers continued as both parties accused one another of using violence. On June 1, for instance, a Bengali member of the government's party youth organization, the Bangladesh Awami Jubo League, was found dead at Kha-grachhari Sadar-Dighinala road, Rangamati district. According to reports, thousands of people, mostly Bengali settlers, gathered to protest against the extrajudicial killing, suspect-

ing Jumma people were behind it. The protest turned violent. Around 200 houses were vandalized in arson attacks and one person was killed. Police and military forces were criticized for not intervening. However, the local police promised to investigate the incident and Awami League offered support to the people affected.

Throughout the year, the army reportedly detained indigenous people, often leading figures of organized groups. On April 5, for instance, army personnel detained Romel Chakma, a leader of the Adivasi student organization Pahari Chhatra Parishad (PCP) in Naniarchar, Rangamati district, as a suspect in two arson attacks. The following day, he was handed over to the police who admitted Chakma to a hospital where he died on April 19. Leaders of UPDF and PCP, student bodies and human rights groups claimed that the army was responsible for Chakma's death and organized protests in form of blockades and human chains. They demanded an end to harassment and torture of Jumma people by security forces and a judicial inquiry into the death of Chakma. As a reaction to detentions and arrests of Jumma UPDF and PCJSS members, some Bengali groups demanded a ban on these groups, accusing them of a variety of crimes. UPDS's and PCJSS's activities were also criticized within the Jumma community. For instance, on May 6, the Jumma Mro community blocked part of the Lama-Ali Kadam-Chakaria road in Bandarban district, thereby protesting PCJSS's criminal activities in the area. On several occasions, for example on May 19 and November 11, PCJSS and UPDF reiterated their call to the government to implement the Chittagong Peace Accord. In July, the government reaffirmed its commitment to the accord by inaugurating a new project on the implementation, in collaboration with UNDP.

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BANGLADESH (ISLAMIST GROUPS)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 1971

Conflict parties: Hindus, Christians, Buddhists vs. ABT, AAI, JMB, Hel, HuT, HuJI-B, IS, et al. vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology, subnational pre-dominance

The violent crisis over ideology and the orientation of the political system as well as religious predominance between radical Muslims, mainly organized in Islamist groups, the government, and religious minorities, such as Hindus, Buddhists and Christians, continued.

While attacks by Islamist militants decreased significantly by comparison to 2016, security forces continued their intensified countrywide operations against alleged Islamist groups and arrested many members linked to last year's attacks.

In total, 905 people were arrested, among them alleged members of the Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen (JMB) or its "Neo-JMB" faction, but also militants of Ansar al-Islam (AAI), Ansurallah Bangla Team (ABT), Hizb ut-Tahrir (HuT), and Harkat-ul-Jihad al-Islami Bangladesh (HuJI-B). Reportedly, 52 alleged militants were killed during these operations. For instance, on March 16, police, Special Weapons And Tactics (SWAT), and

the Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime unit (CTTC) forces stormed two houses in Chowdhurypara and Amirabad area in Sitakunda city, Chittagong division. During the operation in Chowdhurypara, police killed three alleged JMB militants, while two died in the attempt to stop the police, due to their suicide vests. In Amirabad, the arrest of two militants left three police officers and a firefighter injured. A large amount of bomb-making material was found in both houses. On March 24, an army Para Commando Battalion started a four-day raid on an alleged Neo-JMB hideout in Atia Mahal, Sylhet city eponymous division, evacuating 78 civilians. On the second day, two IEDs exploded nearby the hideout, killing six people, among them two police forces, and injuring more than 40 people. Throughout the raid, four militants died, two of them by employing suicide vests. Later, Islamic State (IS) reported the blasts, while Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal denied any links. On March 17 and 18, militants attacked two Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) checkpoints in Ashkona and Khilgaon area of the capital Dhaka, Dhaka division, using crude bombs and bomb vests. Two militants were killed and four RAB officers injured. IS claimed responsibility for both the Ashkona blast and a suicide bomb attack close to Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport, Dhaka, on March 24, which left the attacker dead and at least three injured. Meanwhile, the authorities held local Islamist groups responsible. On March 5, the government banned AAI, a suspected arm of Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS).

Violence against religious minorities continued throughout the year. Hindu temples and shrines were vandalized several times. For instance, on November 10, thousands of Muslims attacked a Hindu community in Thakurpara, Rangpur division, in reaction to an allegedly blasphemous Facebook post against the Muslim prophet Mohammed. Around 30 houses were torched until police dispersed the crowd with rubber bullets and teargas, leaving one dead and around six injured. Over 1,000 Hindus staged protests after the attack, demanding punishment and compensation. mwf, fli

BANGLADESH (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 1991

Conflict parties: BNP, Jel vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology, national power

The conflict over national power and the orientation of the political system between the opposition parties Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and Jamaat-e-Islami (Jel), on the one hand, and the government led by the Awami League (AL), on the other, continued as a violent crisis. BNP and Jel were supported by their student organizations, Bangladesh Jatiyatabadi Chatra Dal (BJC) and Islami Chatra Shibir (ICS), whereas the Bangladesh Chatra League (BCL) supported AL. Throughout the year, AL and BNP members and their respective youth wings clashed in numerous incidents, leaving at least four people dead and 126 injured in total.

On January 5, the BNP organized countrywide protest processions in order to mark the anniversary of the controversial 2014 national elections, which the BNP had boycotted. In at

least two incidents, BNP members clashed violently with the AL and police, leaving at least 30 injured. For instance, the procession in Naogaon, eponymous district, Rajshahi division, turned violent when police used batons against demonstrating BNP members, leaving at least 20 people injured, including four police officers. Moreover, intra-party conflicts over the parties' orientation and rivalries among members resulted in at least 45 dead and 680 injured people.

As in previous years, opposition parties, human right organizations and journalists criticized the government for increasing authoritarian practices and the violation of human rights. The opposition particularly criticized the government's intensified operations against alleged Islamist militants, claiming they targeted opposition members instead [→ Bangladesh (Islamist Groups)]. In July, Amnesty International called upon the government to investigate cases of extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances and furthermore criticized the status of freedom of speech. As in previous years, several high-ranking members of the BNP and Jel were prosecuted for crimes allegedly committed during the Liberation War in 1971. On February 2, an AL member shot and killed a journalist, who covered a clash between two AL factions.

Moreover, the issue of the election mode remained disputed. The Election Commission (EC), which will oversee the upcoming national elections at the end of 2018, was appointed in February. On March 3, the BNP branded the EC-chief commissioner an "identified Awami Leaguer", calling the upcoming elections unfair. BNP has been considering boycotting the elections again. On November 11, Chief Justice of Bangladesh, Surendra Kumar Sinha, resigned. He had announced a controversial verdict on July 3, declaring the 16th amendment of the constitution enabling the parliament to impeach judges void. The opposition claimed that corruption allegations against him were part of the AL's campaign to besmirch him, and to gain control over higher judiciary. Furthermore, the conflict parties disagreed on the handling of the Rohingya crisis. While the BNP leader Khaleda Zia demanded entry for Rohingyas, AL considered the Rohingyas a security issue for Bangladesh and emphasized the insufficient capacity to provide shelter [→ Myanmar (Rohingya)].

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CAMBODIA (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: 2 | Change: ↘ | Start: 1997

Conflict parties: CNRP, civil society groups vs. CPP
Conflict items: system/ideology, national power, resources

The conflict over national power, ideology, and resources between the opposition Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP), as well as other opposition parties and civil society groups, on the one hand, and the ruling Cambodian People's Party (CPP), on the other, de-escalated to a non-violent crisis. Throughout the year, political and legal decisions taken by the government often directly targeted opposition and media. For example, Prime Minister Hun Sen reiterated threats of civil war in a speech on May 24, if his party lost the upcoming communal elections. CNRP's exiled leader Sam Rainsy resigned

from his post on February 11 but continued strategizing from abroad. The July 17 amendment to the Law of Political Parties made association with anyone convicted of a criminal offense a legal reason to dissolve a party.

CPP won the elections on June 4 with 51 percent to CNRP's 44 percent of the votes, with the latter contesting the elections' fairness. Subsequently, the re-elected CPP pushed for further measures against perceived threats to the country. On August 12, police arrested the minor oppositional Khmer Power Party's president Sourn Serey Ratha for insulting the military. Three days later, 50 police officers raided and searched the party's headquarters. On September 3, police detained CNRP's successful leader Kem Sokha on charges of an alleged conspiracy with the USA to seize power. Before and after the detainment, more than half the 55 oppositional MPs fled the country, announcing they would continue to coordinate their political activities from abroad. On October 17, the National Assembly voted to redistribute the CNRP's seats to other parties. On November 16, the Supreme Court announced the dissolution of CNRP for alleged collusion with foreigners to overthrow the government, banning 118 individuals from any political activity for five years. In the following days, ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights, civil rights groups and several foreign governments condemned the decision. Media censorship increased steadily. By August, 18 radio stations were shut down and broadcasts from two foreign stations stopped, effectively bringing almost all domestic broadcast under government control. Two journalists still reporting from Cambodia to foreign countries were detained on November 14 and charged with espionage on November 25.

This year, no protests or violent measures were reported regarding any opposition group, including trade unions of garment workers. kv

CHINA (CHRISTIANS)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 1949

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

The violent crisis over religious practicing between Christian groups and the government continued.

Throughout the year, authorities prevented Christians from exercising their religious practices through arrests, interruptions of church meetings and limitations in mobility, by considering them non-compliant with the rules Communist Party of China. For instance, on April 15, authorities arrested and blamed a Taiwanese pastor for "illegal religious activity" after he had led a group of Christians in a song of worship in Zhengzhou city, Henan province. In May, about 300 officials and police officers heavily damaged and looted the Shuangmiao Christian church in Shanggiu, Henan. Police forces injured an unknown number of Christians, while between eight and 40 were taken into custody. On September 12, authorities in Sichuan province reportedly hindered a pastor and at least one member of the Christian Autumn Rain Blessing Church in Chengdu from traveling to Hong Kong to participate in a Protestant Christian symposium. Moreover, on September 22, authorities arrested a pastor belonging to the unreg-

istered Zion church along with two family members in Xianning, Hubei province after they had preached and prayed in public. On November 5, authorities interrupted the Qingcaodi house church's Sunday morning worship service in Jiangmen, Guangdong province and detained 13 churchgoers while taking one of them into custody.

Another perpetual issue of contention between the government and some Chinese Catholic Christians groups was the existence of unofficial underground churches, which recognize the Holy See and are not integrated into the state-run Chinese Patriotic Catholic Association (CPCA). In April, authorities arrested two underground bishops. For instance, on April 6, the Bishop of Mindong was arrested and detained until May 6, preventing him from participating in Easter celebrations. On April 12, authorities arrested the Bishop of Wenzhou, whose whereabouts remained unknown until September 12 when he was admitted to hospital in the capital Beijing. In early March, the government of Zhejiang province ordered that the churches of the Protestant Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM) needed to install surveillance cameras for "anti-terrorism and security purpose". In some cases this order was forcefully enacted, for example in Wenzhou, Zhejiang province, where police officers equipped the Changlin Church with surveillance cameras in late March. In the process, the police officers destroyed the gate and parts of the church, and reportedly injured an unknown number of resisting church members. pak

CHINA (HONG KONG)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 1997

Conflict parties:	pro-democracy groups, independence groups vs. government, SAR government	pro-gov-
Conflict items:	autonomy, system/ideology	

The conflict between various Hong Kong (HK) pro-democracy groups, on the one hand, and the government of the People's Republic of China (PRC) as well as the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), on the other, over autonomy and the political system in HK continued as a violent crisis.

On January 1, around 5,000 people demonstrated peacefully in the city center against the government's removal of two pro-democracy MPs one month earlier. Early January, several members of the pro-PRC Patriot Association injured pro-democracy MP Nathan Law at HK's international airport by throwing bottles at him. On January 27, political activists demonstrated for democracy in Victoria Park, with regard to the upcoming city leader's election.

On April 26, HK police arrested two pro-independence parliament candidates and interrogated them on charges of unlawful assembly. Three days later, another nine pro-democrats were arrested for the same charge. On May 10, HK authorities denied the pro-democratic Civil Human Rights Front to conduct their annual July 1 rally in Victoria Park. Instead, authorities permitted activities of the pro-PRC group HK Celebration Association. On June 4 and July 1, around 15,000 pro-democratic protesters attended the vigil marking the 28th an-

niversary of Tiananmen Square Protests. On July 14, HK Court of First Instance suspended four pro-democratic MPs from HK parliament, claiming they had altered the wording of their oaths during their swearing-in ceremony. On August 17, HK Court of Appeal sentenced three pro-democratic politicians to six to eight months in jail on grounds of their involvement in the Occupy Central movement. Thousands of protesters marched to the Court of Final Appeal to demand their release, and in November, the HK Federation of Students initiated a crowdfunding campaign to support the politicians financially. The HKSAR denied the accusation that the verdict had been politically motivated. In late September and early October, thousands of people took to the streets, demonstrating for democracy. On October 24, both Joshua Wong and Law were released on bail in order to file an appeal against their imprisonment.

On November 7, the PRC government extended a law to HK which forbids the disrespect of the national anthem. On December 3, about 1,000 pro-democracy activists protested in HK's shopping district against the PRC's authoritarianism in HK. kol

CHINA (INNER MONGOLIA)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 1981

Conflict parties:	Mongolian ethnic minorities vs. Han Chinese, government
Conflict items:	autonomy, subnational predominance, resources

The violent crisis in the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region over subnational predominance, autonomy, and resources between Mongolian ethnic minorities, on the one hand, and the Chinese government, as well as the Han Chinese majority, on the other, continued. Tensions concerning land usage between the Han and Mongolians, who are mainly herders, remained, while the Han dominating mining and steel industry was a contentious issue.

Throughout the year, protests erupted over financial losses caused by ongoing land expropriations and the delayed disbursement of compensation. Land grabbing, and the subsidies intended to compensate it, are part of a region-wide ecological strategy which assumes that grazing of the grasslands, mining and resource extraction had intensified desertification. For instance, on January 9, police forces arrested and detained four herders in New Barag Right Banner, Hulun Buir, for allegedly organizing an online petition that demanded the government to pay promised subsidies. A group of herders protesting the arrest in front of the local police station was dispersed by police using pepper spray. One person was allegedly injured. Reportedly, the detainees were later released. Between March 20 and 21, approx. 200 herders protested the delayed payment outside local administrative buildings in Heshigten Banner, Chifeng City. On April 10, about 3,000 ethnic Mongolians protested against land expropriations and environmental exploitation in front of the government offices in Horqin Right Front Banner, Hinggan League. They demanded immediate compensation for the expropriation of grazing grounds. Approx. 1,000 police of-

ficers violently dispersed the crowd, allegedly using tasers. The security forces also arrested around 30 Mongolians and injured multiple protesters. On April 24, around 200 herders gathered in front of a pig farm in Ongniud Banner, Chifeng, to protest the supposedly illegal seizing of a wide swath of grassland from Mongolian herders. Besides land grabbing, they denounced the violence police used against the Mongolian communities. On June 1, a group of Han immigrants, equipped with batons, allegedly attacked and injured more than two ethnic Mongolians in Bairin Right Banner, Chifeng, in a dispute over land rights. On June 18, more than 100 Mongolian protesters gathered near Hulun Lake in Heshigten Banner. They attempted to retain access to the lake, essential to the continuity of their herding activity. Local Chinese authorities were said to have given concession for the use of the lake and the surrounding grazing land to a fish-breeding corporation, although a local court had ruled in the herders' favor two days earlier. The police dispersed the crowd with 30 vehicles and teargas, and arrested nine protesters. During a sit-in of more than 100 Mongolian herders on August 3 in Evenk Banner, Hulun Buir, police armed with batons detained more than a dozen herders and injured many others. On November 29, government and agricultural officials beat up three Mongolians who resisted the seizing of their land and water source in Hanggin Banner. gko

CHINA (TAIWAN)

Intensity: 2 | Change: • | Start: 1949

Conflict parties: ROC vs. PRC

Conflict items: secession, system/ideology

The non-violent crisis between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Republic of China (ROC) over secession, the political status of Taiwan and its political system, continued.

On January 11, a PRC's Liaoning aircraft carrier group passed through the ROC's air defense identification zone in the Taiwan Strait while being monitored by Taiwanese military aircrafts, amidst growing tensions over the phone call between the Taiwanese Tsai Ing-wen and US President Donald Trump in December 2016. Throughout the year, the PRC strongly objected to the ROC's planned armament measures, including the production of 66 jet trainer aircrafts and new submarines. As defined in the Taiwan Relation Act (TRA), the US continued to provide military support. For instance, on June 27, the US State Department proposed to the US Senate an arms sale to the ROC worth 1.42 Bio. USD, including high-speed anti-radiation missiles, torpedoes and missile components [→ China – USA]. On October 27, when the Taiwanese President was on her way to the island's diplomatic allies in the Pacific, the PRC demanded the US to deny her stopover in Honolulu. However, the US granted it two days later. On August 15, ROC's Defense Ministry put the military on high alert after PRC bombers and fighter jets had conducted drills in the Bashi Strait and had entered ROC air defense identification zone.

ROC's representation in international organisations and its adherence of the one-China principle continued to be a con-

flictive issue. After Tsai Ing-wen had refused to reiterate the 1992 consensus last year, ROC was not invited to the WHO Assembly held in the end of May. On May 9, ROC's Mainland Affairs Council warned against "irreversible damage" to cross-strait relations if PRC would continue to challenge Taiwan's international space. Panama established formal relations with the PRC while ending its ties with the ROC on June 12. After the Taiwan Foreign Ministry had accused the PRC of preventing the Taiwanese Environmental Protection Minister from attending a UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, PRC declared this to be in line with the one-China-Principle. On December 8, a PRC senior diplomat stated that the PRC would activate the anti-secession law in case the US would send Navy ships to Taiwan. On December 12, US President Donald Trump signed the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2018, allowing the US Navy to send ships to Taiwanese ports.□

lja

CHINA (UYGHURS / XINJIANG)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 1949

Conflict parties: TIP, ETIM, Uyghurs vs. government, Han

Conflict items: secession

The violent crisis over secession between the ethnic Uyghurs in China and Uyghur diaspora organizations, on the one hand, and the Chinese government and Han Chinese, on the other, continued. Additionally, tensions between the ethnic Kazakhs and the Chinese government arose in the region after detentions of Kazakhs and restrictions on free movement occurred.

Throughout January and February, clashes with police forces left six Uyghur militants and five civilians dead. On January 8, during a raid, the local police in Hotan prefecture shot dead three alleged Uyghur militants, who they suspected of involvement in a terrorist attack in Pishan county two years ago. The central government held the Uyghur Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP) responsible for the attack. On February 14, three Uyghur attackers killed five civilians and injured five with knives in Pishan county, before police shot the attackers. The government responded by deploying thousands of additional security forces to XUAR and launching region-wide patrols by army helicopters and aircrafts. On February 18 at a military parade in Urumqi, capital of XUAR, Deputy Party Secretary of XUAR, Zhu Hailun, thus reiterated that any kind of separatist or terrorist actions would be met with force. On February 27, TIP released a video condemning the acts against the Uyghur people by the government and threatening the non-Muslim population and especially Han Chinese. Throughout the year, the government passed several laws that further restricted the rights of Muslim Uyghurs. On January 2, Shohrat Zakir, chairman of the XUAR, announced that the Xinjiang border security would be further strengthened. On February 20, the government of Bayingolin Mongol Prefecture, XUAR, released a law that made GPS tracking compulsory for every vehicle in the prefecture. On April 1, the government of XUAR issued a law that forbid the wearing of burqas

and "abnormal" beards and made illegal the refusal of state services, such as broadcasting and national education. Another law was introduced on April 13, banning several names with Muslim connotations. On June 20 and July 10, the XUAR government issued further local regulations, banning Uyghur language education in Hotan and making it compulsory to install a surveillance application on every smartphone in XUAR. On July 2, the government launched an annual free health-care programme called "Physicals for All", which was used to collect DNA and blood samples of all residents of the XUAR between the age of 12 and 65. Moreover, on October 13, authorities of Yining County in the Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture, XUAR, announced it would ban the Uyghur language in its schools. vhe

CHINA – INDIA

Intensity: 2 | Change: • | Start: 1954

Conflict parties: PRC vs. India

Conflict items: territory, international power, resources

The non-violent crisis between India and China over territory, international power, and resources, such as water, continued. Diplomatic and territorial issues, including the border dispute over the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Arunachal Pradesh/Southern Tibet, remained at the centre of contention. Tensions intensified in August leading to a military standoff between the conflict parties.

After a Taiwanese delegation had visited India on February 13, China accused India of having violated the one-China-Principle [→ China (Taiwan)]. On April 4, the Tibetan spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, visited the disputed LAC area. The visit was strongly objected by the Chinese Foreign Ministry one week later [→ China (Tibet)]. On May 14, the Indian Foreign Ministry announced not to participate in China's Silk Road Summit from May 14 to 15 in Beijing, China, claiming that the Silk Road project in Kashmir ignored India's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

On June 8, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) destroyed two self-help bunkers of the Indian Army at the Doka La Pass on the Dolam Plateau, Doklam/Donglang area, near the disputed tri-junction on the borders of Bhutan, China, and India. On June 16, a Chinese track construction party started the construction of a road at the Plateau near Doka La Pass, which was stopped by the Indian military soon after, leading to a standoff between 300 soldiers of the Chinese PLA's 6 Border Defense Regiment and approx. 350 Indian soldiers. The standoff lasted until August 28 and ended with the withdrawal of the troops.

Moreover, on July 25, around 50 Chinese soldiers transgressed one kilometer into Indian territory in Barahoti area, Chamoli district, Uttarakhand. In November, China strongly objected to the visits of the Indian Presidents, as well as the Defense Minister to the LAC area claimed by China, accusing India of intensifying tensions. On December 7, the Chinese Defense Ministry expressed its strong dissatisfaction with India over a crashed drone on the LAC.

Throughout the year, China continued to block the designa-

tion of Jaish-e-Mohammed chief Masood Azhar as a terrorist in the UNSC, as well as India's efforts to join the Nuclear Suppliers Group.

lja

CHINA – USA

Intensity: 2 | Change: • | Start: 1949

Conflict parties: PRC vs. USA

Conflict items: system/ideology, international power

The non-violent crisis over international power and system/ideology between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the United States of America (US) continued. While disputes in the South and East China Seas remained a primary issue, high-level cooperation continued in areas of military, trade, cyber security and environmental policy.

On February 8, a Chinese KJ-200 aircraft came close to intercept a US P-3G aircraft over the Scarborough Shoal in the South China Sea (SCS), which was later criticized by the US [→ China – Vietnam et al. (South China Sea)]. On February 18, the US aircraft carrier Carl Vinson, loaded with more than 60 aircraft, began patrols in the SCS. Two days earlier, China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs had condemned this operation as an attempt to undermine China's sovereignty and security. On March 7, the US started to deploy the anti-missile system THAAD to South Korea against repetitive opposition of China. On the same day, PRC declared to take necessary steps to protect their security interests. On March 22, a US Air Force B-1 bomber flew into China's Air Defense Identification Zone in the East China Sea (ECS) [→ Japan – China (East China Sea)]. On May 17, two Chinese Sukhoi Su-30 jets intercepted a US WC-135 aircraft operating over the ECS, one of them coming as close as 150ft. The US called this interception "unprofessional", whereas the PRC urged them to stop close-in reconnaissance activities in this area. On June 3, during the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore, US Secretary of Defense James Mattis spoke against China's militarization of artificial islands and expressed US support of its allies in the SCS. On the next day, spokeswoman of China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs urged related parties to stop issuing "irresponsible remarks". On July 2, the US guided-missile destroyer Stethem sailed within the 12 nautical miles of Triton Island claimed by PRC, Taiwan and Vietnam. In response, the PRC condemned this operation as a "serious provocation" and dispatched three warships and two J-11B fighter jets to warn off the US destroyer. On August 15, military commanders of both sides signed an agreement on Joint Staff Dialogue Mechanism to reduce the risk of miscalculation in the South and East China Seas.

From April 6 to 7, the presidents of the two countries held a summit at President Trump's Mar-a-Lago estate. During the summit, both sides agreed on a 100-day action plan for economic cooperation and the establishment of four high-level dialogues in areas of diplomacy and security, economy, law enforcement and cybersecurity, as well as social and cultural exchanges. On August 14, President Trump authorized an

investigation against China of alleged damage on American companies' intellectual property rights. On September 13, the White House announced to have prevented the acquisition of a US semiconductor company by Chinese investors for security reasons. The next day, China's Ministry of Commerce criticized this as a step towards protectionism. During President Trump's three-day state visit to China from November 8 to 10, both presidents signed trade and investment agreements of over \$250 billion. ¹

CHINA – VIETNAM ET AL. (SOUTH CHINA SEA)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 1949

Conflict parties: China vs. Vietnam vs. Brunei vs. ROC vs. Malaysia vs. Indonesia vs. Philippines
Conflict items: territory, international power, resources

In the South China Sea (SCS), the violent crisis over territory and its resources such as fish, oil, and submarine minerals, as well as international power between Brunei, the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Republic of China (ROC), Malaysia, the Philippines, Vietnam and Indonesia, continued. Throughout the year, the PRC held several maritime military drills, beginning with a ten-day exercise from January 2 to 12 within the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) off the ROC east coast. In reaction, the ROC conducted a two-day drill in the Taiwan Strait, beginning on January 17, as well as a three-day drill around the contested Taiping Island (Itu Aba), belonging to the Spratly Islands, beginning on March 29. On April 24, the Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative (AMTI) reported that Chinese vessels had been patrolling regularly near the Malaysian Luconia Shoals in January and February. On August 11 and 12 as well as on November 24, PRC held air force exercises over the Bashi Channel. On June 5, the PRC conducted a naval patrol in the waters of Hong Kong. In the last week of August, the PRC held so-called regular military training around the contested Paracel Islands, which was strongly criticized by the Vietnamese government.

Throughout the year, satellite images revealed PRC constructed military infrastructure on the disputed islands Fiery Cross, Subi, and Mischief Reefs, all belonging to the Spratly Islands, as well as North, Tree, and Triton Islands, belonging to the Paracel Islands. On April 6, AMTI images showed Chinese J-11 fighter jets on Paracel's Woody Island. On May 5, the Philippines started to transfer troops and construction material to Spratly's Thitu Island in order to repair existing infrastructure and to build a dock.

In 2017, several conflict parties clashed in the SCS. On March 27, a Chinese speedboat reportedly fired on a Filipino vessel in the Spratly archipelago without injuring anybody. On April 24, Chinese air forces tried unsuccessfully to turn away two planes carrying the Filipino defense chief and military chief to Thitu Island. Indonesian maritime patrol vessels intercepted five Vietnamese fishing boats in the EEZ in the north of the Natuna Island chain on May 21. Afterwards, a Vietnamese coast guard ship rammed its Indonesian counterpart, which subsequently sank. While Vietnam detained one In-

donesian fisheries officer, Indonesia took eleven Vietnamese crew members into custody. On July 22, Indonesia allegedly fired shots at Vietnamese fishing boats 245 km off the coast of Con Dao island, injuring four fishermen. In retaliation, the Filipino navy fired on Vietnamese vessels illegally fishing within the Philippines EEZ of Pangasinan, Ilocos region, on September 23. Two Vietnamese fishermen were killed. In the first week of April, Indonesia destroyed 81 fishing boats in twelve different locations of Indonesian archipelago, including Riau Islands, which were seized earlier for illegal fishing. In the end of August, Malaysia burned two foreign fishing boats off the coast of Kelantan state for the same reason. In June, Indonesia released 695 Vietnamese fishermen who had been detained for illegal fishing. Indonesia renamed the north of its EEZ to North Natuna Sea on July 15, in order to contain the territorial claims of the PRC, causing criticism by the Chinese government.

Throughout the year, several agreements were reached in talks over formerly disputed issues. On April 10, the Philippines and the PRC announced an arrangement concerning fishing activities in disputed Scarborough Shoal, close to Luzon Island, Philippines. Chinese coast guard vessels have been based there ever since. On April 28, the Philippines and Brunei agreed on the peaceful resolution of their overlapping claims. Since July, the PRC and the Philippines considered joint oil drilling activities in contested waters off Vietnam's south-east coast as an opportunity for cooperation. At the beginning of November, the PRC and Vietnam reached a consensus about managing their dispute through friendly talks. In April, ASEAN and PRC committed to establishing a Code of Conduct (CoC) for the SCS by the end of the year and finished a draft in May. At a summit in November, the ASEAN countries announced the start of CoC negotiations for 2018. Throughout the year, the US maintained its presence in the SCS [→ China – USA]. ²

INDIA – PAKISTAN

Intensity: 3 | Change: ▼ | Start: 1947

Conflict parties: India, Pakistan
Conflict items: territory, international power, resources

The limited war between India and Pakistan over international power, water distribution, and the status of the Kashmir region de-escalated to a violent crisis.

Throughout the year, Indian and Pakistani soldiers committed at least 167 violations of the 2003 ceasefire agreement along the Line of Control (LoC) and the International Border (IB) of Jammu and Kashmir state (J&K). In total, 163 people died, among them 48 Indian soldiers, 53 Pakistani soldiers, 22 Indian civilians, and 40 Pakistani civilians. At least 229 people from both sides were injured. Nearly two-thirds of casualties were injured between June and September, causing over 20,000 Indian civilians native to the border areas along the LoC and IB to flee their homes. The Indian government thus began the construction of 100 bunkers that could accommodate up to 1,500 villagers. Three Pakistani Rangers and one Indian civilian were killed in cross-border shootings along the

LoC between Indian and Pakistani troops from February 6 to 16. On April 17, Indian troops killed eight Pakistani soldiers and injured several more in border skirmishes along the LoC in Rajouri district of J&K. Consequently, hundreds of villagers fled their homes in the border region.

On July 18 and 19, school children were evacuated after shots were fired between Indian and Pakistani troops along the LoC in Poonch and Rajouri district in J&K. Several school buildings near the border were damaged and closed.

Later in September, reportedly in response to Pakistani sniper and shelling attacks, the Indian Army launched Operation Arjun, targeting farms and houses of retired Pakistani army officers near the IB with heavy weapons such as mortars and anti-tank guided missiles. During the operation between September 27 and 29, Indian troops killed one Junior Commissioned Officer and three civilians. At least eleven people were injured.

On August 23, senior army commanders of India and Pakistan agreed to institute mechanisms for durable peace. The Director Generals of the border guarding forces of India and Pakistan met on November 9 to discuss all border-related issues. On September 21, Pakistan's Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi urged the UN to appoint a special envoy to Kashmir.

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INDIA (GJM ET AL. / WEST BENGAL)

Intensity: 3 | Change: ↗ | Start: 1907

Conflict parties: GJM, GNLF, CPRM, JAP, GMCC vs. government

Conflict items: autonomy

The autonomy conflict in the Indian Dooars region between different Nepalese-origin Gorkha groups and the government escalated to a violent crisis. Gorkhas were mainly organized into the following political parties: Gorkha Janmukti Morcha (GJM), Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF), Communist Party of Revolutionary Marxists (CPRM), and the Jan Andolan Party (JAP).

Throughout the year, all parties continued to demand an autonomous Gorkhaland comprising the Darjeeling Hills, Siliguri, the Dooars and Terai regions, and called for the abolishment of the semi-autonomous Gorkha Territorial Administration (GTA). In the first months of the year, no violent conflict measures were conducted. However conflict intensity increased from June onwards.

On May 16, Chief Minister of West Bengal, Mamata Banerjee, announced the introduction of Bengali as a compulsory language subject in schools, even in the GTA area, where Nepali has been the official language. In reaction, GJM initiated peaceful protest rallies, which began on June 5, and in which thousands of protesters participated. Even though the chief minister clarified on June 8 that Bengali would be an optional school subject in the GTA area, GJM called for an indefinite strike of all government facilities, and the protests continued. Protests turned violent the day after Gorkha supporters at the protests threw petrol bombs, stones, and bottles at security forces. In reaction, the West Bengal government deployed army forces in Darjeeling, who used teargas and batons. 52

people were injured in the clashes.

In reaction to these developments, demands for an autonomous Gorkhaland increased. On June 13, GJM and GNLF cooperated for the first time by adopting a joint resolution together with CPRM and Bharatiya Janata Party in favor of an autonomous Gorkha state. After GJM's leader Bimal Gurung called for a "final battle" for Gorkhaland on June 16, protests turned violent for two consecutive days, resulting in several injured on both sides and at least six deaths on the Gorkha side. Parties in favor of an autonomous Gorkha state organized in the Gorkhaland Movement Coordination Committee (GMCC) on June 20. Until September 26, bilateral attempts and meetings between the conflict parties failed to end the ongoing strike and violence. However, on this day, GJM announced the end of the 104 day strike, after Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh had appealed to end the strike and called upon the Union Home Secretary to convene an official meeting to discuss the issues concerning Gorkhaland. On October 13, suspected cadres of Gorkhaland Personnel, a GJM militant wing, killed one policeman and wounded four others during an operation by security forces to arrest GJM leader Bimal Gurung.

The protests left at least twelve GJM supporters and two security forces dead, and at least 110 persons injured on both sides. At least 83 GJM supporters were arrested by security forces, and several government offices, cars, and buildings were damaged. More than 1,000 security personnel requested by the West Bengal government supported the local police to contain the uprising.

ila

INDIA (GNLA ET AL. / MEGHALAYA)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 1992

Conflict parties: GNLA, ASAK, AMEF, ARA, HNLC, ANVC-B vs. government

Conflict items: secession

The violent crisis between militant groups seeking secession in the Garo Hills and Khasi Hills region of Meghalaya State, and the government, continued.

Militant groups associated with the Garo ethnicity, especially Garo National Liberation Army (GNLA) but also Achik Songna Anpachakgipa Kotok (ASAK), Achik Matgrik Elite Force (AMEF) and Achik Revolutionary Army (ARA), strove for an independent Garo state. The Hynniewtre National Liberation Council (HNLC), representing the Khasi ethnicity, pursued an independent Khasi state.

As in previous years, militant groups financed themselves through criminal activities, such as the abduction of eleven traders near Gasuapara in South Garo Hills, on January 10.

Over the course of the year, twelve violent encounters between security forces and militants, mainly GNLA, left six militants and one civilian dead. On June 27, security forces shot a GNLA-militant in a gunfight in South Garo Hills. Another high ranked GNLA militant, Sohan D. Shira, managed to escape the scene. A civilian was shot dead by suspected GNLA militants on August 2, after being accused of collaborating with the police. Furthermore, on October 8, a joint operation

between Meghalaya and Assam State police forces led to the dismantling of a GNLA and United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) extortion racket incident in the district of Goalpara, Assam [→ ULFA-I et al. / Assam]. The Meghalaya government continuously urged militants to surrender arms and to give up militancy. In total, 34 militants surrendered this year; 24 GNLA militants, one supporter of AMEF, and nine ASAK members. Among the latter was Reding T. Sangma, commander-in-chief of ASAK, who surrendered to police forces in Baghmara, South Garo Hills District, on March 2. Some groups handed over their arms and ammunition. Moreover, on March 21, policemen arrested high ranked ARA-militant William Sangma in Bongaigaon District, Assam.

Former militant group A'chik National Volunteers Council (breakaway faction) (ANVC-B) issued its disappointment with the government's failure to implement the settlement agreement signed in 2014, which contained rehabilitation packages for surrendered militants. On May 22, they threatened to return to the jungle if their demands were not met by the state government. The withholding of the promised rehabilitation packages was also criticized by HNLC, who also threatened to kill a government official in November, blaming him for economic hardship and claiming he was not protecting the indigenous tribes from immigration. On December 21, the government decided to extend rehabilitation packages to another 28 surrendered ANVC-B members and 10 militants of the disbanded United A'chik Liberation Army (UALA). cre

INDIA (HINDUS – CHRISTIANS)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 1999

Conflict parties: Hindus, RSS, Bajrang Dal, Hindu Yuva Vahini, Hindu Makkal Katchi vs. Christians

Conflict items: subnational predominance

The violent crisis over subnational predominance between Hindus and Christians continued.

On February 27, approx. 200 members of Rashtriya Swayam-sevak Sangh (RSS), a nationalist Hindu organization with connections to the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), attacked a Christian peace festival in New Delhi. About 300 people were injured and the festival site was destroyed. On July 16, two RSS members killed a Christian pastor in Ludhiana, Punjab state. On August 16, around 50 RSS members injured three Christians in Dabli Rathana, Rajasthan state. Several incidents of Hindus attacking pastors were reported. For example, on April 5, 15 Hindus attacked a Christian pastor with swords and sticks in Jadhua, Bihar state. On June 19, 330 Hindus forcefully stopped a Christian worship service in Abasing, Odisha state, injuring twelve people. Similar violent instances were reported. On December 8, four Hindus destroyed a Christian prayer room. One of them was the head of the local branch of the BJP in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu state.

Reportedly, Hindus repeatedly tried to force Christians to convert. For example, on January 20, around 20 Hindus immersed two Christians in ice cold water for about 17 hours in Kubua, Jharkhand state. One of them died as a consequence. On

August 2, Jharkhand became the sixth state to adopt the anti-conversion law, rendering forceful conversions illegal. This law, however, is allegedly deployed discriminatorily against Christians. For example, on October 13, three Hindus injured a Christian pastor in Chhattisgarh state. When the injured pastor went to the police to file charges, the police threatened to arrest him based on the anti-conversion law, accusing him of performing illegal conversions. On May 21, police stopped a bus with Christian students on the way to a religious bible camp. The police justified this with reference to the anti-conversion law, claiming that the students had been forcefully converted.

Further cases of police discrimination against Christians were reported. On March 17, two members of the Bajrang Dal attacked a pastor because he had married a Hindu and a Christian in 2010, in Begusarai, Bihar. The police ignored the attack. On December 4, 20 RSS members broke into a house in Mathura, Uttar Pradesh state, and attacked seven Christians. After the incident, the police charged the Christians with "outraging religious feelings".

In September, following a petition, the Supreme Court sent notice to the Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, calling upon them to end the legal discrimination of Christian Dalits. vpe

INDIA (HINDUS – MUSLIMS)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 1947

Conflict parties: Hindus vs. Muslims

Conflict items: subnational predominance

The violent crisis over subnational predominance between Hindus and Muslims continued.

Throughout the year, several violent communal clashes left at least 15 people dead and 117 injured. On March 2, groups of Hindus and Muslims clashed in Kheri, Uttar Pradesh state, after a video clip appeared, showing Muslim youths insulting Hindu deities. Two people were injured by gunshots, and schools remained closed for several days after local authorities imposed a curfew. On November 4, members of the Hindu and Muslim communities clashed in Aligarh district, Uttar Pradesh, as a dispute over the construction of a toilet on land, adjacent to a mosque but owned by a Hindu, escalated. One person was killed and at least ten people were injured. 25 Muslim families fled the village when clashes occurred on November 9, and another person was killed. On December 6, a road accident in Honnavar, Karnataka state, led to a confrontation between the Hindu and Muslim communities, whose relations had been tense due to a long-standing dispute over ground used by both communities for festivities. When the dead body of a Hindu was found on the day following the clash, Hindu activists called for revenge. One week later, around 30,000 people took part in a procession to protest the killing. Protesters pelted stones and torched vehicles and houses.

In two separate incidents in September, police hindered Hindu activists from attacking interreligious couples in Uttar Pradesh. In Kerala state, a case of so-called "love jihad", where a Muslim husbands was accused of forcing a Hindu

women into marriage, received nationwide attention. After the Kerala High Court had annulled the marriage and had given the woman into the custody of her parents, the case was referred to the Supreme Court, which released the woman on November 27 but did not reinstate the marriage.

The introduction of a beef ban in several Indian states last year, and new regulations on cattle slaughter issued by the central government in May, caused public debate and widespread protests. Muslim organizations, such as the All India Jamiatul Quresh Action Committee, condemned the regulations and questioned their constitutionality, while Hindu activists, such as the right-wing Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), celebrated them. Incidents of lynching and vigilantism related to cows left at least five people dead and 20 injured. For instance, on May 13, tensions between the Hindu and Muslim communities erupted in the village of Silawan, Madhya Pradesh state, after a Hindu man accused a Muslim of injuring his cow. After days of trying to settle the dispute through court, the owner was found dead, allegedly killed by the accused Muslim. In reaction to incidents of cow vigilantism, on September 6, the Supreme Court assigned state governments to appoint a senior police officer for each district as nodal officer to coordinate action against cow vigilante groups. *abo*

INDIA (INTER-ETHNIC RIVALRY / ASSAM)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 1979

Conflict parties: Assamese, ULFA-I, AASU vs. NIBBUSS, Bangladeshi immigrants vs. Adivasis, AASAA et al.

Conflict items: subnational predominance, other

The violent crisis over subnational predominance concerning administrative, political and socio-cultural issues between various communities in Assam State continued. The issue of Bangladeshi migration and presence of perceived outsiders remained contentious. It was further fueled by rivalries over the state's recognition of ethnicities as so-called Scheduled Tribes (ST), an administrative category granting governmental reservations.

Throughout the year, tensions erupted between various pro-Assamese groups and assumed Bengali migrants over issues such as the latter's citizenship status, proof of citizenship registration, Assam's legacy data update, and the central government's Citizenship (Amendment) Bill granting Hindu Bangladeshis citizenship. For instance, the All Assam Students Union (AASU) and other Assamese organizations frequently demanded the fulfillment of the 1985 Assam Accord. On April 26, AASU reiterated 90 demands, including consequent deportation of Bangladeshi immigrants.

Furthermore, the separatist armed group United Liberation Front of Assam Independent faction (ULFA-I) continued to clash with security forces, while occasionally attacking civilians [→ India (ULFA-I et al. / Assam)].

On August 22, ULFA members clashed with Bengali immigrants, inducing ULFA to call for all Assamese to unite against perceived outsiders.

Moreover, many protests against the National Register of Citizens (NRC) and the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill were held in the course of the year and occasionally turned violent. On March 6, Bangladeshi migrants raided an AASU office in Silapathar, Dhemaji district, during a rally, demanding citizenship from the Indian government amid the discussed Citizenship Act reform. On March 8, the government installed a one-man inquiry commission into the Silapathar incident, while thousands followed a protest call by AASU two days later. On March 22, Subodh Biswas, president of the Nikhil Bharat Bangali Udbastu Samanvay Samiti (NIBBUSS), was arrested, after various groups had called for his detention due to the NIBBUSS's alleged involvement in the raid. In the following weeks, police arrested more than 50 NIBBUSS members. On April 1, AASU and other ethnic organizations held a mass rally in Guwahati reiterating their demands and protesting against the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill. On June 30, police shot dead one Muslim protester at National Highway 37, Goalpara district, in a rally demanding the government to address the issue of so-called doubtful voters, who were not allowed to vote since their citizenship was in question. On December 31, the first draft of the updated NRC was published, while nearly 45,000 security forces were employed to ensure public safety.

As in previous years, protests over governmental reservation quotas referring to ST and Other Backward Classes (OBC) statuses continued frequently. During a visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi on May 26, representatives of tribes holding the ST status protested the government's decision to include six OBC communities in the ST list. On August 30, about 100 members of All Adivasi Students Association of Assam (AASAA) gathered on motorcycles lobbying for ST status. On December 5, the Kokrajhar district committee of All Santal Students' Union (ASSU) organized a sit-in near the DC office, Kokrajhar, also asking for a teachers quota and land ownership.

The issue of linguistic and socio-cultural predominance continued to be contentious. On April 22, for instance, youths were arrested for posting a death threat to singer Zubeen Garg on Facebook, in reaction to the singer's choice to perform in Hindi at a local festival.

nbm

INDIA (KASHMIR)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 1947

Conflict parties: LeT, HM, JeM, HuM, TuM, APHC, local protesters vs. government

Conflict items: secession, autonomy

The violent crisis over secession and autonomy in the Indian-administered state of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) between Hizbul Mujahideen (HM), Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), Tehreek-ul-Mujahideen (TuM), Harkat-ul-Mujahideen (HuM), the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) and local protesters, on the one hand, and the Indian government, on the other, continued.

Overall, at least 145 alleged HM, LeT, JeM and TuM militants and 60 security personnel were killed. Moreover, at least 35

civilians died and many were injured, mostly in protests and clashes following raids of security forces against alleged militants.

On April 27, in a suicide attack by suspected JeM militants, three Indian army troopers and two militants were killed at Panjgaon of Chowkibal, Kupwara district, while five soldiers were injured. One civilian was killed and seven were injured during anti-India protests by locals that erupted immediately after the encounter.

Throughout the year, the APHC repeatedly called for protests and strikes against Indian military presence, especially in the Kashmir Valley. Separatist leaders Syed Ali Shah Geelani, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq and Mohammad Yasin Malik were arrested, or put under house arrest, several times for allegedly supporting militant organizations.

Reportedly, security forces killed at least 20 high-ranked HM, LeT and JeM commanders. For example, on August 13, security forces killed HM commander Yasin Ittoo and two associates in an overnight encounter at Awnera village, Shopian district, while militants killed two soldiers. Meanwhile, clashes broke out between local protesters and government forces in the area, in which two civilians were killed. On November 18, police, army and central paramilitary forces killed six LeT militants including the nephew of 26/11 Mumbai attacks' strategic planner Zaki-ur Rehman Lakhvi in an encounter at Chandergeer village, Hajin area, Bandipora district. One Indian Air Force member was killed and one soldier injured. The next day, the Indian army claimed that the major LeT leadership had been "wiped out" by J&K.

In January and April, two videos circulated on social media showing HM, LeT and JeM militants cooperating, a trend that presumably started after the July 2016 unrest. For example, on February 12, four militants, two army personnel and two civilians were killed and around 25 civilians were injured in an encounter followed by violent clashes in Kulgam district. Apparently, both HM and LeT militants were involved. Beforehand, the three militant organizations had had slightly different areas of operation.

On July 10, militants opened fire on a bus returning from the Amarnath cave shrine through Anantnag district, killing eight Hindu pilgrims and injuring 19. While LeT denied any involvement, on August 6, the Special Investigation Team of J&K police blamed LeT for the attack, and stated that they had arrested three LeT militants. rgo

INDIA (MANIPUR)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 1964

Conflict parties: Meiteis, KNF, KRA, Kukis, KYKL, KCP, PREPAK-Pro, PLA, UNLF, ZRO et al. vs. government

Conflict items: secession, autonomy, subnational predominance

The violent crisis over autonomy, and secession of Manipur state between both militants and activist groups, including Meiteis, Kukis, and other ethnicities, on the one hand, and the Indian government, on the other, continued. Militants were mainly organised in the Kuki National Front (KNF), Kuki Revolu-

tionary Army (KRA), Kangleipak Communist Party (KCP), Kanglei Yawol Kunna Lup (KYCL), People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (PREPAK), People's Liberation Army (PLA), United National Liberation Front (UNLF) and Zomi Revolutionary Organisation (ZRO).

Apart from their fight against the Indian government, the groups competed over subnational predominance in violent encounters with each other. Furthermore, the Naga's strive for independence affected also Manipur, for example on June 1, when the NSCN-K killed at least 18 Assam Rifles in an ambush between the two villages of Paralong and Charong, Chandel district [--->India (NSCN et al./ Nagaland)].

Violent clashes between militant groups and the Indian Government resulted in at least 17 deaths and 59 injuries. On May 8, UNLF killed two Indian soldiers with an IED at Lokcha area in Tengnoupal district. Three days later, UNLF declared that the attack served the insurgents' liberation movement. On May 16, states of Northeast India asked the Indian Home Ministry to increase the number of security forces to secure the Indo-Myanmar border, which was objected by ethnic groups living on both sides of the border, such as the Konyak, Khiamniungan and Yimchunger Nagas. In the following weeks, Manipur border districts witnessed an increase in violence. On May 19, an IED blast by unidentified militants near Moreh, Tengnoupal district, injured four police officers. On June 30, PLA killed a soldier with an IED and injured two more at a checkpoint at Lambui village, Ukhrul. On June 2, PLA stated that the attack served to repel the repressive forces of the Indian army that have created enmity amongst the ethnic groups. Against the backdrop of the Rohingya crisis in the neighboring state of Myanmar, the Union Home Ministry intensified its attempts to secure the Indo-Myanmar border to prevent refugees from entering the country [--->Myanmar (Rohingyas)]. On September 9, Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh announced that the number of security personnel in the five border districts of Manipur had been increased. On November 13, two soldiers died and six were injured in an IED explosion by PLA at Maha Mani village, Chandel District. PLA declared that the attack was carried out to fight Indian occupational forces.

Furthermore, militant groups competing for regional predominance clashed several times over the year leaving at least 20 persons dead. For instance, on September 12, five members of the PLA died in an ambush by the rivaling NSCN-IM at Makan village, Kamjong District.

After the government had decided to create seven new districts last year, thereby strengthening the administrative rights of Kukis and Meiteis, the United Naga Council (UNC) protested with an economic blockade on the National Highways 2 and 37. Trucks traversing the blockade came under attack. On April 18, a convoy of 47 oil tankers was ambushed by KRA at the National Highway 2 in Senapati district. Subsequently, the drivers launched a 48-hour work strike, claiming security forces could not protect them sufficiently against attacks. Tripartite talks between the UNC, the Manipur state government and the Government of India have remained without results over the course of the year and were postponed to 2018.

On March 4 and 8, Manipur state elections were held. During the preceding weeks, military groups mobilized against the elections. On February 23, the umbrella organization of

six major militant groups, CorCom, announced a "total shut-down" of Manipur to oppose Prime Minister Modi's visit to attend an election rally. Although the state government increased the number of security personnel, militant groups attacked polling stations. On March 7, a poll official died in an IED explosion triggered by unidentified militants near a polling station located in Ashang Khullen, Kamjong district. nwa, ths

INDIA (NAGALIM)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 1947

Conflict parties: NSCN-IM, NSCN-K, NSCN-R, NNC, NNC-NA et al. vs. government

Conflict items: secession, autonomy

The violent crisis between militant Naga groups and the government over either autonomy or secession of Naga-inhabited areas in the states of Nagaland, Manipur, Assam, and Arunachal Pradesh as well as bordering territories in Myanmar, continued.

Naga militants were mainly organized in factions of National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN), namely Isaak-Muivah (NSCN-IM), Khaplang (NSCN-K), Nelpao-Khitovi (NSCN-NK), and Reformation (NSCN-R). Also aiming for a sovereign country called Greater Nagaland (Nagalim) were the political parties Naga National Council (NNC) and Naga National Council – Non Accordist (NNC-NA).

Throughout the year, NSCN-K clashed most frequently with security forces. For example, on January 22, NSCN-K together with United Liberation Front of Assam - Independent (ULFA-I) attacked soldiers using IEDs, grenades and firearms in Tinsukia district, Assam, leaving two soldiers and two militants of the NSCN-K dead [→ India (ULFA et al. / Assam)]. On June 6, soldiers killed four NSCN-K militants in an encounter in Mon district, Nagaland. NSCN-K members were still hiding out in Myanmar and thus border security remained an issue throughout the year between the government and its Myanmar counterpart. Throughout September, two NSCN-K militants were killed in encounters with security forces in Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and on the Myanmar border. At least four militants and two soldiers were injured.

The peace talks between NSCN-IM and the government continued according to the peace framework agreement which was signed on 2015/08/02. They met regularly throughout 2017 to reach a final settlement concerning the Naga issue. On May 10, NSCN-IM agreed to share sovereignty with the government to ensure peaceful coexistence between the Nagas and India. The government declined NSCN-IM's demand for a separate Nagaland constitution on August 29. Further, the government stated it would not meet the group's request to include Naga-inhabited areas in Manipur, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh in a Greater Nagaland but to continue to preserve territorial integrity of the concerned states. Both parties stated that the most substantial problems were resolved and that they expected to reach a final settlement.

Towards the end of the year, the central government invited the Naga political groups NNC, NNC-NA, and NSCN-R and Federal Government of Nagaland to join the peace process. On

November 17, the central government called for Naga peace talks, which resulted in the signing of an agreement between the government and a committee comprising the mentioned Naga political groups. This agreement secured the Naga's right of self-determination and laid the foundation for further peace talks. nrö

INDIA (NAXALITES)

Intensity: 3 | Change: ▾ | Start: 1967

Conflict parties: CPI-M, CPI-ML-RF, PLFI, CPI(ML), CP, TPC, CPI-ML (New Democracy) et al. vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology

The limited war between the left-wing extremist Naxalites and the government over the orientation of the political system and its ideology de-escalated to a violent crisis.

Maoists known as Naxalites were primarily organized in the Communist Party of India-Maoist (CPI-M), while other parties, such as the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) Red Flag (CPI-ML-RF), and the People's Liberation Front of India (PLFI) also continued activity. Most incidents reportedly took place in the federal states Chhattisgarh, Odisha, and Jharkhand. Furthermore, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Telangana, Tripura and West-Bengal were affected.

Over the course of the year, at least 308 people, including 151 Naxalites, 87 security officers and 70 civilians were killed during clashes, IED explosions, and attacks on civilians. This marked a significant decrease compared to the more than 361 fatalities last year. However, the number of security officers killed increased by 36. On April 24, CPI-Maoists killed at least 25 Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel and injured a further six in an ambush in Sukma District, Chhattisgarh, which marked the most fatal attack on security forces across India since 2010. In reaction, the government induced major operations against Maoists, such as the operations "Prahar" and "Prahar 2" that were conducted in June and November, respectively. Joint security forces included more than 2,000 members of Special Task Force, District Reserve Guard, Central Reserve Police Force and Commando Battalion for Resolute Action units, who carried out the first major security operation in the border region of Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand, Maoist heartland. The police claimed the operations were a success, although the numbers of reported casualties on the Maoist side differed greatly.

Moreover, incidents of inter-militant violence were reported. On August 16, members of the CPI-ML-RF publicly killed a man in Telangana for sympathizing with a rival Maoist group, CPI-ML (New Democracy).

Naxalites regularly targeted civilians and former members, mostly accusing them of being police informers. For example, on April 28, Naxalites shot two ex-militants in Malkangiri district, Odisha, suspecting them of cooperating with the police. On January 30, Maoists killed an employee of a road construction company in Jamui district, Bihar, after the company refused to pay extortion money. jpf

INDIA (PATELS ET AL.)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 1981

Conflict parties: Patel community, Jat community, Kapu community, Rajput community, Maratha community vs. government

Conflict items: other

The violent crisis between various communities, most prominently the Patels, Jats, Kapus, and Marathas, on the one hand, and the government, on the other, over benefits under the reservation system, continued.

The reservation system, which allocates government jobs and access to education based on a community's status as either Scheduled Caste (SC) or Scheduled Tribe (ST), had started to evolve under British colonial rule and had been expanded by the Other Backward Caste (OBC) status after Indian independence.

In order to emphasize their demands, different communities and their affiliated organizations staged protests across India, which in some cases turned violent. On February 27, Patels, led by Hardik Patel, held their first rally since 2015 in Ahmedabad, Gujarat state, renewing their demand for reservation. On January 29, members of different Jat organizations, most prominently the All India Jat Aarakshan Sangharsh Samiti (AI-JASS), started protests in different districts of Haryana state, demanding access to the reservation system. Thousands of Jat protesters were involved in rallies, leading to traffic disruptions like the blockade of Rohtak-Panipat national highway on February 1. The internet was shut down in Sonapat and Rohtak areas on February 18. The protest turned violent on March 19, when Jat protesters pelted stones at Haryana police personnel and torched two police buses in Fatehabad, leaving around 20 policemen and five protesters injured. Police reacted with teargas and batons. All in all, the protests lasted around 50 days, until March 19, when a delegation of Jat senior community leaders met Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar, whose government agreed to most of the protesters' demands. On July 20, Jats and five other castes were granted reservation under OBC in Haryana state and on August 23, Jats of Bharatpur and Dholpur district in Rajasthan state received reservation warrants from the state government.

On July 26, the Police of Andhra Pradesh state placed Kapu leader Mudragada Padmanabham under house arrest, thus preventing him from leading a procession in Kirlampudi village, East Godavari district, which should have demanded reservations. On August 9, the Gujjar community renewed their demands for a higher quota in a protest at Gazipur near Mahwa, Dausa district, Rajasthan. On the same day, hundred of thousands of Maratha people organized a protest march in Mumbai and disrupted traffic. More than 10,000 police forces were deployed.

On March 3, thousands of protesters demanding a quota for upper castes, including Rajputs, engaged in stone-pelting and arson near the Vidhan Sabha in Jaipur, Rajasthan. Afterwards, hundreds of protesters stormed the state BJP headquarters

and damaged property, tore posters, and smashed windows of several vehicles parked in the area. aho

INDIA (SIKHS)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 1947

Conflict parties: SAD, KLF, KCF, BK/BKI, AISSF/ISYF vs. government

Conflict items: secession, autonomy

The violent crisis over secession and autonomy between Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) Party and Sikh groups fighting for an independent Sikh state of "Khalistan", on the one hand, and the Indian government, on the other, continued. It mainly took place in the state of Punjab. While SAD no longer attempts to achieve a separate Sikh state but advocates Sikh rights and greater autonomy, there are still several militant groups fighting for secession.

On January 31, a car bomb detonated at a Congress party rally held in Bathinda district, Punjab, in the run-up to Punjab's state election. Seven people were killed and 22 were injured. The police ascribed the attack to Pro-Khalistan militants. On election day itself, February 4, violent clashes between supporters of SAD and the Congress Party left at least seven persons injured.

The Khalistan issue raised diplomatic tension between India and Canada. The passing of a parliamentary motion in Ontario on April 6 describing the 1984 anti-Sikh riots as genocide, and PM Justin Trudeau's presence at a 1984 remembrance event in May, were described as "matters of concern" by the Indian government.

On March 20, Delhi police arrested Gursewak Singh Babla, who was allegedly involved in over 50 cases of terrorist activities and attempted to revive the Khalistan Commando Force. On July 8, six members of Sikhs for Justice were held and one of them arrested by the police for putting up a billboard campaign for a 2020 Pro-Khalistan Independence referendum in different locations in Punjab. Three members of a Khalistan Liberation Force (KLF)-associated militant group were arrested on August 9 in Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh state. The police also identified and arrested four members of Pro-Khalistan Babbar Khalsa in Uttar Pradesh state on August 17 and September 19. Seven Babbar Khalsa International activists allegedly working for a UK-based leader of the militant organization were caught in Ludhiana, Punjab, on September 30.

In November, police uncovered another Pro-Khalistan militant group with links to KLF and UK-based International Sikh Youth Federation (ISYF). Five men were arrested. Two of them confessed they had planned and carried out seven murders over the last two years. The latest killings had targeted Hindu-nationalist activists: Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh leader Ravinder Gosain, shot on October 17 in Ludhiana, and Shiv Sena activist Vipin Sharma, shot on October 30 in Amritsar. The National Investigation Agency stated that the killers had been hired by UK-based KLF members, had been in touch with KLF chief Harminder Singh Mintoo and had received financial support from Europe, the UAE and Pakistan. Allegations of

torture by one of the arrested militants, British national Jagtar Singh Johal, against the Indian police sparked protests among UK's Sikh diaspora and caused further diplomatic tensions.

INDONESIA (ISLAMIST MILITANT GROUPS)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 1981

Conflict parties: MIT, JAD et al. vs. government
Conflict items: system/ideology

The violent crisis over the orientation of the political system between Islamist militant groups fighting for an Islamic state and the government continued. During the first half of the year, violent encounters between militants and government forces left 20 people dead and another 16 injured. Throughout the year, 95 people were arrested on suspicion of belonging to an Islamist militant group or of returning from fighting in Syria.

"Operation Tinombala", which involved 1,500 police and military personnel, was continued by the government and extended until December 29, with the objective of killing or arresting remaining members of Mujahidin Indonesia Timur (MIT) in Poso, Central Sulawesi province. On October 24, parliament passed amendments to the Anti-Terrorism Law, giving police and military greater competence in dealing with suspected militants, such as the ability to preventively detain them for up to six months. This law also banned organizations whose ideologies contradict state ideology, including Islamist groups such as Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia, that had already been banned by a presidential decree on July 19 [→ Indonesia (Muslims-Christians)].

On February 27, a suspected Jamaah Ansharut Daulah (JAD) member detonated an IED in a park in Bandung, West Java province. Later, police officers killed him in a shootout in a nearby government building. On March 23, police shot three alleged militants and injured another in Banten province. On April 8, police and security forces shot six alleged militants after the latter had attacked a security checkpoint in Tuban district, East Java province. On May 15, two alleged MIT members were killed and one "Operation Tinombala" task force member was injured during a shootout in Poso. On May 24, two alleged militants staged a suicide attack that killed three police officers and injured eleven people, including six police officers, near a bus terminal in the east of the capital, Jakarta. On June 25, two alleged militants attacked the police headquarters in Medan, North Sumatra, killing one police officer. One of the attackers was killed, the other one injured in the attack. On June 30, an alleged militant attacked a police officer in a mosque in Jakarta and was later shot by another police officer. On November 2, police shot two alleged JAD militants in raids in Bima, East Nusa Tenggara Province. On December 29, the government decided to add 600 personnel to Densus 88, the anti-terrorism police force, making a total of 1100 personnel.

INDONESIA (MUSLIMS – CHRISTIANS)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 1998

Conflict parties: Muslims vs. Christians
Conflict items: subnational predominance

The violent crisis over subnational religious predominance between Muslims and Christians continued.

The beginning of the year was accompanied by Muslims protests against the Christian Governor of the capital Jakarta, Basuki Tjahaja Purnama "Ahok". On February 11 and 21, as well as March 31, several thousand Muslim protesters marched in Jakarta, demanding the imprisonment of "Ahok". The protests were organized by various Islamic organizations, including the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI), Hizb ut-Tahrir Indonesia (HTI) and the Islamic Ummah Forum (FUI). Muslim groups, led by the FPI and HTI, had accused the governor of blasphemy in September 2016, with two massive protests in the same year. Subsequently, "Ahok" was put on trial for blasphemy.

On March 24, the construction of Santa Clara Church in Bekasi, West Java, continued, causing violent protests by various Muslim groups. The FPI and the Forum for Bekasi Muslim Friendship (MSUIB) clashed with police, who used teargas to disperse the protesters.

On April 19, "Ahok" lost his re-election. One month later, on May 5, the FPI organized another protest against "Ahok" shortly before the proclamation of his sentence. On May 8, chief security minister Wiranto announced that the Indonesian government intended to disband HTI for their conflict with Indonesia's state ideology Pancasila. One day later, a North Jakarta district court found "Ahok" guilty and sentenced him to two years in prison.

In reaction, the Christian Governor of West Kalimantan province, Cornelis, rejected the presence of the FPI in his province. On May 15, local authorities forced two FPI leaders to leave the province immediately after they arrived at Supadio International airport.

In Jayapura, Papua province, hundreds of Christian protesters clashed with local police on May 25, after a report of a bible-burning by soldiers spread on social media. Three protesters and two members of the police were injured. The local police denied that the bible-burning had taken place. On June 8, a military spokesman confirmed that some bibles had been burnt due to an accident that was still under investigation.

On July 10, President Joko Widodo issued a decree to ban organizations classified by the government as against the constitution and Pancasila. A week later, on July 18, about 2,000 Muslims protested the government measure in Jakarta. The Indonesian government banned HTI under the decree the following day. Protests resurfaced on July 28, when thousands of protesters from various Islamist and civil rights groups rallied at the Istiqlal mosque in Jakarta.

On October 24, the Indonesian parliament enacted a law approving President Widodo's previous decree. Around 1,000 protesters, led by Islamist groups, convened around the parliament, which was guarded by 5,200 members of police and military.

INDONESIA (PAPUA)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 1961

Conflict parties: OPM, ULMWP, KNPB, FRI-West Papua, PRPPB, TPN, APM vs. government

Conflict items: secession, resources

The violent crisis over the secession of the provinces of Papua and West Papua, and over resources, between mainly indigenous Papuans, on the one hand, and the government, on the other, continued.

The Papuans were organized into several groups, such as Free West Papua Movement (OPM), National Committee for West Papua (KNPB), United Liberation Movement for West Papua (ULMWP), Indonesian People's Front for West Papua (FRI-West Papua), People's Union for West Papua Freedom (PRPPB), Papuan Student Alliance (APM) and the armed independence movement (TPN).

Throughout the year, security forces killed at least seven indigenous Papuans, injured at least 35, and tortured several more. For instance, in early January, police killed two Papuans and allegedly tortured six civilians in a police operation in Dogiyai, Papua. In reaction, thousands of Papuans protested against police violence in Dogiyai.

On March 27, police killed the suspected leader of OPM, Maikel Merani, in a raid in Yapen, Papua.

On May 1, KNPB rallied in Sentani, Papua, to protest the annexation of Papua and West Papua by Indonesia. Subsequently, police arrested 200 protesters, and several participants reported maltreatment by the police. On May 10, police arrested several students for wearing the Papuan morning star symbol in Jayawijaya, Papua. Between October 21 and 23, a series of shootings between Indonesian Mobile Brigade Forces (BRIMOB) and an unknown armed group took place in Tembagapura District. According to Papuan Regional Police, members of TPN were responsible for the shootings. On October 21, an unknown armed group shot at a convoy of the mining company Freeport-McMoRan, injuring two BRIMOB officers in Utikini Village. On the same day and place, police torched a Papuan house. On November 14, an unknown armed group killed one BRIMOB officer and injured another in a firefight in Tembagapura District.

On November 5, OPM and TPN isolated more than 1,300 civilians in several villages in Tembagapura District from infrastructure by blocking all roads. On November 17, TNI and Army's Special Forces Kopassus rescued 344 locals from the isolated area. On December 12, a clash between TPN and TNI left one dead and one injured in Mugi District, Nduga region, West Papua. Between December 12 and 15, the TNI conducted raids in the same district, in which they injured five Papuans, allegedly tortured a further four and torched two houses.

On April 20, around 1,000 Papuan miners protested new regulations in mining law regarding Freeport-McMoRan, which led to increased unemployment in Timika, Papua. The police injured at least six miners. On November 24, around 2,000 people protested for the closure of Freeport-McMoRan in Jayapura, Papua.

On September 26, the UN council rejected a petition by West Papua independence activists demanding self-determination. The petition had been supported by marches of thousands of people in May. At least 126 KNPB members had been arrested in relation to the petition process.

mbe, mmu

INDONESIA, PHILIPPINES – MALAYSIA (IMMIGRANTS)

Intensity: 1 | Change: • | Start: 1998

Conflict parties: Malaysia vs. Indonesia, Philippines

Conflict items: other

The conflict over immigration between Malaysia, on the one hand, and Indonesia, as well as the Philippines, on the other, continued as a dispute.

Throughout the year, Malaysian authorities focused on sending back undocumented foreign workers. On February 15, the Malaysian Immigration Department launched the Enforcement Card (E-Kad), a temporary working permit valid until February 2018. If not applied for by June 30, illegal workers would be detained and deported. On March 12, it also prohibited employers from recruiting new foreign workers. In two investigations on May 26 and 27 in Sabah State, in Kota Kinabalu city and Eastern Sabah Security Command, Lahad Datu, respectively, immigration agents arrested approx. 30 Filipinos and seven Indonesians, and destroyed 93 illegally built houses. Police subsequently stated its intended cooperation with Philippine security forces. After the E-Kad registration deadline had passed, immigration agents started a nationwide crackdown on July 1, amounting to about 18,000 investigations, primarily through house searches. On July 10, the Indonesian Manpower Ministry urged Malaysia to extend the deadline but was rejected by the Malaysian Immigration Department one day later. By July 27, 1,495 Indonesians and 261 Filipinos had been arrested. Meanwhile, hundreds of illegal Indonesian workers fled to plantations or forests to avoid punishment. eku

JAPAN, SOUTH KOREA, USA – NORTH KOREA

Intensity: 2 | Change: • | Start: 1990

Conflict parties: Japan, South Korea, USA vs. North Korea

Conflict items: system/ideology, international power, other

The non-violent crisis over international power and ideology between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), on the one hand, and the USA, the Republic of Korea (ROK), and Japan, on the other, continued. Further points of contention were the detainment of US citizens, and cyberattacks. In 2017, DPRK demonstrated substantial progress in its nuclear weapons program, for instance on July 4 and on July 28, when DPRK launched an intercontinental ballistic missile

(ICBM), the Hwasong-14 missile, for the first time. US intelligence officials estimated that DPRK had successfully miniaturized nuclear warheads for missiles and would be capable of reaching US mainland territory with its missiles.

Throughout the year, DPRK conducted 16 missile tests, including a third ICBM test on November 28 with the missile type Hwasong-15, which had an estimated range of 13,000 km. Additionally, DPRK detonated a hydrogen bomb on September 3. The UNSC called an open emergency meeting the day after. The US, ROK and Japan regularly reacted to missile tests from the DPRK by re-deploying their troops. On March 6, for example, the DPRK fired four ballistic missiles into the Sea of Japan, which was answered by the deployment of missile defense ships to the point of impact on March 14. Similarly, a large scale joint military exercise between the US and the ROK was conducted on December 4 as a reaction to the DPRK's launch of the Hwasong-15 ICBM in November. On the other hand, the DPRK launched a ballistic missile on February 11 in response to US Secretary of Defense James Norman Mattis' visit to the ROK, during which he discussed the installation of the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense anti-missile system. The annual joint military exercise Ulchi-Freedom Guardian between the US and ROK started on August 21 and was strongly condemned by the DPRK.

Following the leak of estimates of DPRK progress in its nuclear weapons program, US President Donald Trump threatened military measures against the DPRK on August 8. DPRK leader Kim Jong-un threatened to attack US military bases on US territory Guam in response. Both leaders continued to issue threats and insults over the following months.

In 2017, the UN imposed extensive sanctions against DPRK based on four UNSC resolutions. Additionally, bilateral sanctions against the DPRK were imposed throughout the year by various countries. Cyber-attacks, allegedly conducted by the DPRK, including the so-called WannaCry attack in May that impaired banks, hospitals, and companies around the world, were among the cited reasons. On December 22, following a US proposal, the UN imposed its latest sanctions on the DPRK, which included the reduction of DPRK import of refined petroleum products, which are necessary for missile programs, by up to 90 percent. Moreover, the UN required all countries to send DPRK guest workers back within 24 months.

pen

KAZAKHSTAN (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: 2 | Change: • | Start: 2004

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

The non-violent conflict over national power and the orientation of the political system between various opposition groups and individual activists, on the one hand, and the government, on the other, continued.

On January 5, at least 400 workers of the Qalamqas and Zhetybai oil fields in western Manghystau province went on hunger strike to protest the judicial decision to close the Confederation of Independent Trade Unions. This protest led to the conviction of the union leaders Amin Eleusinov and

Nurbek Qushaqbaev on January 21, who were respectively charged with embezzlement and the organisation of an illegal hunger strike. At least another 40 strikers appeared in court, and 15 were fined.

Throughout the year, authorities enforced particularly strong measures against civic activists. On January 18, Jehovah's Witness Teimur Akhmedov was arrested for inciting inter-religious discord, as was journalist and human rights activist Aleksandr Kharlamov, who was detained on February 3. On February 11, police arrested Zhanbolat Mamai, editor-in-chief of the independent news outlet Sayasi kalam/Tribuna on suspicion of money laundering for the exiled opposition leader and banker Mukhtar Ablyazov. On June 7, Ablyazov was sentenced in absentia to 20 years in prison on various charges, such as embezzlement and organizing and leading a criminal group. On February 23, blogger Ashkat Bersalimov was sent to prison for 15 days for reporting Mamai's arrest. On August 3, Ramazan Esergepov, president of the NGO Journalists in Trouble, fled to Paris, after authorities accused him of organizing an unauthorized rally to support political prisoners in Almaty, Almaty Region, on July 29. After several court hearings, on October 21 activist and blogger Zhanar Akhmet fled to Kiev, where she was detained until November 22, with possible extradition to Kazakhstan still outstanding. mor

KYRGYZSTAN – TAJIKISTAN – UZBEKISTAN (BORDER COMMUNITIES / FERGANA VALLEY)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 2000

Conflict parties: Kyrgyzstan vs. Uzbekistan vs. Tajikistan


Conflict items: territory, international power

The trans-state conflict over territory and international power between inhabitants of enclaves/exclaves from Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, backed by their respective governments, remained on the level of a violent crisis.

On January 22, dozens of local residents living near the Kyrgyz-Tajik border clashed and threw stones at one another, damaging four vehicles and a private home. As a result of the clash, the mayor of the Kyrgyz Kok-Tash village was hospitalized and three Tajik citizens were injured. On March 19, government delegations from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan met in working groups to discuss the demarcation of their border. Over the course of the year, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan achieved a breakthrough in their decades-long border dispute. On August 16, Uzbek Prime Minister Abdulla Aripov and Kyrgyz Prime Minister Sooronbai Jeenbekov met at Manas International Airport in Bishkek to discuss bilateral ties, and attended a meeting of the bilateral commission on border delimitation. On September 6, both sides reopened the symbolic Dostuk checkpoint along with thousands attending the reopening ceremony. On September 5, Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev arrived in the Kyrgyz capital Bishkek on an official two-day visit, the first official Presidential visit since 2000. Mirziyoyev and Kyrgyz President Almazbek Atambaev signed an agreement on the demarcation of 85% of the 1280km long Kyrgyz-Uzbek border. Atambaev signed this

into law on October 2, following ratification by the Kyrgyz Parliament on September 28. The Uzbek Senate adopted the agreement on October 4. [ama](#)

MALDIVES (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: 2 | Change:  | Start: 2003

Conflict parties: MDP, AP, MUO vs. government

Conflict items: national power


The violent crisis over national power between opposition parties, primarily the Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP) and the Adhaalath Party (AP), on the one hand, and the government, led by President Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom of the Progressive Party of Maldives (PPM), on the other, decreased to a non-violent crisis.

On February 9, MDP leader Mohamed Nasheed announced his candidacy for the 2018 presidential election, to which PPM MPs objected on the basis of a 2015 criminal conviction. On March 26, Nasheed announced the formation of an alliance against President Yameen with the help of MDP, the PPM faction of Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, as well as with Jumhooree Party's (JP) leader Qasim Ibrahim. The next day, during a vote of no confidence against parliamentary speaker Abdulla Maseeh Mohamed that should have weakened President Yameen, military officers forcefully removed at least 13 opposition MPs from the parliament in the capital, Male. All remaining opposition members walked out in protest. Subsequently, the PPM council removed Gayoom as PPM leader for "working with the opposition to overthrow the lawful government". On the same day, the Civil Court ordered a transfer of party control to President Yameen.

On April 6, police arrested Qasim on allegations of bribery towards legislators. He was sentenced to three years in prison on August 25. On May 6, local council elections took place, having been postponed several times. MDP won all the major constituencies while AP boycotted the election due to alleged manipulation by the election commission.

Further votes of no confidence took place on April 9, July 3, July 24 and August 22. For instance, on July 24, the military used pepper spray to prevent opposition members from entering. Two days later, police used pepper spray against protesters in the MDP meeting hall in Male and arrested eleven people, including eight journalists. On July 27, UNSG Antonio Guterres urged the government to uphold the right of assembly. [twe](#)

MYANMAR (ROHINGYA)

Intensity: 5 | Change:  | Start: 2012

Conflict parties: Rohingya, ARSA vs. government, Buddhists

Conflict items: subnational predominance, other

The conflict over subnational predominance and citizenship between the Muslim Rohingya minority, on the one hand, and the Buddhist majority, as well as the government, on the other, mainly in northern Rakhine State, escalated to a war. Following clashes in October 2016 between the Burmese

Armed Forces known as Tatmadaw and the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA), a militant Islamic group actively pursuing Rohingya interests, the Tatmadaw launched several operations against Rohingya villages, killing and injuring civilians. This sparked international protest, including accusations of ethnic cleansing.

In the first half of 2017, the government and the Tatmadaw investigated alleged cases of human rights violations by four newly established commissions. Both military representatives and Vice President Myint Swe stated that there was no evidence supporting claims of any military wrongdoings. On March 24, the UNHRC adopted a resolution authorizing its council president to dispatch an independent, international fact-finding mission to Myanmar to investigate alleged human rights violations. However, Myanmar opposed such a mission and none had been launched by the end of the year. The UNHCR estimated that around 620,000 Rohingya fled Myanmar throughout the year, causing the world's fastest growing refugee crisis, as it overstrained neighboring countries' capabilities to provide shelter. The vast majority of them remained in refugee camps around the border town Cox's Bazar, Chittagong province, Bangladesh. According to a report issued by the International Crisis Group on December 7, more than 27,000 non-Rohingya and non-Muslim civilians were also displaced as a result of the conflict.

On August 25, approx.150 armed ARSA members attacked 30 police posts and one army base along the border with Bangladesh, with knives, sticks, guns and IEDs. In subsequent conflicts, concentrated mainly in Rathedaung township, which lasted for several days, at least 104 people were killed. The Tatmadaw consequently launched a clearing operation in the border areas to search for ARSA members. During the operation, which lasted at least one month, the military allegedly torched 288 Rohingya villages, destroying several thousand homes. At least 400 people, from both sides as well as civilians, were killed, and by September 8, approx. 270,000 refugees had reached Bangladesh. On September 10, ARSA called for a one-month ceasefire on humanitarian grounds. On October 17, according to the UNHCR, another 15,000 refugees attempted to cross the border with Bangladesh, after more arson attacks had been conducted on their villages a few days earlier. The government of Myanmar repeatedly claimed the torching had been committed by ARSA or other Rohingya themselves.

In September, human rights organizations, Western governments, and global institutions such as the UN condemned Myanmar's operations, some reiterating its description as ethnic cleansing. UN representatives moreover emphasized the importance of granting full citizenship. In interviews conducted by Reuters, Human Rights Watch, and UN health workers, Rohingya refugees stated that the Tatmadaw had committed arson and indiscriminately killed hundreds of Rohingya. Health workers also stated that they found evidence

of rape and sexual assault among dozens of examined Rohingya women, who had fled Myanmar. The government denied these claims, after conducting its own investigations and publishing a report citing 2,817 Rohingya in early November. At the same time, it admitted to having killed ten Rohingya insurgents, allegedly in defense of national security, during clashes in September.

On September 6, Bangladesh officially accused the Tatmadaw of deploying landmines in the border region between the countries and thus violating international law. In the previous days, landmines had killed five Rohingya and injured at least twelve others. Multiple sources reported that the military continued to produce and deploy landmines but were gradually limiting their use.

On September 20, around 300 Buddhist protesters prevented a Red Cross aid boat in Sittwe city from departing for refugee camps. Using stones and Molotov cocktails, the protesters injured several police officers, who were trying to disperse the protesters. Eight people were detained.

The refugees' situations were influenced by decisions taken by the Bangladesh government. For instance, on October 6, Bangladesh announced its plans for camps for about 800,000 possible refugees in a new zone near the border, after being urged to act throughout the preceding months by the UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration. On November 23, in the capital Naypyidaw, the Myanmar and Bangladesh governments agreed to commence the repatriation process. At a meeting in the capital Dhaka, Bangladesh, on December 19, they set up a joint working group to that end. On December 13, the Myanmar government announced that it would start to take back Rohingya refugees from Bangladesh on 01/22/2018, although Rohingya continued to flee Myanmar. ^{tno}

MYANMAR (TNLA / SHAN STATE)

Intensity: 3 | Change: ↘ | Start: 2013

Conflict parties: TNLA vs. government
Conflict items: subnational predominance, resources

The conflict over subnational predominance and resources, such as poppy, between the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) and the government in Pa Laung Self-Administered Zone, Shan State, de-escalated to a violent crisis.

Over the course of the year, TNLA forces and soldiers of the Tatmadaw, the Burmese Armed Forces, clashed numerous times, leaving at least 20 people dead, 17 injured, and at least 1,300 internally displaced. For instance, on May 2, TNLA and Tatmadaw forces clashed in the villages of Namhom, Kongkhur, and Pangzarm, in Namkham township, with the Tatmadaw using artillery and fighter jets. In the crossfire, one civilian was killed and a further three were injured. Due to numerous clashes in the previous weeks, approx. 300 villagers fled their homes in Zaikhao tract, Kunhing township, on May 11, and sought shelter at the Shwe Minta Temple, Namtu township, where many IDPs of clashes in the previous year were still waiting for their return.

On June 26, the TNLA organized a drug burning ceremony in northern Shan State to mark the UN's International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking. Following the event, Tatmadaw soldiers detained seven civilians at a checkpoint near Myohit village, Namhsan township, among them three journalists who had covered the event, charging them with unlawful association and contacts to the TNLA. However, on September 15, the charges were officially dropped.

Despite the ongoing fighting, peace negotiations between the government and the TNLA, as well as other non-signatories to the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA), continued [→ Myanmar (UNFC et al.)]. In early January, the TNLA released a press statement, accusing the government of hindering the peace process by only negotiating with NCA signatories. However, the TNLA announced its willingness to participate in future peace talks with the government on February 24. From May 24 to 27, TNLA representatives joined the second meeting of the 21st century Panglong Conference in the capital Naypyidaw after being invited by the government alongside other NCA non-signatories as "special guests". The TNLA left the conference early without making significant progress. Nevertheless, TNLA reiterated the possibility of further talks with the government. ^{nro}

MYANMAR (UNFC ET AL.)

Intensity: 3 | Change: ↑ | Start: 2011

Conflict parties: WNO, KIO, SSPP/SSA, NMSP, KNPP, LDU, ANC vs. government
Conflict items: autonomy

The conflict between the United Nationalities Federal Council (UNFC) and the government over regional autonomy escalated to a violent crisis.

Throughout the year, peace negotiations continued but the conflict turned violent as members of the Karen National Progressive Party (KNPP), part of the UNFC, were attacked by government forces at the end of the year.


In various meetings and statements from January, March, and April, the UNFC made clear that it planned to sign the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) if the government agreed to their proposed changes, most importantly regarding the current terminology "union based on federalism". In contrast to these announcements, the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) and Shan State Progress Party (SSPP) attended a meeting initiated by the United Wa State Party (UWSA) in Pangkham, Shan State, from February 22 to 24, where they signed an accord that dismissed the NCA and called for a different approach to peace. Following the 4th Summit in Pangkham held between April 15 and 19, the KIO and SSPP, among others, established the UWSA-led Federal Political Negotiation and Consultative Committee [→ Myanmar (UWSA, NDAA / Shan State)]. On April 29, the KIO, followed by the Wa National Organization (WNO) shortly after, resigned from the UNFC. While the KIO and SSPP attended the second meeting of the 21st Century Panglong Conference from May as part of the Northern Alliance, the UNFC boycotted the conference due to their invitation as mere de-facto observers. On August

12, the SSPP requested to leave the UNFC, which was not confirmed by the UNFC until the end of the year.

After numerous meetings between the UNFC's Delegation for Political Negotiation and the government's Peace Commission throughout the year, the parties agreed on most of the conditions to signing the NCA in the UNFC's eight-point proposal, notably excluding security affairs. Moreover, the state's future name remained the main obstacle to agreement after meetings in Yangon, Yangon Region, on November 8 and 16.

On December 20, the conflict turned violent, as Tatmadaw soldiers reportedly raided a KNPP outpost in Loikaw township, Kayah State. They detained, tortured, and killed three KNPP soldiers and one civilian. The KNPP and UNFC subsequently called for an investigative commission, and claimed that the killings would undermine the trust in the Tatmadaw and hurt the peace process. jgi

MYANMAR (UWSA, NDAA / SHAN STATE)

Intensity: 1 | Change:  | Start: 1988

Conflict parties: UWSA, NDAA vs. government

Conflict items: autonomy

The non-violent crisis over autonomy between the United Wa State Army (UWSA) and the National Democratic Alliance Army (NDAA), on the one hand, and the government, on the other, de-escalated to a dispute.

Throughout the year, UWSA took a leading role among ethnic armed forces that rejected the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) with the government. Starting on February 21, the UWSA continued talks with other non-signatory groups, including NDAA, in Pangkham, Shan State. Together with five other non-signatories, they formed the Federal Political Negotiation and Consultative Committee (FPNCC) at a summit held between April 15 and 19. The FPNCC, headed by the UWSA, also issued a joint policy paper, calling for restructuring of the peace process. On May 17, the FPNCC stated their willingness to meet with government, provided that it participated as a collective group. Although UWSA had left the first session of the 21st century Panglong Union Peace Conference on 03/31/2016 due to dissatisfaction with its observer role, it attended the second session in the capital Naypyidaw starting on May 24. Two days later, the FPNCC met with State Counselor Aung San Suu Kyi to propose amendments to the NCA. Government delegations met with the UWSA and NDAA on November 11 and 12 at their respective headquarters in Pangkham without progress. jpa; kv

NEPAL (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 2008

Conflict parties: CPN-UML, UDMF, Federal Alliance, RRP et al. vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology, national power

The violent crisis over national power and the orientation of the political system between several political parties and civil society groups, on the one hand, and the government, on the other, continued.

Opposition groups included the Communist Party of Nepal - Unified Marxist-Leninist (CPN-UML), aiming to form of geographically based federalism, the party alliance United Democratic Madhesi Front (UDMF), which is fighting for the demand of many Madhesis concerning an identity based federal system including an autonomous Madhesi state, and the royalist Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP), demanding the restoration of a Hindu state. The government was formed by a coalition of Nepali Congress (NC), the Communist Party of Nepal - Maoist-Centre (CPN-MC), and Madhesi Jana Forum (MJF). UDMF and RPP, although part of the government coalition joined the opposition at the beginning of the year due to political disagreements.

Policy decisions by the government, local and assembly elections, changes in the government coalition, and intra-oppositional splits caused tension and violence. The formation of a federal commission created to work on the administrative units as proposed in the constitution amendment bill of 2016 continued to be a contested issue. On February 13, a coalition of CPN-UML, UDMF and groups aligned with the Madhesi identity threatened to start mass protests if local bodies were not revised according to their interests. On March 14, UDMF withdrew from the ruling coalition, accusing the government of failing to properly address their demands. Moreover, on April 20, six of seven UDMF parties formed a new party called Rastriya Janata Party (RJP), unifying the Madhesi demands. On May 2, RPP withdrew from the government coalition after an impeachment motion filed by NC and CPN-MC against the chief justice. On October 3, the leaders of three left-wing political parties - CPN-UML, CPN-MC, and Naya Shakti Party Nepal - announced the formation of the Left Alliance to strengthen their position in the legislative and provincial elections on November 26 and December 7.

Election-related violence emerged in all provinces around the local elections held in May, June, and September, as well as during the legislative elections conducted in November and December. In total, eight people were killed and 128 injured in violent clashes and attacks. In the days before May 14, the first local election day, violence erupted in Province No 5 and Province No 3. CPN-MC supporters clashed with NC and CPN-UML supporters, leaving one person dead and another 35 injured. NC and CPN-UML supporters, on the one hand, and RPP and CPN-MC supporters, on the other, clashed after the first election day, leaving three persons dead and seven injured. On June 2, the military was deployed to Sunsari district, Province No 1, in order to ensure security in the run-up to the second local election day on June 28. However, one CPN-UML member was killed and at least ten people were injured in clashes between NC, CPN-UML, and CPN-MC supporters in Provinces 6 and 7. Due to pressure from Madhesi parties, the government re-scheduled the local election in Province No 2 to September 18, after RJP supporters had injured three polling officers on June 12. Throughout September, two people were killed and six injured in attacks and clashes between CPN-UML, RJP, and NC supporters in the

province. Further clashes between supporters of the Left Alliance, Sanghiya Samajwadi Forum Nepal, and NC and IED attacks in several provinces during November and in December left at least 50 people injured. pse

NEPAL (RIGHT-WING HINDU GROUPS)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 2006

Conflict parties: RPP, Shiva Sena Nepal, RPP-D et al. vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology

The violent crisis between various right-wing Hindu groups and the government, over the orientation of the political system and its ideology, continued.

Right-wing Hindu parties such as the Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP) and Shiva Sena Nepal continued their struggle to re-instate a Hindu Kingdom. On February 11, the RPP announced it would adopt a Hindu Kingdom as its official political position before its national convention. On March 16, the RPP continued to promote its position on re-instating a Hindu state, as RPP's president Kamal Thapa directed RPP members to present the party's ideology of a Hindu Kingdom strongly during its poll campaign. However, on March 17, the national Election Commission (EC) removed the part that advocated a Hindu state and a constitutional monarchy from the RPP's statute. Following this decision, on March 18, Thapa issued a statement condemning the EC's action and threatened to take to the streets if it was not repealed. Two days after Thapa's statement, on March 20, violent protests between RPP members and the police occurred in the capital Kathmandu in front of the EC. The clash left at least 15 people injured. Between April 18 and 21, the RPP staged several demonstrations and a public referendum to challenge the EC's ruling.

Other right-wing Hindu groups opposed RPP's Hindu state stance. On April 30, a number of right-wing Hindu groups, burned the effigy of Thapa during a protest that was organized by Shiva Sena Nepal, among others, in Birgunj, Province 2. The protesters accused Thapa of relinquishing a strong pro-Hindu agenda. On August 6, RPP's party leader Pashupati Rana left the RPP to form the new party Rastriya Prajatantra Party-Democratic (RPP-D), after citing compromises on the RPP's Hinduism and monarchy agenda. Thapa aims to restore a Hindu state and the constitutional monarchy, where Rana merely supports the claim of a Hindu state openly. In response, on August 28, Thapa issued a statement, claiming that forces within the government fostered the RPP divide as part of a conspiracy to prevent Nepal from becoming a Hindu state. On October 9, the RPP held a protest rally in the capital demanding restoration of the Hindu state. aer

NORTH KOREA, CHINA (DEFECTORS)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 2000

Conflict parties: DPRK vs. Christian aid groups, defector support networks, ROK

Conflict items: system/ideology, other

The violent conflict over ideology and freedom to leave between the Republic of Korea (ROK), Christian aid groups, and support networks of North Korean defectors, on the one hand, and the government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), on the other, continued.

In the first nine months, the number of North Korean defectors to the South decreased by approximately 15 percent to 881 defectors, compared to the respective time frame in 2016, Yonhap News Agency reported. Many defectors were in very poor health, suffering from radioactive contamination, tapeworms and anthrax, showing grave living conditions in the DPRK, which was denounced by the ROK on several occasions. In January, the DPRK's national security agency began to install land-based, unmanned detection sensors along several popular escape routes in the border region between the DPRK and the People's Republic of China (PRC), such as in the Ryanggang province and in the North Hamgyong region. In addition, the DPRK government significantly increased the number of security agents. On February 13, Kim Jong-un's half-brother, Kim Jong-nam, was killed by two women in Kuala Lumpur, using the chemical weapon VX nerve agent. According to several South Korean news agencies, the assassins were North Korean agents, subordinate to the DPRK government. Before, North Korean defectors' groups in Europe and the United States, such as the International North Korean Association for Human Rights and Democracy in London, United Kingdom, had repeatedly offered Kim Jong-nam the option to serve as leader of a government-in-exile, which he had rejected.

In response to the incident, South Korean law enforcement agencies increased and partly doubled the number of police officers protecting high-ranking North Korean defectors in the ROK, including Thae Yong-ho, defector and former ambassador of the DPRK to the UK. On March 5, the ROK government announced to quadruple the reward for North Korean defectors who share critical information on the DPRK regime or military to USD 860,000.

On June 13, a DPRK soldier defected to ROK by crossing the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) between the two countries, marking the first direct military defection since 09/29/2016. In July, the former North Korean celebrity defector Lim Ji-hyun appeared in a DPRK propaganda video, stating she regretted her time in South Korea and asked other defectors in ROK to return to the DPRK. South Korean police have been investigating the case, suspecting a potential abduction of Lim, possibly by "the North Korean State Security Department", as Rep. Cheong Yang-seog (Bareun Party / ROK) suggested. On November 13, a DPRK soldier, who tried to cross the DMZ, was shot by border guards. After the incident, ROK soldiers found and rescued the heavily injured defector near the border truce village of Panmunjom in the ROK. The North Korean

nuclear scientist Hyun Cheol-huh defected from the DPRK and was detained by Chinese authorities on November 4. After he had been brought back to the city of Sinuiju in DPRK, on November 17, he committed suicide before DPRK authorities had a chance to question him. On December 18, the defection of a low-ranking DPRK soldier crossing the DMZ triggered gunfire from both sides, yet, without injury to any person [→ North Korea – South Korea]. lei, msc

PAKISTAN (BALOCHISTAN)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 1948

Conflict parties: BLA, BRA, UBA, LeB, BNP, BLF, BNM vs. government

Conflict items: secession, resources

The conflict between several Baloch militant groups and political parties, on the one hand, and the government, on the other, over the secession of Balochistan province and the control over its gas, oil, coal, and mineral deposits continued as a violent crisis.

Throughout the year, at least 14 alleged militants and 15 security personnel were killed and at least 26 injured in clashes between police, army and paramilitary Frontier Corps (FC), on the one hand, and the separatist militant groups Balochistan Liberation Front (BLF), Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), and United Baloch Army (UBA), on the other hand. Furthermore, at least 43 civilians were killed and another 34 injured in attacks by militant groups. Apart from two militant attacks carried out in Sindh province, all measures took place in Balochistan.

Security forces conducted numerous raids against alleged militants throughout Balochistan. For example, on June 12, the FC conducted an intelligence-based operation in Quetta, killing two alleged BLA members. Militants carried out attacks targeting security personnel, infrastructure, the media, and civilians. For example, on April 23, an IED explosion near Turbat, Kech district, killed four and injured three FC personnel. BLF claimed responsibility for the attack. Militants targeted infrastructure four times using IEDs, for example on May 18, in Manghopir area, Sindh, where they damaged the Sui gas pipeline, disrupting gas supply in parts of Sindh. Security forces arrested two alleged BLA members in connection with the attack. In early October, BLF and UBA gave the media an ultimatum to defy an alleged ban by the government on covering militant activity, denouncing the news coverage on Balochistan as biased. After the end of the ultimatum on October 24, militants attacked a newspaper shop in Turbat and the Hub Press Club in Karachi, Sindh, with grenades. The attacks resulted in the deployment of paramilitary troops to media houses and an almost complete disruption of newspaper distribution throughout Balochistan until November 5. Militants carried out at least eight attacks against civilians, specifically targeting civilians from other provinces or laborers working on construction sites linked to the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The latter is opposed by separatists for allegedly exploiting the Baloch province and its people. For example, on May 13, two attackers on a motorbike shot and killed ten laborers from Sindh province working at two construction sites near the port city of Gwadar. The

BLA claimed responsibility for the attack. On February 21, the government announced the deployment of 15,000 military personnel to Balochistan and other provinces to protect CPEC projects.

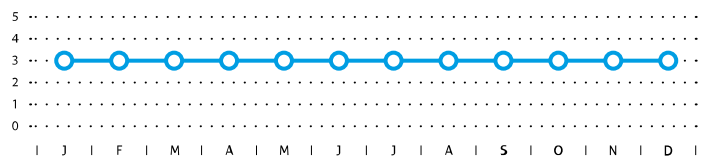
Throughout the year, at least 914 militants reportedly surrendered to the government and were subsequently granted amnesty as part of the "Pur-aman Balochistan" program implemented in 2015, which aims to reintegrate Baloch militants into civil society. On November 14, Prime Minister Shahid Abbasi announced a 10-year development program for Balochistan. eko

PAKISTAN (ISLAMIST MILITANT GROUPS)

Intensity: 4 | Change: ↘ | Start: 2001

Conflict parties: TTP, JuA, LeJ, al-Qaeda, IS vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology, national power



The war over national power and the orientation of the political system between various Islamist groups, most prominently the Tehrik-e-Taliban (TTP), its splinter group Jamaat-ul-Ahrar (JuA), Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ), and al-Qaeda, on the one hand, and the government, supported by the United States, on the other, de-escalated to a limited war for the first time since 2008.

A total of at least 576 people were killed and 435 injured throughout the year. Most fatalities were counted in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), followed by the provinces Punjab, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Sindh, and Balochistan. In the FATA, at least 201 people died in airstrikes conducted by the Pakistan Air Force (PAF), in fire exchanges between militants and security forces, and in IED detonations. PAF targeted suspected militant hideouts along the border in Khyber Agency, FATA, with bombardments on February 17, 21, April 26, and May 19 as well as in North Waziristan Agency, FATA, on February 19. In KP, Punjab, Sindh and Balochistan, numerous clashes between security forces and militants of TTP, JuA, and al-Qaeda accounted for the majority of reported fatalities. For example, on February 9, police killed six al-Qaeda and TTP militants during a raid followed by a shootout in Karachi, Sindh. Four days later, the Counter Terrorism Department of Punjab killed at least six alleged JuA militants in Khanewal District, Punjab.

Attacks on security forces and civilians continued throughout the year in all named provinces. On February 13, a suicide bomber affiliated with JuA targeted a protesting crowd in front of Punjab Assembly in Lahore, Punjab, killing at least 14 people and injuring another 85. On June 23, a car bomb killed 13 people in Quetta, Balochistan, for which both JuA and the so-called Islamic State claimed responsibility.

On February 22, the Army launched the nationwide anti-terror operation "Radd-ul-Fasaad" (RuF) in order to put the National Action Plan into effect, which was adopted in January 2015

after the militant attack on the Army Public School in Peshawar, KP. Meanwhile, 35 mostly TTP-affiliated militants were executed in KP and Punjab after being charged with terrorism by military courts. The mandate of military courts empowered by the 21st Constitutional Amendment to sentence alleged terrorists expired on January 7 after two years. On March 31, President Mamnoon Hussain approved the Pakistan Army Act 2017 and the 28th Constitutional Amendment Bill, which extended the mandate of the military courts. On February 13, TTP and JuA claimed their 2016 launched operation Saut-al-Raad (Sound of Thunder) as successful, and agreed to stage larger-scale attacks.

The Pakistan Army crossed the border to Afghanistan at Mohmand and Khyber Agency to target militant hideouts on February 17, contributing to interstate tensions [→ Afghanistan – Pakistan]. Border-crossings to Pakistan from the Afghan side were also reported.

In March, the US conducted four drone strikes in Kurram Agency and North Waziristan Agency, killing at least twelve suspected militants, including TTP commander Abdullah Kashmiri. On December 7, however, PAF Chief Marshal Sohail Aman warned that US drones violating the country's airspace would be shot down [→ Pakistan – USA]. iro

PAKISTAN (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 1973

Conflict parties: PTI, PAT, TLY, Tehreek-e-Khatme-Nabuwat, Sunni Tehreek Pakistan vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology, national power

The violent crisis over national power, the orientation of the political system and ideology between the opposition parties Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and Pakistan Awami Tehreek (PAT) as well as the religiously oriented parties Tehreek-i-Labaik Ya Rasool Allah (TLY), Tehreek-e-Khatme-Nabuwat, and Sunni Tehreek Pakistan (ST), on the one hand, and the government headed by Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N), on the other, continued.

PTI, PML-N MPs and party supporters clashed repeatedly over the year, often regarding the later dismissed Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif (PML-N). On January 26, members of PTI and PML-N clashed in a session of the National Assembly. Following an aggressive verbal debate and allegedly shouting of slurs from each side, the MPs started a brawl. On April 20, the Supreme Court ruled that there was insufficient evidence of corruption to remove Sharif from his office. However, it demanded a joint investigation into the claims. On April 21, following the Supreme Court's decision, opposition parties including PTI protested in the National Assembly and demanded the resignation of Sharif. PTI leader Imran Khan announced protests demanding Sharif's removal.

On July 28, the Supreme Court removed Sharif over corruption allegations reported in the so-called Panama Papers of 2016. Sharif, three of his children, and his associates such as the Finance Minister Ishaq Dar were referred to the National Accountability Court. Following the Supreme Court's decision, local clashes reportedly erupted in several locations. For

instance, in Multan, Punjab province, supporters of PTI and PML-N clashed, leaving at least three people injured. On July 30, PTI held a rally at the capital Islamabad's Parade Ground to celebrate Sharif's disqualification, which thousands of supporters attended.

On September 12, PTI filed two petitions in the Supreme Court against PML-N and Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), accusing them of receiving foreign funds. After Sharif's National Assembly seat for the constituency NA-120 was vacated, Kulsoom Nawaz, Sharif's wife, ran for the MP seat. PAT and PPP members filed an appeal against her nomination papers, which was dismissed by the Supreme Court on September 18. She won the seat on September 27. On October 3, PAT filed a petition in the Lahore High Court challenging the Election Reforms Act which allowed Sharif to stay president of PML-N despite his disqualification. On November 6, PTI chairman Khan brought the same challenge to the Supreme Court.

In November, the religious parties TLY, Tehreek-e-Khatme-Nabuwat, and Sunni Tehreek Pakistan protested against an amendment to the Elections Act proposed by the government on October 2, which slightly changed the MPs' mandatory oath of office to confirm their belief in the finality of Prophet-hood. Although the government retracted the amendment two days later, calling it a "clerical error", protests led by TLY started, accusing the Law Minister Zahid Hamid of blasphemy, eventually leading to a two-week long sit-in at Faizabad, an intersection between Rawalpindi and the capital Islamabad, in mid-November. After several ultimatums, the government deployed police officers to disperse the protesters on November 25, resulting in clashes, which left six protesters dead and at least 200 protesters and security officers injured. Subsequently, violent protests occurred throughout the country, for example in Karachi, Sindh, where up to 23 people were injured in clashes between security forces and pro-TLY protesters. The government finally capitulated all the protestors' demands, including Hamid's resignation, in an agreement brokered by the army on November 27.

plo, rna, rgo

PAKISTAN (SUNNI MILITANTS – RELIGIOUS GROUPS)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 1985

Conflict parties: TTP, LeJ, IS, JuA vs. Shiites, Ahmadis, Sufis, Hindus, Christians

Conflict items: subnational predominance

The violent crisis over subnational predominance between Sunni militant groups and religious minority groups, especially Shiites, Ahmadis, Sufis, and Christians, continued. Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ), Jamaat-ul-Ahbaar (JuA) and the so-called Islamic State (IS) claimed responsibility for a majority of the attacks. Throughout the year, at least 240 people were killed and at least 809 injured, mostly in IEDs attacks or shootings.

IS claimed responsibility for two attacks against Sufi Muslims. On February 16, a suicide bomber killed 88 people and injured 343 at the shrine of Sufi saint Lal Shahbaz Qa-

landar in Sehwan, southern Sindh province. The second attack, for which IS claimed responsibility took place on October 5, when a suicide bomber killed 18 people and injured 30 in front of a Sufi shrine in Baloch town of Jhal Magsi district, Balochistan province. On December 17, two suicide bombers attacked Christians at Bethel Memorial Methodist church in Quetta, Balochistan province, killing at least nine people and injuring another 45. IS claimed responsibility for the attack. Various attacks on members of the Shiite minority were reported, including an IED attack on January 21 at the vegetable market of the mainly Shiite area of Parachinar, Kurram Agency, Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). LeJ claimed responsibility for the attack, in which 25 people were killed and 87 injured. JuA, a group that had emerged from the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), claimed responsibility for two attacks against the Shiite minority. On March 31, at least 22 people were killed and 90 injured in a car bomb attack near a Shiite place of worship in Parachinar, Kurram Agency. Furthermore, on April 25, an IED buried on the roadside hit a pickup truck, killing 14 people and injuring nine in the Gudar area of Central Kurram Agency. On March 30, LeJ militants shot dead Malik Saleem Latif in Nankana, Punjab province. Latif, a cousin of the Pakistani Nobel Prize winner in physics Abdus Salam, was a prominent member of the Ahmadi community. LeJ claimed that Latif was spreading Ahmadi beliefs in the region. No militant group claimed responsibility for a number of further attacks against members of religious minority groups. For instance, on October 9, a gunman opened fire on Shiites on a pickup truck in Quetta, Balochistan, killing five. hak

PAKISTAN (TALIBAN – TRIBES)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 2001

Conflict parties: TTP, LI, JuA vs. various tribes, tribal militias, peace committees
Conflict items: system/ideology, subnational pre-dominance

The violent crisis over ideology and subnational predominance between Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Lashkar-e-Islam (LI) and Jamaat-ul-Ahrar (JuA), on the one hand, and various tribes led by their elders along with pro-government militias such as Aman Lashkar and government-supported peace committees, on the other hand, continued.

The conflict primarily took place in the semi-autonomous Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), but also spread to the neighboring province of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa.

Throughout the year, at least 15 people were killed and four injured in IED attacks and gun fights between the two parties. LI claimed responsibility for the killing of five pro-government tribal elders in Khyber Agency, FATA, on May 22. On September 1, TTP claimed responsibility for an IED blast that had killed three tribal elders and injured two in Mohmand Agency, FATA. Furthermore, TTP militants killed five peace committee members in South Waziristan on November 30. On the other hand, two alleged LI militants were killed during a gunfight with members of the Zakhakhel peace committee in Khyber Agency on October 29.

Several attacks on tribal elders and peace committee members were reported, for which no militant organization claimed responsibility. For example, on February 13, unidentified militants shot dead three tribal elders in Sur Baghal area, Shekhainin, Orakzai Agency, FATA. On October 2, at least one person was killed and two others injured in an IED attack on the vehicle of peace committee member Ahmed Zeb in Malam Jabba near Mingora, Swat, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa.

lva

PAPUA NEW GUINEA (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 2011

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

The violent crisis over the orientation of the political system as well as national power between the opposition and the government, led by Prime Minister Peter O'Neill, continued. Throughout the year, at least 16 people were killed and 23 were injured. Prior to the general election in June, former opposition leader Don Polye and the Ombudsman Commission accused the government of structural discrimination of candidates and manipulation of the election.

On April 27, one day after the nomination of MP Francis Marus and John Pakua, their respective supporters clashed in the city of Kimbe, West New Britain Province. Three people were killed and three injured during the clash.

From June 24 to July 8, elections were held. They were accompanied by protests against alleged bribery of electoral officials, incorrect polling procedures and the call for more ballot papers.

Alfred Manase was declared winner of the Kandep Open electorate on August 2. Supporters of the rival candidate Polye protested the outcome violently, demanding the counting of seven allegedly uncounted ballot boxes and torching houses in Amala, Enga province. Further, the Karl tribe of Amala shot three men from Kandep and two from the Kii tribe of Tere-menda village, Enga province. A gunfight between both tribes in Wabag, Enga province, killed five people and injured 20 [→ Papua New Guinea (tribal tensions)]. The same day, O'Neill was reappointed as prime minister.

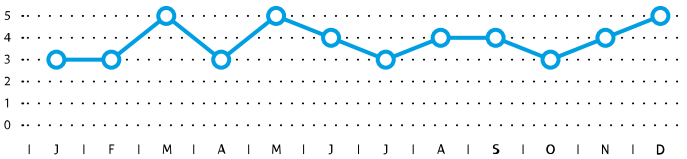
Throughout the year, the opposition accused the government of corruption as well as mismanagement of public funds. For instance, Polye blamed O'Neill of having overexerted public funds, allegedly taking out a one billion USD loan. Prior to that, the government was default of the UN membership fees of 180,000 USD in March. This led to the loss of the country's voting right. On December 15, the Supreme Court dismissed the 2014 warrant against O'Neill over corruption allegations due to lack of evidence.

nro

PHILIPPINES (BIFM, BIFF – MILF, GOVERNMENT)

Intensity: 4 | Change: • | Start: 2008

Conflict parties: BIFM, BIFF vs. MILF, government
Conflict items: secession, subnational predominance



The conflict over secession and subnational predominance between the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Movement (BIFM) and the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF), on the one hand, and Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the government, on the other hand, continued as a limited war.

The conflict was concentrated in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) and the region of South Cotabato, Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat, Sarangani, and General Santos City (SOCCSKSARGEN). Throughout the year, frequent clashes between the conflict parties left 145 BIFF members, 16 MILF members, four members of the military, five prisoners, one security officer and one civilian dead. 40 BIFF members, 40 military forces and twelve civilians were injured. More than 33,000 civilians were displaced by the clashes.

On January 4, BIFF members attacked the North Cotabato District Jail, killing five inmates, one civilian, one guard and injuring one inmate. 158 inmates were freed from prison.

Between January 28 and 30, BIFF attacked army detachments in the towns of Aleosan, Pikit and Midsayap in Cotabato, SOCCSKSARGEN, leaving six BIFF members injured. On March 8 and 10, BIFF injured two military officers in two separate bomb attacks in Datu Salibo, Maguindanao, ARMM. Subsequently, the army started an air and ground offensive in Datu Salibo from March 13 to 16. The attacks killed 30 and injured 26 BIFF members and displaced 400 families.

On March 11, BIFF members moved into the towns of Shariff Aguak, Pagatin and Mamasapano in Maguindanao, ARMM, leaving 300 families internally displaced.

On May 5, the army began another air and ground offensive against BIFF in Datu Salibo. The five-day offensive, in which rocket-propelled grenades, artillery and air strikes were used, left 31 BIFF members dead and four injured, seven soldiers wounded and 24,000 civilians internally displaced.

Defence Minister Delfin Lorenzana suggested that BIFF members may also have been involved in the occupation of Marawi City [→ Philippines (Islamist militant groups)]. Between June 6 and 12, BIFF members tried to raise the flag of the Islamic State on multiple occasions in Sharif Saidona, Shariff Aguak and Datu Unsay in Maguindanao, ARMM. In subsequent clashes with the army, nine BIFF members were killed, four BIFF members and five soldiers injured.

On June 21, 300 BIFF members attacked towns in Pigcawayan, Cotabato, SOCCSKSARGEN and took 31 hostages, who were freed one day later. Eight BIFF members and one soldier were killed and two civilians injured, as well as 1000 civilians internally displaced. The BIFF members furthermore de-

stroyed buildings, for instance a health clinic and churches. Between August 2 and September 27, BIFF members repeatedly clashed with MILF members, who were assisted by the military, in Sharif Saidona, Datu Unsay, Salibo and nearby towns. In total, at least 30 BIFF members and 20 MILF members were killed. On September 22, the army attacked BIFF using artillery in Guindulungan, Maguindanao, ARMM, leaving four injured. On October 19, the army killed two BIFF members in Sharif Saidona. On the same day, BIFF members wounded five soldiers in an attack in Shariff Aguak. On November 15, two battalions of the army tried to hunt down BIFF members in Shariff Aguak and Datu Unsay. Ten BIFF members were killed, while 5000 civilians were displaced in a combined air and ground offensive. Two days later, the army launched another artillery attack against the BIFF in Carmen, Cotabato, SOCCSKSARGEN. On November 21, the army seized the BIFF camps in Carmen and Aleosan, leaving 3000 civilians internally displaced. On December 3, 30 BIFF members attacked the town of Shariff Aguak, leaving two villagers dead and seven injured. prü

PHILIPPINES (CPP, NPA)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 1968

Conflict parties: CPP, NPA vs. government
Conflict items: system/ideology

The conflict over the orientation of the political system between the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and its armed wing, the New People's Army (NPA), on the one hand, and the government, on the other, remained violent. Throughout the year, the conflict left at least 90 people dead, 75 injured and several hundred internally displaced.

President Duterte suspended all planned meetings with CPP and NPA and formally terminated the peace process on November 23. Furthermore, he ordered the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the Philippine National Police (PNP) to shoot NPA members on sight. The following month, President Duterte signed a proclamation officially declaring CPP and NPA terrorist organizations.

As in previous years, AFP and NPA members clashed several times all over the Philippines. Most incidents occurred in CALABARZON and Bicol region. On January 21, AFP troops attacked an NPA camp, killing one NPA member. Eight AFP members were killed in the firefight. On February 16, two soldiers were killed by an IED deployed by the NPA. In an ambush on the PNP on March 8, the NPA killed four PNP members. In several attacks in CALABARZON on May 17, NPA members killed one AFP soldier and injured twelve people, among them AFP and PNP members as well as civilians, using firearms and IEDs. On several occasions, NPA members targeted buildings vital to the economy and infrastructure. For instance, on October 10, the NPA claimed the attack on a sub-station of a hydroelectric power plant in Bauko, Mountain Province, Cordillera Administrative Region.

In the end of December, NPA as well as the government declared a bilateral ceasefire. psc

PHILIPPINES (ISLAMIST MILITANT GROUPS)



January



February



March



April



May



June



July



August



September



October



November



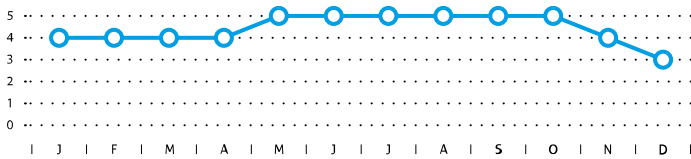
December

PHILIPPINES (ISLAMIST MILITANT GROUPS)

Intensity: 5 | Change: NEW | Start: 1991

Conflict parties: Abu Sayyaf Group, Maute Group vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology, other



The conflict over system and ideology between various Islamist militant groups, such as Abu Sayyaf and Maute, and the Philippine government, escalated to a war.

The war was marked by heavy fighting between the Islamist militant groups and the government, on the one hand, and by Abu Sayyaf frequently abducting civilians on land and sea and demanding ransom, on the other.

Throughout the year, at least 1,430 people were killed and 350 injured. At least 400,000 people were internally displaced. In several operations, the military attacked camps of Islamist militant groups, predominantly in ARMM. A total of 201 alleged militants were arrested, while 54 surrendered. During the year, Abu Sayyaf abducted at least 25 civilians, of which four were killed in captivity. A total of 38 hostages, some of whom had been abducted in 2016, were either released after ransom payment or freed by the government. At the end of 2017, nine hostages remained in captivity.

The Philippine military conducted several ground raids and airstrikes against Abu Sayyaf camps in ARMM. For instance, on January 25 and 26, airstrikes carried out by FA-50 combat aircrafts killed at least 15 Abu Sayyaf and Maute fighters and injured a further seven in Butig, Lanao del Sur, ARMM. Encounters between the Philippine military and Abu Sayyaf militants intensified after Abu Sayyaf decapitated a German hostage, Jürgen Kantner, on February 26. In the following weeks, military and police conducted numerous operations against Abu Sayyaf hideouts mainly in ARMM. For example, on March 3, a military offensive carried out with ground troops, artillery and MG520 helicopters in Patikul, left ten Abu Sayyaf militants dead and at least 20 injured. On April 11, Abu Sayyaf members clashed with police on Bohol, Central Visayas, while allegedly looking for hostage victims. The clash left four troops, four Abu Sayyaf members and two civilians dead. Clashes on April 22, May 5 and May 15 left at least seven people dead in a subsequent operation to kill the remaining Abu Sayyaf members in Bohol. On August 24, Abu Sayyaf members attacked the village Maluso, Basilan, ARMM, killing at least nine civilians and injuring a further 16.

On May 23, in Marawi City, ARMM, police forces clashed with Abu Sayyaf and Maute fighters while unsuccessfully attempting to arrest Abu Sayyaf leader Isnilon Hapilon, who had been announced leader of the so-called Islamic State in Southeast Asia in January 2016. Hapilon allegedly met militants of the Maute group in Marawi City. On the same day, Maute fighters attacked and seized a nearby military base. Moreover, Islamist militants occupied important buildings in Marawi City,

such as the Amai Pakpak Medical Centre, and took at least 1,750 civilians hostage. Defence Minister Delfin Lorenzana suggested that about 40 militants from BIFF [→ Philippines (BIFM, BIFF – MILF, government)] and Ansar al-Khilafah, may also have been involved in the occupation. On the same day, President Rodrigo Duterte declared martial law in ARMM for an initial 60 days. On July 22, it was extended until December 31. The military attacked Marawi militants by ground and air strikes during the occupation of the city. Maute co-leader Abdullah Maute was killed in one of the airstrikes. On October 16, the military killed Hapilon and Omar Maute along with five other Maute members. On October 23, the government declared the occupation to be over. The occupation of Marawi left a total of 1,174 people dead, including 962 militants, 165 military personnel and 47 civilians. The military retrieved about 805 fire arms and at least 1,270 IEDs. IS did not claim responsibility for the occupation of Marawi, but did claim responsibility for an attack on a military base killing six people in Marantao, ARMM, on August 22.

On December 13, the government extended martial law in ARMM until 12/31/2018. Human rights organisations such as Amnesty International voiced concern. In December 2017, the Philippine military was investigating against 309 cases of abuse of martial law. tgu

SRI LANKA (INTER-RELIGIOUS TENSIONS)

Intensity: 3 | Change: ↑ | Start: 1948

Conflict parties: Sinhalese Buddhists, BBS, Sinhala Ravaya, Sinhala Jathika Balaya vs. Muslims, SLMC, Christians

Conflict items: system/ideology

The dispute over ideology between extremist Buddhist groups such as Bodu Bala Sena (BBS), the Sinhala Ravaya and Sinhala Jathika Balaya, and Muslims, represented by the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC), as well as Christians, represented by the National Christian Evangelical Alliance of Sri Lanka (NCEASL), escalated to a violent crisis.

Communal tensions between the Buddhist majority and religious minorities such as Muslims and Christians in the form of physical attacks and destruction of places of worship occurred throughout the year. For instance, in the first half of the year, members of Christian communities as well as their churches and houses were targeted on at least 20 occasions. On January 5, for example, twelve Buddhists, led by a Buddhist monk, attacked and destroyed the Christian Kithu Sevana prayer center in Paharaiya, North Western Province, using wooden sticks, iron bars, and knives. They were detained by police and later released on bail. One week after a Catholic shrine had been damaged in Mannar, Mannar District, on July 11, police arrested three Muslims. During the second half of the year, at least three Catholic shrines were damaged. Between April 16 and May 22, groups such as BBS, Sinhala Ravaya and Sinhala Jathika Balaya destroyed mosques and Muslim-owned shops in more than 15 incidents in Southern, North Central, Eastern and Western province.

On June 2, the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka issued grave concern over violence targeting the Muslim commu-

nity and urged President Maithripala Sirisena to direct law enforcement authorities to take immediate action.

On June 18, authorities arrested a police officer and a Buddhist monk for torching a mosque and a Muslim-owned book shop in Panadura town, Western Province. On September 26, Buddhist monks attacked 31 Muslim Rohingya refugees in a UN camp in Mount Lavinia, Western Province. Two days later, the SLMC called upon the government to take action against the violence.

On November 17, clashes between Sinhalese Buddhists and Muslims in Gintota, Galle Province, erupted following an incident on November 13, when two Muslims were hit by a Sinhalese motorcyclist, leaving all three injured. Four people were injured and at least 60 Muslim-owned houses and shops were damaged in the clashes. In reaction, the government imposed a night curfew and deployed 300 troops to Gintota. Later, police arrested 16 Sinhalese Buddhists and three Muslims.

mmu

TAJIKISTAN (ISLAMIST GROUPS)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 1997

Conflict parties: various Islamist groups vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology, national power

The violent crisis over the orientation of the political system and national power between various Islamist groups and the government continued. Throughout the year, the government arrested several alleged Islamist militants and continued to restrict freedom of religion, for example, by demanding the dismissal of imams who had studied at religious schools abroad.

On March 30, a court sentenced a Tajik man to 15 years imprisonment for organizing a criminal group and for recruiting Tajiks for the Islamic State (IS) in Syria and Iraq. According to officials, on July 4, security forces killed four Islamist militants in the Vose District, Khatlon Region, while they were trying to cross the border into Afghanistan. They arrested a further three, who were later sentenced to prison terms ranging from seven to 18 years for trying to illegally cross the border and resisting arrest. Reportedly, the leader of the government operation received several stab wounds. The suspected militants had allegedly been close relatives of Gulmurod Halimov, a former Tajik police commander who had joined IS and became a leading IS member in Syria in 2015. According to officials, the seven suspected Islamists had not been formally charged before the incident on July 4, but had previously been put under surveillance.

fsc

THAILAND (ISLAMIST SEPARATISTS / SOUTHERN BORDER PROVINCES)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 1902

Conflict parties: BRN, PULO vs. government

Conflict items: secession, system/ideology

The violent conflict over secession and ideology between various Islamist separatists, such as Barisan Revolusi Nasional (BRN) and Pattani United Liberation Organization (PULO), on the one hand, and the government, on the other, continued.

The Islamist separatists sought the separation of the predominantly Muslim southern border provinces Narathiwat, Pattani, Yala, and Songkhla, and their integration into Malaysia. Mara Patani, an umbrella organization of separatist groups formed in 2015, held peace talks with the government on ceasefires, safety zones, and development projects. No agreement was reached between the parties.

Throughout the year, separatists carried out numerous attacks, primarily targeting security personnel and civil servants. The conflict resulted in at least 73 people killed and 173 injured. For instance, on February 11, separatists placed an IED next to a road in Chanae district, Narathiwat, injuring four. On March 3, following a separatist attack on a Buddhist family, both Muslim and Buddhist religious leaders and civilians demonstrated in Rueso district, Narathiwat. On March 20, police arrested a wanted BRN member in Yaha district, Yala. Nine days later, paramilitary rangers killed two suspected separatists in Rueso district. On April 7, separatists placed approx. 110 IEDs in Narathiwat, Pattani, Songkhla, and Yala, damaging 52 electricity poles and causing electricity disruptions in the areas. On May 9, BRN members detonated a car bomb in front of a supermarket in Pattani town, Pattani, leaving one person dead and at least 51 injured. One day later, the Royal Thai Army condemned the attack on civilians. On June 21, authorities arrested ten suspected separatists in Sai Buri, Yaring and Maiken districts of Pattani. On July 20, separatists threw six pipe bombs at a police checkpoint in Bacho district, Yala, killing one policeman and injuring another. On August 16, seven BRN members stole five pickups from a car dealership in Na Thawi district, Songkhla, leaving one person dead and one injured. On the same day, they detonated one of the pickups, which had been converted into a car bomb, in Nong Chik district, Pattani, damaging ten houses. Later on, police intercepted another pickup in the same district, and killed the BRN driver. On September 17, Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha asked Malaysia to help restore peace in the southern provinces. Five days later, separatists killed four paramilitary rangers and injured six others by detonating an IED in Sai Buri district. On October 18, the Deputy Defense Minister announced that the army would deploy surveillance drones in 2018 to support ground patrols in the South. After international disapproval, the Pattani Provincial Court withdrew criminal defamation charges against three human rights activists on October 24, who had published a report on the torture of separatists by security forces in February 2016. On December 25, separatists attacked a truck in Si Sakhon district, Narathiwat, leaving one soldier dead, five

other wounded, and one civilian injured. ceb

UZBEKISTAN (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: 1 | Change: • | Start: 1991

Conflict parties: opposition vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology, national power

The dispute over the orientation of the political system and national power between various oppositional activists and the government continued.

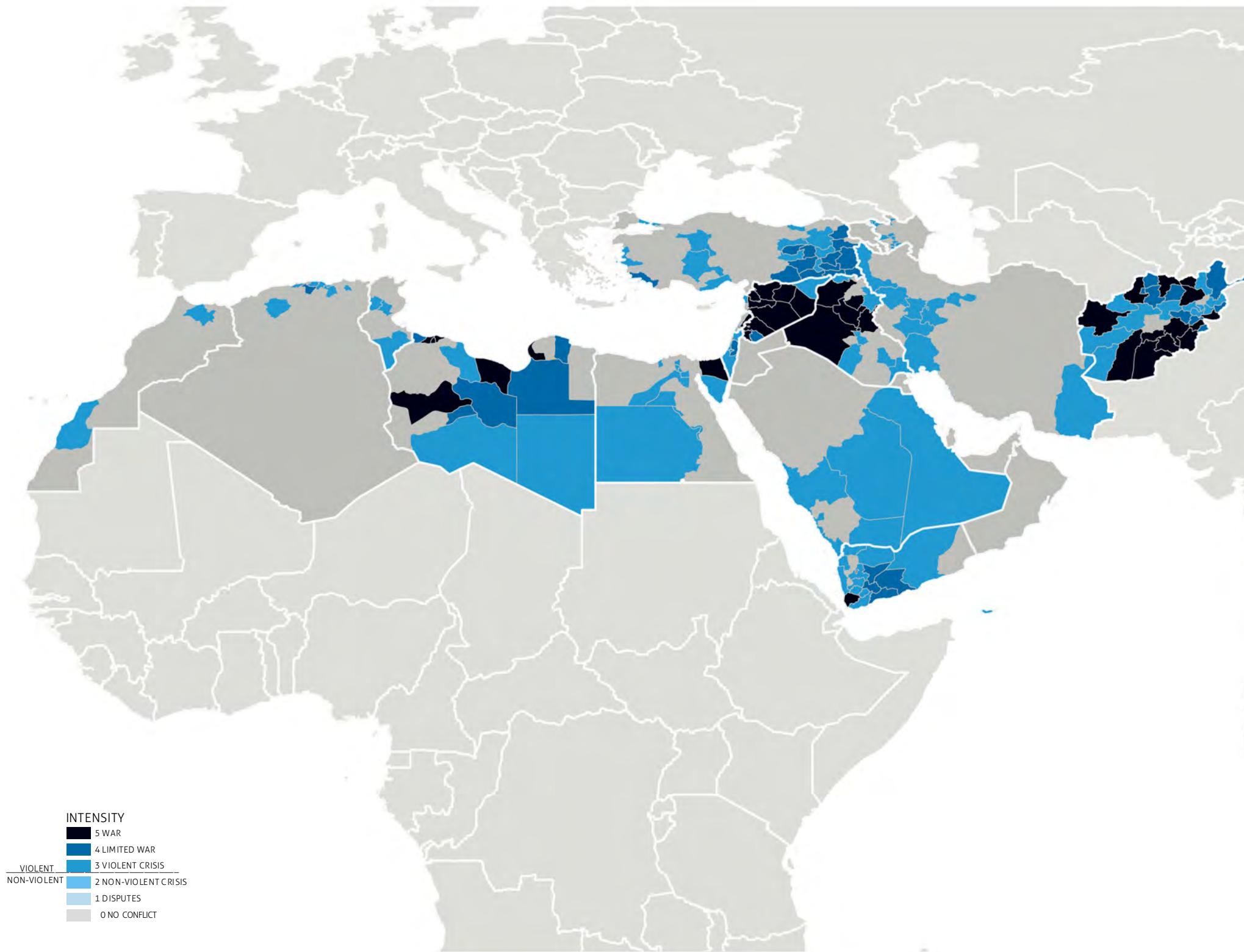
After the election of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev in December 2016, several activists and opposition leaders were released in 2017, after the completion or near-completion of

their prison terms, including investigative journalists Jamshid Karimov and Solijon Abdurahmono, rural development activist Agzam Farmonov, human rights activists Agzam Turgunov and Ganihon Mamathonov, and opposition activist Muhammadali Qoraboev.

Uzbekistan also opened up to international human rights organizations, hosting on May 11 the first visit of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights since 1991, and welcoming a Human Rights Watch delegation in August.

On the other hand, persecution of oppositional figures also continued under the new president. For example, Elena Ulaeva, head of the Human Rights Alliance of Uzbekistan, claimed she was forcibly admitted to a psychiatric institution on March 1. On September 27, journalist Bobomurad Abdullaev went missing and, two days later, was confirmed by officials to have been detained for an alleged theft afo

Middle East and Maghreb



Middle East and Maghreb counted a total of 63 conflicts in 2017, among them six wars and five limited wars. Last year's wars in Turkey between the government and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and in Yemen against al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and its arm Ansar al-Sharia both de-escalated to limited wars.

The war with the so-called Islamic State (IS) had the biggest impact on the conflict landscape in the Middle East and Maghreb [→ Syria, Iraq et al. (IS)]. IS had to face major territorial losses within its core in Syria and Iraq. Throughout the year, they lost their de-facto capital Raqqa in Syria against Kurdish groups backed by the US-led coalition, as well as Mossul, the biggest city under their control, to the Iraqi army and its allies. By the end of the year, IS remained in control of pockets at the Syrian-Iraqi border, in the Syrian governorates of Hama, Deir ez-Zor, and Quneitra as well as the Iraqi governorate of Sallahuddin. In Iraq, IS continued its strategy of suicide attacks in Baghdad and predominantly Shiite governorates like Nadjaf and Basra.

In Afghanistan, the war between the Taliban and various other Islamist militant groups such as the Haqqani Network, on the one hand, and the government, supported by the NATO-led Resolute Support Mission (RSM) and additional US forces, on the other, continued [→ Afghanistan (Taliban et al.)]. As in previous years, the Taliban conducted numerous attacks on security personnel as well as civilians. The group succeeded in extending its territorial control and strengthening its position in the south. The country's capital Kabul continued to be heavily affected by violence. Violence related to the IS in Khorasan Province (ISKP) continued with Nangarhar as most affected province [→ Syria, Iraq et al. (IS)]. The provinces of Jawzjan, Kunar, Kabul, and Zabul were increasingly affected by drone strikes, clashes, and violence against civilians. ISKP attacks repeatedly targeted Shiites and their places of worship. According to UNAMA figures, 3,438 civilians were killed and 7,015 injured between January and December.

In Algeria, protests revolved around socio-economic conditions, newly imposed tax laws, and alleged governmental corruption and electoral fraud [→ Algeria (opposition)]. In the conflict between Sahrawi protesters and POLISARIO, on the one hand, and the Moroccan government, on the other, tensions revolved around protests in the Moroccan-controlled parts of Western Sahara, the verdicts against 23 Sahrawi activists in July, as well as international developments in the conflict [→ Morocco (POLISARIO / Western Sahara)].

In Egypt, the Sinai Peninsula continued to be the hotspot of violence, which is to be attributed to the conflicts between IS' Sinai Province and the government as well as the limited war between militant groups and the government [→ Syria, Iraq et al. (IS); Egypt (militant groups / Sinai Peninsula)]. Most notably, IS killed over 300 civilians in an attack on a Sufi mosque in North Sinai during the Friday prayers in late November. While Egypt's government limited farther the non-violent opposition's ability to organize or exercise their freedom of speech, militant opposition groups such as the Hasm Movement, Lewaa al-Thawra, and Ansar al-Islam mainly attacked police officers and army forces [→ Egypt (opposition)].

In Iran, nationwide protests erupted in December, with protesters criticizing the economic situation, the overall political system, the government of President Rouhani, the Iranian involvement in various regional conflicts, as well as shouting "Death to Khamenei" [→ Iran (opposition)]. By December 31, at least twelve people had been killed, numerous people injured, and hundreds arrested in the course of the protests. In the western provinces, several Kurdish political parties and their armed wings repeatedly clashed with Iranian security forces [→ Iran (PDKI, PAK)].

In Israel, the two violent crises over the creation of a Palestinian state between Palestinian actors and the Israeli government continued [→ Israel (PNA / Palestinian Territories); Israel (Hamas et al. / Palestinian territories)]. No progress was made in advancing a peaceful conflict settlement. Hamas introduced a new charter that possibly signified a slight change in its policy regarding a Palestinian state. As in the last years, inner-Palestinian tensions within the Gaza Strip continued [→ Israel (Hamas – Salafist groups)]. Hamas and Fatah, the dominant party within the PLO, agreed upon a quid pro quo, involving the ease of Gaza's blockade in exchange for the full civilian control in Gaza to be exercised by Fatah [→ Israel (al-Fatah – Hamas)]. While no casualties were reported in the conflict between Hezbollah and Israel, the conflict's scope on Syrian territory was widened and rhetoric intensified [→ Israel (Hezbollah)].

In Lebanon, heavy fights between various Sunni militant groups, on the one hand, and the government and Shiite Hezbollah, on the other, took place in the border region with Syria [→ Lebanon (Sunni militant groups)]. The Lebanese Armed Forces conducted several operations in cooperation with Hezbollah as well as the Syrian Armed Forces [→ Syria (opposition)]. Additional fights took place in various Palestinian refugee camps, where militants contested the authority of Fatah party and affiliates over the camps [→ Lebanon (inner-Palestinian tensions)].

In Libya, the rivalling Government of National Accord and the House of Representatives, supported by the Libyan National Army, announced a ceasefire which was repeatedly violated since then [→ Libya (opposition)]. Also, the controversy between both actors regarding Libya's political future could not be settled. Throughout the year, both parties conducted military campaigns against several Islamist groups.

In June, a new conflict over international power emerged between Qatar, on the one hand, and Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, and Egypt, on the other [→ Qatar – Saudi Arabia et al.]. The conflict mainly revolved around Qatar's alleged interference in their internal affairs, its relations to Iran, and its alleged financial support for Islamist groups, notably the Muslim Brotherhood. While several countries cut or severed their diplomatic relations with Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, and Egypt also imposed a sea and air blockade on Qatar in early June. Kuwait's mediation efforts didn't result in tangible results.

In Saudi Arabia, the violent crisis over the orientation of the political system between the Shiite minority and the government continued in the Eastern Province [→ Saudi Arabia (Shiites)]. Most notably, clashes broke out in the Shiite town of al-Awamiyah triggered by a governmental urban development project.

In Syria, three wars continued. The government of President Bashar al-Assad, backed by Russia, Iran, and Shiite militias, continued to make territorial gains in the conflict with various opposition groups [→ Syria (opposition)]. Pro-government troops

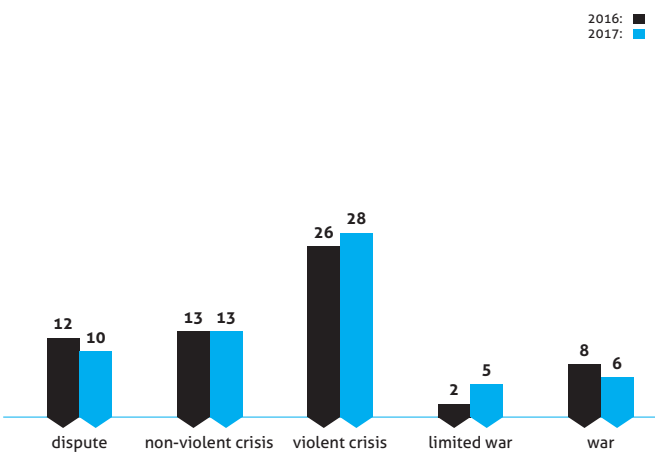
retook vast territories in the Syrian desert, connecting to Iraq for the first time in years. Intense fighting took place in Idlib, Hama, and Daraa governorates, as well as in the East Ghouta suburbs of Damascus. The opposition conflict also had an impact on the territorial conflict between Syria and Israel, due to cross-border shelling [→ Syria – Israel]. The war between the opposition groups, such as the al-Nusra Front successor Hay'at Tharir al-Sham, mainly affected the East Ghouta region and Idlib Governorate [→ Syria (inter-opposition rivalry)].

In Tunisia, civil society movements and unions protested against the economic and security situation as well as political issues [→ Tunisia (opposition)]. Several large-scale protests took place near oil and gas fields, with protesters demanding more jobs and a larger share of revenues for the local population.

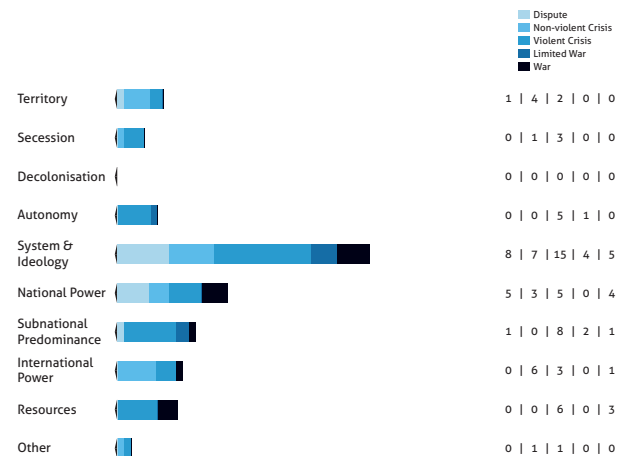
In Turkey, the government expelled several thousand government workers and academics, accusing them of having supported the coup of 2016 [→ Turkey (opposition)]. Political opposition parties were further accused of being involved in the coup, as well as of allegedly supporting the PKK [→ Turkey (PKK, TAK)]. During the year, the Turkish Armed Forces repeatedly clashed with PKK fighters, especially in Diyarbakir governorate as well as in northern Iraq. Moreover, IS conducted several attacks against civilians and police forces [→ Syria, Iraq et al. (IS)].

In Yemen, the war over national power between al-Houthi forces and troops loyal to former president Ali Abdullah Saleh, on the one hand, and the government of internationally recognized President Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi, on the other, continued [→ Yemen, Saudi Arabia (al-Houthi)]. Both conflict parties experienced intra-alliance tensions, with the Houthi-Saleh alliance breaking in early December. On December 4, Saleh was killed by al-Houthi forces in Sana'a city. Over the course of the year, the humanitarian situation severed due to the ongoing conflict and the increased restriction of humanitarian access. Additionally to a deteriorating food crisis, the country experienced the largest cholera crisis ever recorded in one country in a single year. The non-violent crisis over the secession of southern Yemen between al-Hirak, also known as Southern Movement, and the government also continued [→ Yemen (al-Hirak / Southern Yemen)]. Southern politicians formed the Transitional Political Council of the South (STC) in mid-May. In mid-October, the STC announced an upcoming independence referendum and the formation of its "National Assembly", which held its first meeting in late December. Conflicts with al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and the Yemeni branch of IS continued in Yemen's southern governorates under the government's increasingly fragile control [→ Syria, Iraq et al. (IS)]. Although US airstrikes against AQAP continued on a large scale under the Trump administration, the conflict over ideology between AQAP and its insurgent arm Ansar al-Sharia, on the one hand, and the government of President Hadi, local forces loyal to him, local UAE-backed counterterrorism forces, and the US, on the other, de-escalated to a limited war [→ Yemen (AQAP, Ansar al-Sharia)].

CONFLICT INTENSITIES IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND MAGHREB IN 2017 COMPARED TO 2016



FREQUENCY OF CONFLICT INTENSITIES BY CONFLICT ITEM IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND MAGHREB IN 2017



FREQUENCY OF CONFLICT INTENSITIES BY CONFLICT TYPE IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND MAGHREB IN 2017



Overview: Conflicts in the Middle East and Maghreb in 2017

Name of conflict ¹	Conflict parties ²	Conflict items	Start	Change ³	Int. ⁴
Afghanistan (Taliban et al.)	Taliban et al. vs. government	system/ideology, national power, resources	1994	•	5
Afghanistan – Pakistan	Afghanistan vs. Pakistan	territory, international power, other	1949	•	3
Algeria (Berbers / Kabylia)*	Berbers vs. government	autonomy, system/ideology	1963	•	3
Algeria (opposition)	opposition vs. government	system/ideology	2011	•	3
Algeria, Mali et al. (AQIM et al.)	AQIM, Ansar al-Sharia, Uqba ibn Nafi Brigade, ISGS, Ansaroul Islam, al-Mourabitoun, MUJAO, Ansar al-Din, MLF vs. Algeria, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Tunisia	system/ideology	1998	↗	4
Bahrain (opposition)	opposition groups vs. government	system/ideology, national power	1975	•	3
Egypt (militant groups / Sinai Peninsula)	militant groups vs. government	system/ideology, subnational predominance	2011	•	4
Egypt (Muslims – Christians)*	Muslims vs. Christians	subnational predominance	1952	•	3
Egypt (opposition)	HM, Lewaa al-Thawra, MB, Ansar al-Islam, civil rights activists vs. government	system/ideology, national power	1954	•	3
Egypt – Sudan*	Egypt vs. Sudan	territory	1958	↗	2
Iran (opposition)	intra-systemic opposition, non-systemic opposition vs. government	system/ideology, national power	1997	•	3
Iran (PDKI, PAK)	PDKI, PAK et al. vs. government	system/ideology, national power	1979	•	3
Iran (People's Mujahideen)*	PMOI vs. government	system/ideology, national power	1965	•	2
Iran (PJAK / Kurdish areas)*	PJAK vs. government	autonomy	1979	•	3
Iran (Sunni militant groups / Sistan Baluchistan)*	Jaish al-Adl, Ansar al-Furqan et al. vs. government	autonomy	1979	•	3
Iran – Israel*	Iran vs. Israel	system/ideology, international power	1979	•	2
Iran – Saudi Arabia*	Iran vs. Saudi Arabia	system/ideology, international power	1979	•	2
Iran – UAE*	Iran vs. UAE	territory	1971	•	1
Iran – USA	Iran vs. USA	system/ideology, international power	1979	•	2
Iraq (KRG – YBS)	YBS vs. Kurdistan Regional Government	system/ideology, subnational predominance	2017	NEW	3
Iraq (Kurdistan Regional Government)	KRG vs. government	autonomy, resources	1971	↑	3
Iraq (opposition)*	opposition vs. government	system/ideology, national power	2011	•	1
Iraq (Shiite militant groups)	Al-Mukhtar Army, Asaib al-Haq, Mahdi Army, Shiite militias vs. government	system/ideology, national power	2004	•	2
Iraq (Sunni opposition)*	Sunni opposition vs. government	system/ideology, national power	2012	•	1
Israel (al-Fatah – Hamas)*	al-Fatah vs. Hamas	subnational predominance	1994	•	1
Israel (Hamas et al. / Palestinian Territories)	Hamas, PIJ, other Islamist militant groups vs. government	secession, resources	1988	•	3
Israel (Hamas – Salafist groups)*	Hamas vs. Salafist groups	subnational predominance	2007	↗	3
Israel (Hezbollah)	Hezbollah vs. government	territory, system/ideology	1982	↘	2
Israel (PNA / Palestinian Territories)	PNA vs. government, Israeli settlement movements	secession, resources	1948	•	3
Israel – Lebanon*	Israel vs. Lebanon	territory, international power	1948	•	2
Israel – Syria	Israel vs. Syria	territory, international power, resources	1948	•	3
Jordan (Hamas)*	Hamas vs. government	system/ideology	1994	•	1

MIDDLE EAST AND MAGHREB

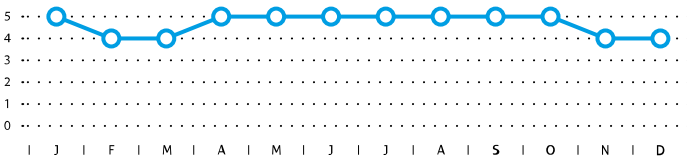
Name of conflict ¹	Conflict parties ²	Conflict items	Start	Change ³	Int. ⁴
Jordan (opposition)*	opposition groups vs. government	system/ideology, national power	2011	↘	1
Kuwait (Bedouns)	Bedouns vs. government	other	1959	↗	2
Kuwait (opposition)*	opposition movement vs. government	system/ideology, national power	2011	•	1
Lebanon (Fatah al-Islam et al.)*	Fatah al-Islam, Palestinian Islamist groups vs. Government	system/ideology	2006	↗	3
Lebanon (inner-Palestinian tensions)	Fatah al-Islam, other Palestinian Islamist groups, Jund al-Sham vs. Fatah, other Palestinian factions	subnational predominance	2006	•	3
Lebanon (March 14 Alliance – March 8 Alliance)*	March 14 Alliance vs. March 8 Alliance	system/ideology, national power	2005	•	1
Lebanon (Sunni militant groups)	HTS, Saraya Ahl al-Sham, other Sunni militant groups vs. government, Hezbollah	system/ideology, subnational predominance	2014	↗	4
Libya (inter-tribal tensions)	Tebu vs. Awlad Suleiman vs. Touareg vs. Qaddafi vs. Mahamid	subnational predominance, resources	2012	•	3
Libya (opposition)	Hor, LNA vs. GNA, Misrata militias, Tripoli pro-GNS militias vs. DMSC, BRSC, BDB, GNS, Tripoli pro-GNS militias	system/ideology, national power	2011	•	5
Mauritania (anti-slavery activists)*	IRA, opposition groups vs. government	system/ideology, national power	2015	•	3
Morocco (opposition)*	20 February Movement, AMDH, Justice and Spirituality, labor rights activists, Hirak movement vs. government	system/ideology	2011	•	3
Morocco (POLISARIO / Western Sahara)	POLISARIO, Sahrawi protesters vs. government	secession	1975	•	3
Oman (opposition)	opposition groups vs. government	system/ideology	2011	•	1
Qatar – Saudi Arabia et al.	Qatar vs. Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, Egypt	international power	2017	NEW	2
Saudi Arabia (opposition)*	opposition vs. government	system/ideology	1992	•	1
Saudi Arabia (Shiites)	Shiites vs. government	system/ideology	1979	•	3
Syria (FSA, Islamist groups – KSC / Kurdish regions)*	FSA, Islamist groups vs. KSC	system/ideology, subnational predominance, resources	2012	•	3
Syria (inter-opposition rivalry)	Hayat Tahrir al-Sham vs. Ahrar al-Sham vs. Islamist groups vs. FSA	system/ideology, subnational predominance, resources	2013	•	5
Syria (Kurdish groups)*	KDPS, PYD vs. government	autonomy, subnational predominance	1962	•	3
Syria (opposition)	NC, FSA, Hayat Tahrir al-Scham, Ahrar al-Sham vs. government	system/ideology, national power	2011	•	5
Syria – Turkey*	Syria vs. Turkey	territory, international power	1946	•	2
Syria – USA*	Syria vs. USA	system/ideology, international power	2003	↗	3
Syria, Iraq et al. (IS)	IS vs. al-Houthi, YPG, Syrian opposition groups, Hezbollah, Libya, Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Turkey, Yemen, Egypt, et al.	system/ideology, international power, resources	2014	•	5
Tunisia (opposition)	civil society movements vs. government	system/ideology	2010	•	3
Turkey (opposition)	Opposition Groups, Gülen Movement vs. government	system/ideology, national power	2013	↓	2
Turkey (PKK, TAK)	Government vs. TAK, PKK	autonomy	1974	↘	4
Yemen (al-Hirak / Southern Yemen)	al-Hirak vs. government	secession	2007	•	2
Yemen (AQAP – al-Houthi forces)	AQAP, Ansar al-Sharia vs. al-Houthi forces, forces loyal to former president Saleh	system/ideology, subnational predominance	2010	•	3
Yemen (AQAP, Ansar al-Sharia)	AQAP, Ansar al-Sharia vs. UAE-backed forces, USA, government	system/ideology	1992	↘	4
Yemen, Saudi Arabia (al-Houthi forces)	al-Houthi forces, troops loyal to former president Saleh vs. government	national power	2004	•	5

^{1 2 3 4} cf. overview table for Europe

AFGHANISTAN (TALIBAN ET AL.)

Intensity: 5 | Change: • | Start: 1994

Conflict parties: Taliban et al. vs. government
 Conflict items: system/ideology, national power, resources



The war over national power, the orientation of the political system, and resources, namely the cultivation of opium poppy, between the Taliban and various other Islamist militant groups such as the Haqqani Network, on the one hand, and the government supported by the NATO-led Resolute Support Mission (RSM), and additional US forces, on the other, continued. On March 17, the UNSC extended UNAMA's mandate for another year.

On August 21, US President Donald Trump announced a new strategy for the US's engagement in Afghanistan, focussing on counter-terrorism while reducing efforts of nation building. On September 18, US Defense Secretary Jim Mattis declared the deployment of 3,000 troops starting the same month in addition to the currently more than 8,000 US forces stationed in Afghanistan.

With a peace conference on June 6 in the capital Kabul, the government launched the "Kabul process" which aims at involving the Afghan Government, Afghan society and armed groups, neighbouring countries and other regional actors as its latest effort to revive peace talks and enhance regional security cooperation under an overarching framework. Representatives from Pakistan, India, Iran, Russia, China, Saudi Arabia, the US, and the EU participated in the meeting. The process further aimed at creating conditions for direct negotiations with the Taliban. A second meeting was scheduled to take place in early 2018. Hezb-i-Islami leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar returned to Kabul on May 4, following the signing of a peace agreement with the government on 09/22/16 granting him amnesty. In a public speech, he urged the Taliban, his former allies, to join the peace process.

According to UNAMA figures, civilian casualties in 2017 decreased by nine percent compared to 2016. Between January and December, 3,438 civilians were killed and 7,015 injured with the number of deaths decreasing by two and the number of injured civilians decreasing by eleven percent. Those figures accounted for all conflict-related deaths including violence related to the so-called Islamic State in Khorasan Province (ISKP) [→ Syria, Iraq et al. (IS)]. According to the UNHCR, more than 200,000 people were displaced between January and September 2017.

As in previous years, ground engagements between militants and security forces, suicide and complex attacks as well as IEDs caused the majority of civilian casualties. While UNAMA reported a decreased number of civilian casualties caused by ground fighting, the number of civilians killed in suicide and complex attacks continued to rise. The provinces of Kabul,

Helmand, Nangarhar, Kandahar, and Faryab were most affected by violence against civilians. On May 31, a truck bomb exploded in Kabul city near the diplomatic quarter, killing at least 150 people and injuring more than 300. The bombing marked one of the most fatal single attacks in Afghanistan since the 2001 intervention. No group claimed responsibility. The Taliban denied involvement, while the government blamed the Taliban-affiliated Haqqani Network. Following the attack, on June 2, Afghan National Police (ANP) forces shot dead at least five people during protests denouncing the security situation in Kabul and calling for President Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah to resign. The next day, at least 20 people were killed and 35 injured when three explosions hit the funeral of a person killed during the protests. On June 22, a car bomb outside a bank in Lashkar Gah, the capital of Helmand province, killed at least 29 people and injured 60, most of them civilians. A Taliban attack on the villages of Sina Ordo and Tagab Rabat and the Bai villages in Ab Kamari district, Badghis province, on October 7, left over 200 families displaced. No casualties were reported.

Further, civilians were repeatedly killed in international coalition airstrikes. UNAMA confirmed the killing of 18 civilians in an airstrike involving US aircrafts on February 16 and 17 in Sangin district, Helmand province. On November 3, US airstrikes hit the villages of Essa Khil, Qatl-e Aam and Uzbek Bazaar, Chardara district, Kunduz province, reportedly leaving at least 13 civilians dead. Six people were killed and another 13 injured on December 3, when a suicide bomber attacked a pro-government gathering in Jalalabad, the capital of Nangarhar province. Militants kidnapped civilians, although less frequently than in previous years. On July 21, Taliban abducted 70 people from a village next to the Kandahar-Tarinkot highway, Kandahar province, and killed at least seven of them. They reportedly accused the villagers of cooperating with the government.

Moreover, foreign as well as Afghan officials were targeted by militant attacks. For instance, on January 10, a Taliban suicide bomber attacked a minibus of National Directorate of Security (NDS) staff in Kabul city, followed by a car bomber, targeting alarmed security forces. At least 35 people were killed and more than 70 injured. Taliban fighters hit the international airport of Kabul with rockets, including RPGs, on September 27, after NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and Jim Mattis had arrived for a meeting with Ghani. Taliban claimed the officials had been the target of the attack, however, the incident caused no casualties.

As in previous years, Taliban frequently destroyed infrastructure. For instance, on November 22, they cut electricity supply to Maimana, the capital of Faryab province, as well as four more of its districts thereby affecting approx. 57,000 households.

Taliban fighters frequently attacked members of the Afghan security forces. At least 135 members of the Afghan National Army (ANA) unit Shaeen Military Corps were killed and 160 wounded in a Taliban attack on April 21 near the city of Mazar-e Sharif, Balkh province. Ten attackers, dressed as soldiers, entered the military premises by detonating an explosives-laden vehicle at the entrance before opening fire with RPGs and rifles. On May 23, an estimated number of 200 Taliban attacked Achakzai military camp in Kandahar province, killing

at least 15 ANA soldiers.

Moreover, Taliban continued to carry out insider attacks against both Afghan and foreign security forces. For instance, at least six members of the ANP were shot by two fellow police officers on June 4 in southern Kandahar province. On June 10, Taliban claimed responsibility for a so-called green-on-blue attack killing three US soldiers in Achin district, Nangarhar province. On June 17, seven US soldiers were wounded by an Afghan soldier in Camp Shaheen, Balkh province.

The Taliban succeeded in extending their territorial control and seizing strategically important areas, especially throughout the first half of the year. In mid-March the Taliban took control of the town of Sangin and major parts of the eponymous district, Helmand province, thereby strengthening their position in the south. Accounting for a major part of Afghanistan's opium crop, the district has been of high strategic importance. Militants stormed security headquarters on March 23, killing an unknown number of Afghan security forces and forcing them to retreat from the town on March 24. As part of their annual spring offensive, the Taliban were able to take control of the Qala-i-Zal district, Kunduz province, by capturing the police headquarters and checkpoints around May 6. The ensuing heavy clashes displaced around 2,000 families. The district's capital Aqtepa was recaptured by Afghan security forces on May 16. In late July, Taliban captured several districts in Ghor, Fayrab, Paktia, Baghlan, Kunduz, and Helmand provinces.

ANA repeatedly launched military operations such as "Pamir-8" in northeastern Takhar province, killing nine people and wounding 19, and "Alberz-6" in Dara Souf Payeen district, Samangan province, killing 29 people. Both operations were conducted in mid-June to clear the areas of militants. Between June 7 and 11, a major operation in the Imam Sahib district of Kunduz province resulted in the death of at least 83 militants, including high-ranking Taliban commanders. In the course of the operation, around 2000 families fled the area. A follow-up mission, launched in early October in the same district, which was supported by the Afghan Air Force, killed at least 88 Taliban fighters and wounded 78 others, according to security officials.

RSM forces continued to provide military support to ANSF, mainly through airstrikes. For instance, at least 60 Taliban fighters were killed on February 8 in security operations backed by foreign air forces in contested Sangin district. On July 17, ANSF re-took Nawa district, Helmand province, from Taliban control in an operation aided by coalition airstrikes. According to the Afghan Ministry of Defense, more than 50 Taliban militants were killed. On November 19, Afghan special forces and coalition soldiers freed at least 30 persons, including civilians and ANSF members, in a joint raid on a Taliban prison in Nowzad village in the eponymous district, Helmand province. The coalition forces featured US Special Forces whose increased deployment to Helmand was concluded by the US administration in January. As in previous years, the US military carried out numerous drone strikes. On May 1, at least eight Taliban militants were killed in a US drone strike in eastern Nangarhar province.

Clashes between rival Taliban groups broke out occasionally. For instance, eight Taliban militants were killed and several injured in infightings that took place on April 21 and 22 in Shindand district, Herat province. On May 11, clashes between

two groups in Adraskan district, Herat province, resulted in the death of around 20 militants. Taliban conducted joint attacks with Islamic State in Khorasan Province (ISKP) fighters, despite ongoing rivalries between the two groups. More than 40, including at least 27 civilians, were killed when Taliban and ISKP raided the predominantly Shiite Hazara village of Mirzawalang, Sayad district, Sar-i-Pul province, on August 4. Several mosques were destroyed and an unknown number of civilians taken hostage during the subsequent gun battle between the militants, ANSF and government-backed militia, which lasted until August 5. *ssd, ivo, twu, chf, rui*

AFGHANISTAN – PAKISTAN

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 1949

Conflict parties: Afghanistan vs. Pakistan
Conflict items: territory, international power, other

The violent crisis between Afghanistan and Pakistan over the demarcation of the border along the Durand-line, border security issues, and mutual allegations of supporting terrorism, continued. The porous border and the deteriorating security situation in both countries remained the primary issue of contention [→ Afghanistan (Taliban et al.)].

In February, Pakistan closed its borders to Afghanistan for more than a month to prevent an influx of militiamen, after a series of attacks killed more than 100 people across Pakistan [→ Pakistan (Islamist militant groups)]. On March 8, the Afghan government filed a complaint at the UNSC, accusing Pakistan of violating its territorial integrity by allegedly repeatedly shelling border districts in Nangarhar and Kunar provinces. Afghan officials claimed the incidents caused several casualties and displaced hundreds of families.

As in previous years, military forces on both sides engaged in skirmishes throughout the border region. For instance, on May 5, at least 15 people were killed and more than 25, including civilians, injured, in clashes between Afghan and Pakistani troops in the border area near Chaman border crossing between Balochistan province, Pakistan and Kandahar province.

Afghan border police forces fired at Pakistani troops, who were guarding a team conducting a census on disputed territory in the villages of Killi Luqman, called Loqman by Afghan authorities, and Killi Jahangi, also called Haji Nazar. The Pakistani Army claimed to have killed 50 Afghan security forces. Hundreds of families were reportedly displaced by the incident. Afghanistan and Pakistan agreed on a ceasefire immediately after the shootout. However, Pakistan closed Chaman border crossing in response. It was re-opened on May 27 on humanitarian grounds. *chf*

ALGERIA (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 2011

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

The violent crisis over the orientation of the political system between various opposition groups and workers' unions, on the one hand, and the government, on the other, continued. On January 2, protesters demonstrated against a new law that increased taxes and the pension age. In the cities of Akbou and Bejaia, Bejaia province, protesters threw stones at police forces. The law was part of a continued policy of cutbacks in Algeria, as state revenues from oil had heavily decreased since 2014.

Throughout the year, protests against corruption, socio-economic conditions and alleged repression by the government continued. On March 21, electricity and gas workers from 16 provinces protested alleged repression by unions in Tizi Ouzou, Tizi Ouzou province. According to the Confédération générale autonome des travailleurs en Algérie, police forces arrested the leaders of the national electricity and gas workers' union on the morning of the protests, and confiscated their material. After the protests, the detainees were released. The next day, police dispersed similar protests in Bejaia and arrested dozens of protesters.

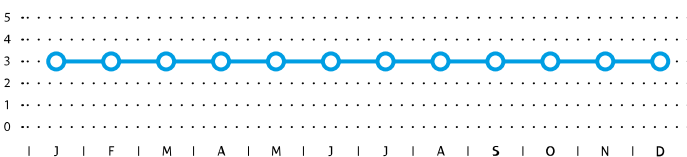
On April 16, members of the Mouvement Démocratique et Social went on a hunger strike to protest the prison sentences of Mohamed Salah Dabouz, president of the Algerian League for the Defense of Human Rights, and lawyer Kamel-Eddine Fekhar. Dabouz and Fekhar were convicted, following their demand of the liberation of all political detainees in Algeria. On June 12, members and supporters of a veterans organisation protested in Sétif, Sétif province, after their leader, Ammar el-Biri, had been arrested. Security forces dispersed the protests using rubber bullets and teargas, injuring several protesters. On November 26, after the results of the local elections had been published, citizens protested alleged fraud. In the city of Tindouf, eponymous province, for example, protesters torched the communal court house and several other buildings. Police forces used rubber bullets to disperse the crowds and arrested several protesters. sge; nsk

ALGERIA, MALI ET AL. (AQIM ET AL.)

Intensity: 4 | Change: ↗ | Start: 1998

Conflict parties: AQIM, MLF, Ansar al-Din, MUJAO, al-Mourabitoun, Ansaroul Islam, ISGS, Uqba ibn Nafi Brigade, Ansar al-Sharia vs. Morocco, Mauritania, Mali, Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Algeria, Tunisia

Conflict items: system/ideology



INTRODUCTION

The violent crisis over the orientation of the international system between al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and its affiliates, such as the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO), al-Mourabitoun, Ansaroul Islam as well as var-

ious other Islamist militant groups and so-called Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS), on the one hand, and Algeria, Mali as well as other governments, on the other, escalated to a limited war.

In 1998, AQIM had emerged in Algeria under its former name, Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC). The group had officially joined the transnational al-Qaeda network in 2006. A fierce counter-terrorism strategy applied by the Algerian government had forced AQIM to gradually withdraw to neighboring countries in the Sahel. Although AQIM and its affiliates were still present in Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, and Mauritania, they had shifted their operational focus to Mali. From the early 2000s onwards, AQIM members had reportedly married into communities in northern Mali, thereby gaining a foothold in the region and facilitating the recruitment of local personnel. In early 2012, AQIM, MUJAO, and the Malian-based Islamist group Ansar al-Din, together with the Tuareg group National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA), had attempted to establish an independent state of Azawad comprising the three northern Malian regions of Kidal, Gao and Timbuktu. This had been followed by clashes between MNLA and the Islamist groups in May 2012, after the latter had proclaimed the region an Islamic caliphate. In 2013, international forces had intervened, strongly curtailing the Islamist groups' power in the country. Furthermore, AQIM activities had spread to neighboring Niger in 2008, at which point the group commenced a series of abductions in the country.

The expansion of so-called Islamic State (IS) to the Maghreb region but also to Western Africa since 2014 had posed a further threat to AQIM in its region of origin [→ Syria, Iraq et al. (IS)]. In the last two years, IS has increasingly succeeded to recruit AQIM fighters and has challenged its regional hold. For instance, in May 2015, MUJAO spokesperson Adnan Abu Walid Sahraoui founded the ISGS, mainly operating in the border region between Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger.

On March 2 2017, Ansar al-Din, AQIM's al-Mourabitoun and Sahara branches, and Macina Liberation Front (MLF) announced they would join forces, creating a new group under the name of Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM). In a video, Iyad Ag Ghaly, former Ansar al-Din and now leader of JNIM, announced that the creation of JNIM would strengthen the groups. Furthermore, he pledged allegiance to AQIM leader Abu Musab Abdel Wadoud, al-Qaeda leader Aiman al-Zawahiri, and the Afghan Taliban leader Mullah Hibatullah Akhundzada. (jas)

ALGERIA

In Algeria, increasing numbers of AQIM members and sub-groups aligned with so-called Islamic State (IS) in 2017 [→ Syria, Iraq et al. (IS)]. Furthermore, the group's operational focus largely shifted to Mali. Even though AQIM claimed several attacks against military convoys and personnel in eastern Algeria, no attack could be externally confirmed. For example, AQIM claimed two attacks on military convoys in early May in the provinces of Tebessa and Ain Defla, as well as on June 17, in the north-eastern Khenchala province, and at the end of July, in Batna province. The Algerian armed forces claimed to have killed 91 and arrested 40 militants as well as 214 alleged supporters throughout the year. However, their respective allegiance was not specified. (aht)

TUNISIA

In Tunisia, violence between the AQIM-affiliated Uqba ibn Nafi Brigade and the government continued. On January 3, the Ministry of the Interior stated that they had divided a militant cell consisting of ten people linked to the Uqba ibn Nafi Brigade in Hergla, northern Sousse governorate, on 12/29/16. On February 17, Tunisian armed forces clashed with armed militants in the Sammama mountains near the Algerian border in Sidi Bouzid governorate, killing two militants and seizing weapons.

On April 30, National Guard forces killed two Uqba ibn Nafi Brigade fighters, who had planned an attack in the town of Sidi Bouzid, eponymous governorate, during Ramadan. According to the Ministry of Interior, on May 29, National Guard forces killed another member of Uqba ibn Nafi Brigade and injured a second one during a security sweep at Mount Saloum in Kasserine Province.

In response to the release of a video showing the killing of a man by IS militants [→ Syria, Iraq et al. (IS)], the National Guard conducted a security operation on August 7 at Bireno Mountain in Kasserine, during which two Uqba ibn Nafi Brigade fighters were killed and another injured. Three days later, armed forces killed a further two militants, including a leading figure of Uqba ibn Nafi, near the Algerian border. (wih)

MALI

In February, the G5 nations, comprising Mali, Mauritania, Burkina Faso, Niger, and Chad, together with France announced the creation of the G5 Sahel Force (FC-G5S), a joint counter terrorism force comprising 5,000 soldiers. In April, the AU Security Council as well as the UNSC stated their support for the FC-G5S, which was subsequently launched in July.

Throughout the year, JNIM repeatedly attacked the MINUSMA forces stationed in northern Mali, often using IEDs to attack convoys. On June 1, JNIM fighters used mortars to attack the MINUSMA base in Timbuktu, eponymous region, wounding several French soldiers. Eight days later, JNIM fighters attacked the MINUSMA base in Kidal, eponymous region, killing four and wounding eight peacekeepers. On September 24, three Bangladeshi peacekeepers were killed and five wounded, when their convoy was struck by an IED in Gao region. In a similar attack in Aguelhok-Tessalit, Kidal region, on October 26, JNIM killed three MINUSMA soldiers and wounded another three. On November 24, JNIM militants attacked a joint convoy of Malian and MINUSMA forces in Ménaka, eponymous region, killing one Malian soldier and three Nigerian peacekeepers as well as injuring at least 16 people. The same day, JNIM killed one Burkinabe peacekeeper and wounded three using IEDs and RPGs in an attack in Douentza, Mopti region. During simultaneous JNIM attacks on MINUSMA positions in Kidal, three peacekeepers and one civilian were wounded on December 15.

Over the course of the year, JNIM repeatedly targeted Malian security forces and government officials all over the country. The most fatal incident took place on January 18. An al-Mourabitoun attack with a truck full of explosives killed 77 people and wounded more than 100 at the Operational Coordination Mechanism base in Gao, eponymous region, where Malian soldiers and former secessionists were preparing for joint patrols [→ Mali (CMA et al. / Azawad)]. On May 2,

JNIM militants ambushed a military convoy in Ségou region, killing eight soldiers and wounding several others. Five days later, JNIM conducted a concerted attack on a military base in Almoustarat, Gao. JNIM militants first attacked the nearby telecommunications tower to forestall the calling of reinforcements. Afterwards, a suicide car bomber hit the base, followed by a group of gunmen. Seven Malian soldiers were killed and 17 wounded in the attack, while 16 remained unaccounted for while the base was burned down.

On July 17, JNIM fighters destroyed Malian army (FAMA) barracks in Bintagougou, Timbuktu region. During the attack, at least five Malian soldiers were killed and eight wounded, while one JNIM militant was killed. Moreover, JNIM seized a military vehicle, weaponry and ammunition.

On July 27, JNIM claimed responsibility for a string of attacks conducted in July, among them one against a position of the Malian military in Koro area, Mopti region, in which five Malian soldiers were killed. On October 10, JNIM militants attacked an army position in Labbezanga, Gao, killing one soldier and wounding at least six. On October 24, JNIM militants attacked a military post in Soumpi, Timbuktu, killing two soldiers and destroying 15 trucks belonging to a French road construction company. One week later, JNIM militants ambushed the vehicle of the Ténenkou MP and High Court President Abdrahamane Niang, killing his driver. When security forces dispatched units to rescue Niang, one vehicle was struck by an IED, killing five soldiers. On December 15, JNIM claimed to have ambushed a FAMA convoy between Dofana and Sambani, Timbuktu. During the attack, two FAMA soldiers and one militant had allegedly been killed. Six days later, JNIM militants attacked a FAMA checkpoint in Niono, Ségou, killing one soldier, wounding three, and allegedly seizing a FAMA vehicle. In the ensuing fight, FAMA forces reportedly killed five JNIM militants. In two IED attacks on army vehicles in Mopti region on December 26 and 28, at least two soldiers were killed, five wounded and two vehicles destroyed.

French forces present in Mali since 2013 and active since 2014, under Operation Barkhane, carried out several raids on JNIM hideouts and supported Malian and MINUSMA efforts to fight militant presence. In early April, one French soldier was killed by JNIM militants in clashes in the Fhero forest, Mopti. By the end of the month, the Barkhane forces claimed to have either killed or captured at least 20 militants in the area, deploying Tiger attack helicopters and Mirage 2000 jets. In July, JNIM conducted two IED attacks against French troops in Tessalit, Kidal, wounding at least six soldiers. On November 6, French forces conducted airstrikes on an Ansar al-Din camp in Abeibara, Kidal, using Mirage jets and attack helicopters. During the attack, 15 militants and eleven Malian soldiers, who were held hostage at the site, were killed. On November 10, French airstrikes ended a JNIM attack against a FAMA checkpoint in Ansongo, Gao, killing at least one militant. During a raid in Tilemsi, Gao, on December 12, French forces arrested one Tunisian JNIM militant, while Abu Hassan al-Ansari, a leading member of the group, escaped the raid. JNIM carried out further attacks on civilian targets. On June 19, JNIM fighters attacked a hotel on the outskirts of the capital Bamako. In the ensuing confrontation with French and Malian security forces all five of the attackers and five hotel guests were killed. On November 6, five people were killed when their car was struck by an IED near Ansongo. The same

day, five civilians working for MINUSMA as well as one National Guard member were killed in an alleged JNIM ambush in M'Beba, Mopti. On December 10, JNIM militants attacked the convoy of a local Tuareg leader in Timbuktu region, killing seven people and wounding three. (bkm, twt)

BURKINA FASO AND NIGER

In Western Africa, AQIM-affiliated groups also continued to stage attacks in Burkina Faso and Niger, prompting the governments of the two countries, together with Mali, to create a joint Multinational Security Force (MSF) on January 24 in order to weaken Islamist militants' presence in the region. In the north of Burkina Faso, especially in Soum province, Ansaroul Islam significantly increased the number of its activities compared to 2016. Throughout the year, the group carried out several attacks, mostly on civilians but also on military and security personnel. For instance, on March 3, members of Ansaroul Islam raided a school in the village of Kourfayel, Soum Province, killing at least two, among them the school principal. Further attacks on schools committed by the group, but resulting in only material damages, were reported in Soum Province in January, in the provinces of Soum and Bam in March, as well as in Soum in October and November. In the year's most deadly incident in Burkina Faso, suspected Islamist militants attacked a restaurant in the capital Ouagadougou on August 13, killing 19 people and injuring a dozen, while security forces shot dead two assailants. On March 22 and May 12, security forces killed Harouna Dicko and his brother Gorane Dicko, two central figures of Ansaroul Islam, in Petega, Soum, and Dori, Seno Province, respectively. In total, Islamist-related violence accounted for more than 40 deaths.

In Niger, ISGS and JNIM repeatedly targeted military and security personnel, mostly in Tillabéry region bordering Mali and Burkina Faso, and thereby killed more than 50 troops over the course of the year. For instance, on October 4, dozens of ISGS militants attacked jointly patrolling Nigerien and US military forces close to the village of Tongo Tongo, Tillabéry, killing eight soldiers and wounding ten. wih; aht; bkm; jas; twt

BAHRAIN (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 1975

Conflict parties: opposition groups vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology, national power

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

As in previous years, the government limited oppositional activities by prohibiting a major opposition party. On May 31, an administrative court ordered the dissolution of the liberal opposition group Wa'ad, after King Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa had approved a constitutional amendment allowing civilians to be tried in military court on April 3.

Throughout the year, numerous opposition protests took place, on which the government cracked down violently on several occasions. Some of the protests were organized by

the February 14 Youth Coalition. On January 15, three alleged opposition members were executed for an attack on police forces in 2014. Following these events, anti-government rallies were held on Sitra Island and in al-Ma'ameer village, Capital Governorate, on January 22. Clashes between the protesters and government forces resulted in injuries to 37 civilians. In the wake of the sixth anniversary of the 2011 uprising, anti-government protests were held throughout the country on February 14. In some of the protests in the village of Bu Quwah, Northern Governorate, protesters reportedly threw various objects at police forces, while the latter responded with teargas. Clashes also erupted in the villages of Abu Saiba and Shakhourah, Northern Governorate, and the villages of al-Ma'ameer and Daih, Capital Governorate, in which government forces used shotguns to disperse protesters. The incidents left several civilians injured. The most intense conflict measure occurred during protests in Diraz village, Northern Governorate, in which five civilians were killed. Nationwide protests were staged three days later as a result of these events.

In 2017, the government sentenced at least 56 opposition members and human rights activists to prison time. Throughout the year, several sit-ins were held in solidarity with the opposition spiritual leader Sheikh Isa Qassim who had been under house arrest since 05/2016. One of the sit-ins on Sitra Island on January 11 turned violent. During the clashes, a protester was fatally injured by shots of security forces dispersing the gathering. In May, Sheikh Isa Qassim was convicted of money laundering and sentenced to one year in prison. On July 10, human rights activist Nabeel Rajab was also sentenced to two years in prison. Both convictions sparked public outrage, which resulted in national protests on July 29 and August 11.

In two incidents, the government accused opposition militias for IED attacks on police buses. An attack on February 26 left one police officer dead and four others wounded. In another attack on October 27, a further eight were wounded.

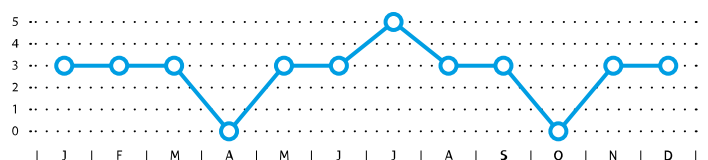
The government also denounced Iran's involvement in the conflict. On February 9, government forces killed three alleged opposition militants and captured seven in a location off the coast south-east of the capital Manama. The captives were supposedly linked to the prison break on January 1, in which one policeman had been killed. Since then, the government has reinforced allegations against Iran for financing and training opposition militias. yad

EGYPT (MILITANT GROUPS / SINAI PENINSULA)

Intensity: 4 | Change: • | Start: 2011

Conflict parties: militant groups vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology, subnational pre-dominance



The limited war over ideology and subnational predominance between Egypt and various militant groups continued. Over the course of the year, at least 181 people died and 36 were injured. Among those killed were at least 133 militants. At least 41 belonged to the Egyptian Armed Forces (EAF) and Egyptian National Police (ENP), while at least seven civilians were killed. The conflict was influenced by the trans-state war against so-called Islamic State's (IS) Sinai Province and the complex relationship between the government and local Bedouin tribes [→ Syria, Iraq et al. (IS); Egypt (Bedouin activists)].

In an attack on the El-Massaed police checkpoint on January 9 in al-Arish, North Sinai Governorate, militants killed a policeman. On January 22, militants killed five ENP officers on the Hasna Highway, North Sinai, first forcing them to leave their vehicle and then shooting them dead. In an IED roadside bombing on February 17, militants killed six EAF officers and wounded nine others south of al-Arish. ENP and militants clashed on March 3, following the latter's attempt to plant IEDs on the road to al-Arish. In the shootout, militants killed two policemen and wounded a further four, while ENP forces killed a militant who was wearing a suicide belt. On March 18, EAF conducted several airstrikes and raided various hideouts in Rafah, al-Arish and Sheikh Zuweid, North Sinai, leaving 18 militants dead. Five days later, EAF killed a further 15 militants, while raiding another hideout in North Sinai. Militants killed a colonel and wounded three soldiers in North Sinai on May 14, using a roadside bomb. In airstrikes on June 20, EAF killed twelve militants in North Sinai. In a joint operation on July 16, EAF air and ground forces raided a hideout in Central Sinai, killing three militants and destroying weapon facilities. Between July 17 and 22, EAF killed at least 60 militants in several airstrikes and raids in North Sinai. On August 20, militants killed a soldier and wounded five others with an roadside bomb near Rafah. The same day, militants killed a policeman with a sniper in an attack on a security checkpoint in al-Arish. Preventing an attack on a security checkpoint in North Sinai on September 13, EAF killed at least five militants and wounded a further two. On November 2, EAF killed five militants and wounded six others, after the group of militants attempted an attack on a checkpoint in North Sinai. EAF air forces supported the soldiers. Between November 11 and 20, EAF killed four and arrested 92 militants in raids on several hideouts in North Sinai. On December 17, militants wounded a lieutenant by using a roadside bomb in al-Arish. ppr

and the government, on the other, continued. HM and Lewaa al-Thawra have been potential adherent parties of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB). Some of the groups allegedly have connections to militants on the Sinai Peninsula [→ Egypt (militants / Sinai Peninsula); Syria, Iraq et al. (IS)]. Over the course of the year, approx. 50 Egyptian National Police (ENP) officers and at least 80 members of HM and Lewaa al-Thawra were killed. At least 50 people on both sides were injured, including six civilians. Furthermore, around 40 activists and members of opposition parties received life sentences and 20 received death sentences for alleged participation in attacks on policemen during uprisings in 2011 and 2013. Former president Mohamed Morsi himself was sentenced to 25 years in prison on September 16, having been declared guilty of spying for Qatar. He had previously been sentenced for 20 years in 2012 for the ordered killing of protesters and for endangering national security by leaking state documents to Qatar in 2014.

The most frequent measures of militant oppositional actors were attacks on the ENP and the Egyptian Armed Forces (EAF). On April 1, members of Lewaa al-Thawra detonated a motorcycle bomb at a police training center near Tanta, Gharbia Governorate, killing one and wounding twelve ENP officers as well as three civilians. On June 16, one ENP officer was killed and four injured by an IED in Maadi, Cairo Governorate, in an attack claimed by HM.

On October 21, the newly emerged militant opposition group Ansar al-Islam attacked a checkpoint, killing between 16 to 52 ENP officers with reported numbers ranging widely, while at least 15 of its members were killed in the same incident. The group used grenades, guns and IEDs near the Wahat Road outside of Giza, Giza Governorate. On October 27, Egyptian security forces killed 13 members of Ansar al-Islam in a raid on a hideout in the Western desert, also recovering weapons and explosives. On May 6, ENP officers killed two civilians in the north of Cairo for allegedly supplying HM and Lewaa al-Thawra with explosives. On June 20, the government launched a raid on HM's base in Alexandria, Alexandria Governorate, in which the ENP killed three group members in a shootout. The Interior Ministry claimed that among those killed were the group's prominent leaders.

The government frequently detained civil rights activists and restricted free media. For instance, in a raid over several governorates on May 17 and 18, ENP forces arrested 28 activists and members of opposition parties. They were accused of sharing social media posts that criticized President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi. Six days later, the government banned 21 websites accused of allegedly spreading false news and supporting terrorism, among them Al Jazeera and local independent news site Mada Masr, amounting to 57 blocked websites on June 11.

elu

EGYPT (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 1954

Conflict parties: HM, Lewaa al-Thawra, MB, Ansar al-Islam, civil rights activists vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology, national power

The violent crisis over national power and the orientation of the political system between militant opposition groups such as Hasm Movement (HM), Lewaa al-Thawra and Ansar al-Islam as well as non-militant civil rights activists, on the one hand,

IRAN (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 1997

Conflict parties: intra-systemic opposition, non-systemic opposition vs. government
Conflict items: system/ideology, national power

The violent crisis over the orientation of the political system and national power between non-systemic opposition groups, intra-systemic opposition groups and the government continued. As in previous years, national power was contested between intra-systemic oppositional actors, such as former president Mohammed Khatami or one of the leaders of the Green Movement Mehdi Karroubi, and conservative political figures, most prominently Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei. While the conflict mainly revolved around the local and national elections in May, as well as the house arrests of leading opposition politicians, tensions concerning socio-economic issues increased significantly in late December and extended to nationwide protests against the political system. As in previous years, HRW criticized the government for repeatedly arresting journalists without charging them. According to Reporters without Borders, by late August, a total of 28 journalists were imprisoned.

On January 8, former president and influential figure for intra-systemic opposition groups, Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, died. During his funeral procession in the capital Tehran, oppositional protesters shouted anti-government slogans. Furthermore, they praised Khatami as well as the leaders of the oppositional Green Movement, Mehdi Karroubi and Mir Hossein Mousavi, who remained under house arrest for the seventh consecutive year.

Ahead of the May 19 presidential elections, the Guardian Council, the constitutional entity responsible for the admission of candidates, rejected the candidacy of former president Mahmud Ahmadinejad. Previously, Khamenei had advised Ahmadinejad not to run for the presidency. During several rallies of President Hassan Rouhani, whose candidacy the Guardian Council had approved, supporters of Rouhani shouted slogans in support of Mousavi and Karroubi, demanding the end of their house arrest and a public trial for both. In the run-up to the election, both Mousavi and Karroubi as well as Khatami declared their support for Rouhani, making him the favored candidate of the reformist camp. On May 19, Rouhani was re-elected. He secured around 57 percent of the vote, thereby defeating the conservative candidate Ebrahim Raisi, who gained 38 percent.

In August, tensions over the house arrest of Karroubi and Mousavi intensified. After Karroubi was hospitalized in mid-July as a result of cardiac disease, his son announced on Twitter that he had started a hunger strike to protest the conditions of his arrest on August 16. The next day, Karroubi had to be hospitalized again and several opposition figures, including Khatami, deputy speaker of parliament Ali Motahari, and the grandson of Ayatollah Khomeini, demanded the end of his and Mousavi's arrest. On August 27, the Prosecutor General announced that a trial against Karroubi and Mousavi could be held if the necessary preparations were made. Two days

later, the Supreme National Security Council announced that the security guards would be removed from Karroubi's house in Tehran, which was confirmed by Karroubi's wife the day after. On October 5, 86 MPs demanded Rouhani to advocate for Karroubi, Mousavi, and Khatami, after the latter had also allegedly been hindered from leaving his house.

During the last week of December, nationwide protests against the government erupted. After protesters in Mashhad, Razavi-Khorasan Province, had protested rising food prices and inflation on December 28, the demonstrations quickly spread to other cities throughout the country. In addition to the economic situation, protesters criticized moral laws, the government of Rouhani, the overall political system, and the Iranian involvement in Syria, Lebanon, and Gaza. On December 30, thousands of government supporters marched in Tehran, in celebration of the end of the last large anti-government protests in 2009. During anti-government protests on the same day, police forces killed two protesters in Dorud, Lorestan Province, while protesters at the University of Tehran shouted "Death to the Dictator" and demanded Khamenei to resign. Subsequently, the police arrested around 200 people in Tehran alone. In several cities, protesters shouted "Death to Khamenei". The next day, the government announced a temporal ban of the social media apps Telegram and Instagram to "maintain tranquility and security". According to the government, ten people, among them one police officer, were killed during protests on December 31 in the provinces of Alborz, Hamadan, Lorestan, Mazandaran, and Qazvin. According to The Guardian, government officials blamed Raisi for organizing the first protests in Mashhad, and several politicians close to Rouhani expressed concern over the protests, as anti-Rouhani and pro-monarchy slogans were reported. Rouhani acknowledged the right to protest, but stated that "anti-social" behavior would not be tolerated. The protests continued until after the end of the observation period. twt

IRAN (PDKI, PAK)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 1979

Conflict parties: PDKI, PAK et al. vs. government
Conflict items: system/ideology, national power

The violent crisis over national power and the orientation of the political system between the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (PDKI) as well as various other Kurdish parties and groups, on the one hand, and the government, on the other, continued.

Over the year, the PDKI continued to recruit, train, and mobilize armed units.

Instead of keeping their soldiers at military headquarters, the group adjusted its strategy and deployed its forces into the Kurdish-inhabited areas, to combine tactics of civil resistance with armed struggle. In early March, PDKI, its splinter group Kurdistan Democratic Party (HDK-I), all Komala parties and the Revolutionary Khabat Organization of the Iranian Kurdistan (Khabat) formed a joint commission to share intelligence and coordinate military cooperation.

During the first quarter of the year, the Zagros Eagles, a Kurdish armed group linked to the PDKI, repeatedly launched attacks in the provinces of Kurdistan and Kermanshah against the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), killing at least three IRGC members. At a joint press conference on April 27, members of PDKI, HDK-I, Khabat as well as one of the Komala parties, KŞZK, announced their boycott of the upcoming presidential elections, denouncing them as undemocratic. In early May, after 25 years, the KŞZK declared the resumption of armed activities against the government, as a means to protect "workers, kulbers, and the families of those killed by the Iranian government". Subsequently, the group mobilized Peshmerga units on the Iraqi side of the border. On June 23, IRGC forces clashed with militant KŞZK members in Sananday, Kurdistan Province, killing three KŞZK members. In a clash near Piranshar, West Azerbaijan Province, on August 5, IRGC forces killed two and arrested four PDKI fighters. From May onwards, the government arrested increasing numbers of individuals allegedly linked to Kurdish opposition groups. In the run-up to the Kurdistan independence referendum in Iraq on September 25, the government repeatedly accused the various Kurdish groups, including the PDKI and the Kurdistan Freedom Party (PAK), of fueling anti-Iranian sentiments among the Kurdish population. After Kurdish groups conducted the referendum on Iranian territory against the government's will, numerous PDKI and PAK members in the West Azerbaijan and Kurdistan provinces were detained. The PDKI reproached the government for providing insufficient emergency relief to the Kurdish population after the November 12 earthquake in Kermanshah Province. eth

IRAN – USA

Intensity: 2 | Change: • | Start: 1979

Conflict parties: Iran vs. USA
Conflict items: system/ideology, international power

The non-violent crisis over international power, the Iranian nuclear program, and Iranian ballistic missile testing between Iran and the USA continued. The conflict revolved around numerous US sanctions imposed on Iran in relation to the 1979 embassy hostage crisis, the Iranian ballistic missile program and alleged human rights violations. On 01/16/16, following the signing of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on 07/14/15, the EU had lifted all of its nuclear-related sanctions against Iran. The US had also lifted nuclear-related secondary sanctions against Iran, but imposed further sanctions on Iran on July 18, due to "Iran's malign activities across the Middle East". These alleged activities included Iranian support for the Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, support for al-Houthi forces in Yemen, and ballistic missile tests that would undermine the commitment to JCPOA.

On April 18, US Secretary of State, Rex Tillerson, announced that Iran was so far complying with JCPOA's terms, but added that the US would examine the deal overall. Two days later, he added that Iran was provoking instability in the region, called the deal a failure, and compared the situation to US relations with North Korea [→ North Korea – USA, South Korea, Japan]. During a stay in Saudi Arabia, the first stop on the first foreign

trip of his presidency, US President Donald Trump demanded that Iran should be isolated from the international community. On June 5, a close aid of the Iranian President Hassan Rouhani accused the US of being responsible for the escalation of diplomatic tensions regarding Qatar [→ Qatar – Saudi Arabia et al.]. On October 13, Trump criticized the JCPOA as "the worst deal", demanded the renegotiation of certain aspects of the agreement, and refused to certify Iran's compliance with the terms of the deal. Subsequently, Rouhani announced that no amendments would be made to the agreement. In a joint statement thereafter, British PM Theresa May, French President Emmanuel Macron, and German Chancellor Angela Merkel declared that they shared concerns over the Iranian ballistic missile program but also affirmed their commitment to the JCPOA as a whole. On October 18, Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei stated that Iran would commit to the deal, but would "shred" it if the US were to abandon it.

On December 27, Tillerson announced in an op-ed in the New York Times that the JCPOA would "no longer be the focal point" of US policy towards Iran. Additionally, he stated that the US would focus on "the totality of Iranian threats" while trying to penalize Iran for alleged violations of ballistic missile commitments and threats to overall stability in the Middle East. Three days later, Rouhani announced that Iran's missile program was not in violation of the JCPOA's agreement and accused Trump of "neglecting a UN Security Council-approved agreement". In November, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini announced that the EU would ensure the full implementation of JCPOA by all parties. krk; twt

IRAQ (KRG – YBS)

Intensity: 3 | Change: NEW | Start: 2017

Conflict parties: YBS vs. Kurdistan Regional Government
Conflict items: system/ideology, subnational predominance

A violent crisis over ideology and subnational predominance erupted between Sinjar Resistance Units (YBS), a Yazidi militia with ties to People's Protection Units (YPG) in Syria and PKK in Turkey, on the one hand, and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), on the other.

On March 2, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) leadership announced that the Rojava-Peshmerga, comprising of Syrian-Kurdish refugees, would be sent to al-Hawl in Al-Hasakah Governorate, Syria. This was opposed by the YPG, who stated that "the presence of two Kurdish military forces would lead to a civil war in Rojava, similar to the 1990s war in Iraqi Kurdistan." On March 3, YBS and Rojava-Peshmerga supported by KRG clashed heavily in the town of Khanasor, Nineveh Governorate, close to the border to Syria, which left several members of the groups injured. Both groups accused each other for the violence. On the same day, both sides agreed to a 24-hour ceasefire. Eleven days later, Yazidi inhabitants protested against Rojava-Peshmerga's presence in Sinjar, Nineveh Gov-

ernorate. The protest turned violent, leaving one person dead and another ten injured. On March 16, people protested in Erbil, eponymous governorate, against the recent violence in Sinjar. KRG security forces detained at least 32 people. Moreover, pro-KDP activists claimed that the Peoples Democratic Union, affiliated with the YPG, detained 40 KDP supporters in northern Syria in early March.

daj

IRAQ (KURDISTAN REGIONAL GOVERNMENT)

Intensity: 3 | Change: ↑ | Start: 1971

Conflict parties: KRG vs. government

Conflict items: autonomy, resources

The dispute over resources and secession between the Kurdistan Regional Government and the Iraqi government escalated to a violent crisis. Throughout the year the diplomatic and later military tension between the two sides rose, since Erbil did not repeal their plans to hold a referendum on independence.

On January 23, KRG president Masud Barzani threatened to declare independence if former Iraqi president, Nuri al-Maliki, under whom the conflict between the KRG and the Iraqi Government escalated in 2012, becomes Prime Minister again. A further incident occurred when the Iraqi Parliament banned the erection of Kurdistan flags on public buildings and institutions in Kirkuk, Kirkuk Governorate, in April, which provoked many protests. On June 6, Barzani set the date of the referendum for September 25. Three days after the date was announced, Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi declared that the Iraqi government rejected the referendum and deemed it unconstitutional. The focus on the city of Kirkuk as the main venue of the Iraqi-Kurdish dispute intensified after Najmaddin Kareem, Governor of Kirkuk Governorate, and the council of Kirkuk, voted to participate in the referendum on August 29. On September 14, the Iraqi Government voted to oust Najmaddin Kareem as Governor of Kirkuk. Kareem later denied this, declaring that such a move would not have been constitutional. Following this incident, the Iraqi supreme court suspended the referendum for independence on September 18, also deeming this unconstitutional. Despite the backlash from Baghdad, the referendum was held in the Kurdistan Region and the disputed areas of Kirkuk and Khanaqin on September 25. 95% of the voters voted in favor of independence.

After the referendum was held, PM Abadi stated publicly that he would not negotiate on the referendum. In October, he also visited Erbil and announced several economic sanctions on the Kurdistan Region, such as the re-seizure of Erbil and Sulaimaniyya airports. The conflict turned violent on October 16, when the Iraqi army seized control of Kirkuk's K1 military base, an oil field and the city of Tuz Khormato, Salah ad-Din Governorate, causing thousands of civilians to flee the region. Loss to life and destruction was allegedly highest in Tuz Khormato. Human Rights Watch later confirmed that five civilians were killed and 51 wounded, and many houses were looted. On October 17, the re-seizure of the disputed areas by the Iraqi army spread to Nineveh and Diyala governorates,

and the cities of Sinjar, Nineveh Governorate, Jalawla and Khanaqin, Diyala Governorate were completely seized. The Iraqi army faced civilian backlash, and one civilian was killed and three wounded in Khanaqin. The conflict deescalated by the end of October, when Masud Barzani announced that he planned to initiate talks with Baghdad to propose a ceasefire, a suspension of the referendum result and a dialogue with the Iraqi government. Furthermore, on October 29, Barzani announced that he would not run as presidential candidate of the Kurdistan Region again after November 1. Scattered protests erupted as a consequence. daj

IRAQ (SHIITE MILITANT GROUPS)

Intensity: 2 | Change: • | Start: 2004

Conflict parties: Al-Mukhtar Army, Asaib al-Haq, Mahdi Army, Shiite militias vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology, national power

The conflict between Shiite militants such as al-Mukhtar Army, Asaib Ahl al-Haq, Hashd al-Shaabi (People Mobilization Force; PMF) and Mahdi Army and the government, over system and ideology, as well as national power, remains on a non-violent level. After the Islamic State (IS) launched its offensive, which began in June 2014, the Iraqi government turned to Shiite militias to bolster the security forces. The militias, which are backed by Iran and have been instrumental in reinforcing Iraqi forces, have helped to retake areas in Iraq. For almost two years, US-backed Iraqi government forces, along with Kurdish Peshmerga forces and other allies, have fought to push IS fighters from the country. Roughly 63 factions make up Iraq's Popular Mobilisation Forces (PMF, also known as PMU) - an umbrella of groups rallied by ethnic and tribal leaders, whose fighters are either loyal to religious scholars, Iraqi political leaders, or Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). The PMF operates largely outside government control, yet the Iraqi parliament formally recognized it as a state-affiliated institution when its own forces became depleted in the fight against IS in Iraq.

Following a the passing of the "Iranian Proxies Terrorist Sanctions Act of 2017" in the US House of Representatives on November 3, imposing sanctions on Asaib Ahl al-Haq and Harakat al-Nujaba, the groups pressured the government to expel US soldiers from Iraq. In November Qais al-Khazali, leader of Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq, called US soldiers to leave "after the end of the excuse of the ISIS presence." After President Haider al-Abadi declared IS in Iraq defeated on December 9, the PMF harshly rejected calls for their dissolution and disarmament, demanded by several Iraqi politicians, the US and France.

mas

ISRAEL (HAMAS ET AL. / PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 1988

Conflict parties: Hamas, PIJ, other Islamist militant groups vs. government

Conflict items: secession, resources

The violent crisis over the secession of a Palestinian state and resources between Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), and other Islamist or Salafist militants, on the one hand, and the Israeli government, on the other, continued. Over the course of the year, 41 conflict-related Palestinian deaths and at least 1,164 injured have been reported, marking an increase comparable to 2016. Notably, casualties significantly increased after US President Donald Trump recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel on December 6 [→ Israel (PNA / Palestinian Territories)]. Conflict measures after the announcement led to twelve conflict-related deaths.

Clashes between Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) and Gazan protesters near the border fence continued. Moreover, due to the ongoing naval blockade of the Gazan Sea, the work of fishermen as well as farmers in the Access Restricted Areas along the border fence was regularly interrupted by IDF. For instance, one fisherman was killed in January when an Israeli Navy vessel collided with his boat. Another fisherman was shot dead by Navy forces on May 15. After December 6, at least five people were killed and 938 were injured in violent protests.

Despite official warnings by the government, Hamas and PIJ continued the construction of tunnel networks underneath the Gazan border that, in recent years, were primarily used to smuggle goods and possibly weaponry, undermining Israeli border restrictions. In reaction, Israel continued its efforts to destroy the remaining tunnels, after the majority of them were destroyed during Operation Protective Edge in 2014. Further more, it tried to prevent new tunnels from being built, for instance by constructing an underground wall. Throughout the year, various tunnels collapsed. On February 9, Hamas officials accused Israel of conducting airstrikes against a tunnel. However, IDF denied responsibility. The incident left two workers dead and injured five others. IDF destroyed a tunnel using explosives on October 30, causing the death of twelve PIJ and Hamas fighters and injuries to a further twelve. This marked the single most violent conflict measure since 2014 and caused PIJ to announce retaliatory attacks against IDF. In at least 16 incidents, rockets were fired from Gaza without causing injuries, eight of them occurring after December 6. Israel reacted with airstrikes and tank fire against Hamas facilities, according to its policy to hold Hamas responsible for all attacks from Gaza. 13 Gazans were injured by Israeli airstrikes and tank fire before December 6, while four Gazans were killed and 25 were injured after December 6. No group has claimed responsibility for most of the rocket attacks from Gaza. However, on June 27, the Islamic State-affiliated group Ahfad al-Sahaba claimed responsibility for a rocket that was fired from Gaza and hit an open area in Sha'ar Hanegev in southern Israel [→ Israel (Hamas – Salafi)].

In retaliation for the tunnel attack on October 30, PIJ fired at least ten mortar shells at IDF working near the Gazan border fence on November 30. No casualties were reported. Israel reacted with tank fire and airstrikes against PIJ sites in northern Gaza, injuring two Palestinians. On December 7, the Salafist al-Tawhid Brigades claimed responsibility for rocket fire from Gaza. On March 24, Mazen Fuqaha, a senior leader of the al-Qassam brigades, Hamas' military wing, was assassinated in Gaza by unknown perpetrators. Hamas blamed the Israeli government for the attack and closed the Erez Border Crossing two days later. On April 4, Hamas forces arrested Palestinians accused of collaborating with Israel and detained the alleged killer of Mazen Fuqaha on May 11. On May 21, both the alleged killer and two accomplices were sentenced to death by a Hamas military court and were executed on May 25.

Significant political developments affected the conflict dynamics. On May 1, Hamas introduced a new charter, considering a Palestinian state in the borders of 1967, while referring to Israel as an "illegitimate Zionist entity." This marks a departure from Hamas' 1988 charter that called for the obliteration of Israel. On May 7, Ismael Haniyeh was appointed the new leader of Hamas and the successor of Khaled Meshaal. Moreover, over the course of the year, the Gazan population was negatively affected by an energy crisis due to the Palestinian National Authority's (PNA) refusal to fund Hamas' energy supply [→ Israel (Hamas – Fatah)]. Both PNA and the Israeli government accused Hamas of misusing energy taxes collected in Gaza to build tunnels. On June 13, the Israeli Security Cabinet decided to reduce Israel's energy supply to Gaza by 40 percent.

Hamas strengthened its security cooperation with Egypt at the Rafah Border Crossing. Moreover, the Egyptian government brokered an agreement between Haniyeh and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas of the Fatah party, which was signed on October 12. As a result, Hamas handed over control of Gaza border crossings to PNA on November 3. However, Hamas refused to give in to Israeli demands to disarm and cut ties with Iran. Trump announced his decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel on December 6. While this decision was welcomed by Israel, it caused violent mass demonstrations in Gaza, as well as widespread international criticism. Hamas called for a new Intifada against Israel on December 7 and PIJ appealed to Arab states to shun Israel. According to media reports from December, Hamas, the Lebanese Hezbollah and other militant groups planned to coordinate their resistance against the US recognition of Jerusalem as the Israeli capital [→ Israel (Hezbollah)]. The resistance has been supported by Iran. On December 31, the Israeli government accused Iran of supplying Hamas and other militant groups in Gaza with arms [→ Iran – Israel].

hna

ISRAEL (HEZBOLLAH)

Intensity: 2 | Change: ▼ | Start: 1982

Conflict parties: Hezbollah vs. government

Conflict items: territory, system/ideology

The conflict over ideology and territorial sovereignty over the internationally contested Shebaa farms between Israel and the Lebanese Hezbollah de-escalated to a non-violent crisis. No casualties were reported in 2017. However, the conflict parties continuously articulated threats. Hezbollah also reportedly continued to receive advanced weaponry from allies such as Syria and Iran [→ Iran – Israel]. As in previous years, the Israeli Air Force (IAF) targeted factories, weaponry, ammunition depots, and military positions in Syria due to Hezbollah's ongoing involvement in the conflicts in Syria in support of President Bashar al-Assad [→ Syria (opposition); Syria, Iraq et al. (IS); Israel – Syria]. While Syria and Hezbollah blamed Israel for these attacks, the latter neither denied nor confirmed particular incidents, but rather framed them as coherent with their "policy to prevent Iran's smuggling of advanced weapons via Syria to Hezbollah", as Intelligence Minister Yisrael Katz commented. For example, on February 22, an IAF aircraft allegedly targeted positions belonging to the 3rd Division of the Syrian Armed Forces in the Syrian Rif Dimashq Governorate close to the border to Lebanon, including a convoy that supposedly contained weapons for Hezbollah. No casualties were reported. On April 27, Israel was blamed for several rocket attacks on a warehouse near the airport of the Syrian capital Damascus that, according to Israeli news, had been a depot for weapons supplied to Hezbollah. As in the past, the conflict was intertwined with tensions between Israel and Lebanon [→ Israel – Lebanon]. On February 12, Lebanese President Michel Aoun stated that Hezbollah's weapons would constitute an "essential part in defending the country." Referring to this statement, the Israeli Permanent Representative to the UN wrote a complaint to UNSG's Antonio Guterres. Later on, a UNSG deputy spokesperson recalled UNSC resolutions that demand the disarmament of all Lebanese militias such as Hezbollah. On August 30, the UNSC approved the renewal of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) mission at the border between Israel and Lebanon, after dealing with Israeli and American complaints that UNIFIL forces would ignore arms transfers to Hezbollah. Throughout the year, Hezbollah strengthened its ties to Hamas [→ Israel (Hamas et al. / Palestinian Territories)]. For instance on November 1, Hamas representatives met Hezbollah's leader Hassan Nasrallah in Lebanon.

ISRAEL (PNA / PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 1948

Conflict parties:	PNA vs. government, Israeli settlement movements
Conflict items:	secession, resources

The violent crisis over the creation of a sovereign Palestinian state - involving secession and resources - between the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), on the one hand, and the government and Israeli settlement movements, on the other, continued.

According to OCHA, at least 46 Palestinians were killed and 6,974 injured, while 15 Israelis were killed.

Israeli settlements continued to be a source of contention. On

January 22, the municipality of Jerusalem announced plans to build about 600 new settlement units in East Jerusalem. On January 25, the government declared intentions to construct 2,500 new housing units in existing settlements in West Bank. Additionally, on February 1, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced a plan for new settlements in West Bank, comprising 3,000 housing units. The same day, Israeli security forces began the eviction and destruction of the settlement in Amona, West Bank, which had been declared illegal by the Israeli High Court. While some residents left the area peacefully, about 600 settlers protested against the action of more than 3,000 Israeli security forces. In erupting clashes, about 60 police forces were injured. On February 6, the Knesset approved a bill, legalizing over 4,000 existing settlement units within the Area C in the West Bank, where security is controlled by Israeli forces. On March 20, the Israeli Security Cabinet approved the establishment of a new settlement in the area of Emek Shilo, West Bank.

Throughout the year, Palestinians protested in the West Bank. Some of the protests turned violent, leading to scores of injured civilians and Israeli soldiers. Furthermore, violence occurred between Palestinians and Israeli security personnel as well as settlers. Palestinian stabbings and vehicular attacks were carried out primarily in the West Bank. Israeli military raids and arrests continued, as did the demolition of Palestinian housings. Further, settlers regularly damaged Palestinian property, for instance olive trees, thereby affecting economy and vegetation.

On April 6, a Palestinian rammed a car into Israeli soldiers standing at a bus stop at the Ofra Junction north of Ramallah, West Bank, killing one and wounding another. On July 14, three Arab Israelis opened fire on border policemen near Lions Gate on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. In reaction, the Temple Mount compound was closed for search purposes until July 16, security measures were significantly increased and metal detectors were installed. Shortly afterwards, protests and clashes took place in Jerusalem, West Bank, and the Gaza Strip [→ Israel (Hamas et al. / Palestinian Territories)]. On July 21, a Palestinian stabbed four civilians in a settler community in Halamish, near Ramallah, killing three and injuring one. An inhabitant shot him in the aftermath. Shortly after, Israeli security forces temporarily increased their presence in the area, raided the perpetrator's house in Kobar, West Bank, imposed a closure on the village, and arrested several Palestinians. Clashes between dozens of Palestinians and Israeli security forces ensued as a consequence, leaving 24 Palestinians injured. On September 26, a Palestinian opened fire on Israeli security officers at a checkpoint in the Har Adar settlement in West Bank, killing three and wounding one. Security forces killed the attacker.

Additional measures took place on diplomatic, national and international levels. The Israeli government declared the Palestinian National Fund a terrorist organization on March 16. On May 2, UNESCO's executive board approved a contentious resolution regarding Jerusalem that criticized Israel, brought in by Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, and Sudan. On July 7, UNESCO declared the city of Hebron, West Bank, as Palestinian World Heritage. While Palestinians welcomed the decision, it was criticized by the Israeli government. On October 12, the Israeli and US governments announced their withdrawal from the organization, effective of

December 31 2018, referring to "continuing anti-Israel bias." On September 27, The PNA was accepted as a full member of INTERPOL. On December 6, US President Trump announced US recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. The EU and the majority of the UN member states voiced their disagreement. In the following days, thousands of Palestinians in West Bank and Gaza demonstrated against the US decision, clashing with Israeli security forces. Member states of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation announced their recognition of East Jerusalem as the Palestinian capital on December 13. On December 21, the UNGA adopted a resolution regarding Trump's decision. According to the resolution, the status of Jerusalem as Israel's capital would be "null and void". On December 24, the Guatemalan President Jimmy Morales announced he would move his country's embassy to Jerusalem.

ISRAEL – SYRIA

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 1948

Conflict parties: Israel vs. Syria
Conflict items: territory, international power, resources

The violent conflict over territory, international power, and resources between Syria and Israel continued. The main conflict issues concerned the status of the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights and water resources located in the disputed area. The Israeli government continued its policy of holding the Syrian government responsible for all attacks from Syrian territory, regardless of the actual aggressor. Furthermore, they targeted Syrian Army positions, due to alleged links to Hezbollah [→ Israel (Hezbollah)].

On February 9, a tank fired a mortar from Syria into open territory on the Golan Heights. In retaliation, the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) attacked a Syrian army post in Quneitra Governorate, which borders the Golan Heights on the Syrian side. On March 17, Israeli Air Force (IAF) struck targets in Syria. The Syrian Army responded by firing several S-200 anti-aircraft missiles at Israeli jets above the Golan Heights. Israel reported that one Syrian missile was shot down by the Arrow 2 missile defense system, while no aircraft was damaged. Israel also stated it targeted weapon shipments towards anti-Israeli forces, specifically Hezbollah, in Lebanon. The incident was the first time Israel officially confirmed a strike on a Hezbollah convoy during the conflicts in Syria. However, the Syrian Army claimed that Israel attacked a military site near Palmyra, Homs Governorate. Syria also claimed to have shot down one Israeli aircraft, which Israel denied. On March 19, Israeli defense minister Avigdor Lieberman said that Israel would target Syria's air defense systems if used against Israeli aircrafts again. On March 25, the Syrian government in turn stated that it would respond with Scud missile attacks against IDF bases if Israel struck Syrian military targets again. Moreover, it would fire Scud missiles at the Israeli city of Haifa, in response to future Israeli strikes on Syrian civilian targets. On April 23, three fighters from the pro-Syrian government group National Defence Forces were killed in Israeli attacks on their positions in the countryside of Quneitra. From June 24 to 26, Israeli

planes struck Syrian army tanks and troops in Quneitra, in response to artillery shelling, which hit the Israeli side of the ceasefire line the previous day. 13 Syrian soldiers were killed. On October 21, after five projectiles had been fired towards Israel, the latter responded by striking three Syrian artillery positions. According to Syrian government sources, the attack from Syria came "after terrorists linked to Israel had launched mortar shells, upon the instructions of the Israeli occupation, on an area of empty land inside the occupied territories to give the Israeli enemy a pretext to carry out its aggression." ska

KUWAIT (BEDOUNS)

Intensity: 2 | Change: ↗ | Start: 1959

Conflict parties: Bedouns vs. government
Conflict items: other

The conflict over gaining the Kuwaiti citizenship between the stateless Bedouns and the government escalated to a non-violent crisis.

On January 23, Bedoun women demonstrated in front of the parliament in the capital Kuwait City, against a decision to cut the Bedouns' social allowances. On February 22, the Bedoun activist Abdulhakim al-Fadhli started a hunger strike, demanding his release from the Central Prison in Kuwait City after he had served an initial three-month sentence for staging a demonstration in 2012. The activist ended his hunger strike on March 13, but the administration of the Central Prison charged an additional sentence of 35 days due to his participation in a demonstration in 2011. On August 1, al-Fadhli was released from the Central Prison in Kuwait City. He signed a declaration that he would not participate in any upcoming protests, in exchange for freezing a deportation order and another prison sentence against him. The most intense measure occurred on September 21, when a Bedoun man set himself on fire in front of the police station in al-Jahra in the eponymous governorate and died as a result of his injuries.

LEBANON (INNER-PALESTINIAN TENSIONS)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 2006

Conflict parties: Fatah al-Islam, other Palestinian Islamist groups, Jund al-Sham vs. Fatah, other Palestinian factions
Conflict items: subnational predominance

The violent crisis over subnational predominance between various Palestinian Islamist groups such as Fatah al-Islam and Jund al-Sham as well as groups headed by Bilal Badr and Bilal Arqoub, on the one hand, and the Palestinian political party Fatah and other Palestinian factions, on the other hand, continued.

Especially the control over different responsibilities in Palestinian refugee camps continued to be contested. Since the

creation of the Joint Palestinian Security Force, Fatah and other Palestinian factions had been in charge together with the rival Hamas organization. However, on February 18, the Joint Security Force dissolved after its head Munir Maqdash had resigned four days earlier due to its ineffectiveness. Violence mostly erupted in the Palestinian refugee camp Ain al-Hilweh, South Governorate. Attacks, explosions, and clashes left at least 19 people dead and another 111 injured.

For instance, on January 15, a shooting between Fatah and an Islamist group left at least three injured in the aforementioned camp. Shortly after the dissolution of the Joint Security Force, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas arrived in the capital Beirut on February 23 to discuss the security situation in the refugee camps with high representatives such as the Lebanese President Michel Aoun. Between February 24 and March 1, clashes occurred between Fatah and militant groups around Bilal Badr in Ain al-Hilweh, leaving at least two people dead and 18 injured. In the beginning of March, a new Joint Security Force comprising of 100 members was deployed to Ain al-Hilweh, consisting of representatives of Palestinian factions as well as Islamist groups, but excluding the Badr fractions. After the assassination of a Fatah member on a fruit market in Ain al-Hilweh on March 23, clashes between Fatah forces and Jund al-Sham killed two people and wounded several. On April 7, an Islamist group aligned to Badr attacked the new Joint Security Force in Ain al-Hilweh. Fighting continued for six days in a part of the camp called al-Tiri, leaving at least eight people dead, over 37 injured and causing the damage of 175 houses and shops. On April 17, Abbas sent a military investigation committee to evaluate Fatah's capacities to control the camp. On August 17, Islamist groups affiliated with Arqoub and Badr attacked the new Joint Security Force. The fighting lasted for seven days, again in al-Tiri, leaving at least five people dead and 43 injured. On the last day, hundreds of camp residents protested for a cessation of hostilities. On October 31, Arqoub's son survived an assassination attempt. Shortly afterwards, his father's supporters attacked Fatah members, wounding two. In December, the Lebanese newspaper Daily Star reported that Badr had left the camp in late November.

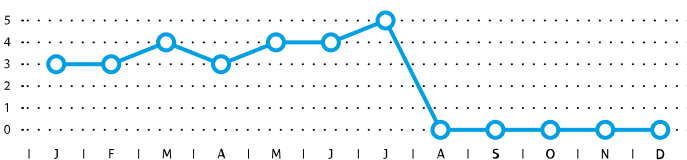
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LEBANON (SUNNI MILITANT GROUPS)

Intensity: 4 | Change: ↗ | Start: 2014

Conflict parties: HTS, Saraya Ahl al-Sham, other Sunni militant groups vs. government, Hezbollah

Conflict items: system/ideology, subnational predominance



The conflict over ideology and subnational predominance between various Sunni militant groups, especially Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), on the one hand, and the government, allied

with the Shiite militia Hezbollah, partly supported by the Syrian Armed Forces (SAF) on the other, escalated to a limited war.

Spillovers of the conflicts in Syria as well as the conflict regarding the so-called Islamic State (IS) [→ Syria (opposition); Syria, Iraq et al. (IS)] impacted the situation in Lebanon, mainly in Baalbek-Hermel Governorate in northeast Lebanon. On January 28, the main militant group, Jabhat Fatah al-Sham, former Jabhat al-Nusra, merged with other Syrian opposition groups to a new entity called Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS). During the first half of the year, Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) and Hezbollah frequently clashed with HTS at the Syrian-Lebanese border. Most clashes took place in Baalbek-Hermel, especially at the outskirts of the towns of Aarsal and Ras Baalbek. Violence between HTS and Hezbollah also erupted in the Rif Dimashq Governorate on the Syrian side of the border.

In July and August, LAF and Hezbollah, backed by SAF, simultaneously conducted military offensives against Sunni militant groups, resulting in their withdrawal from Lebanese territory. On July 21, Hezbollah and SAF launched a joint military offensive between the town of Aarsal and the Syrian village Flitah, Rif Dimashq, against strongholds of HTS and Saraya Ahl al-Sham, a group affiliated with the Free Syrian Army, a major opposition force in Syria's Civil War. At the first day of the offensive, clashes between the conflict parties left at least five Hezbollah fighters and 20 Sunni militants dead. Also, Hezbollah destroyed two of the latter's vehicles on the outskirts of Aarsal with guided missiles. On July 22, LAF strengthened their security measures and targeted HTS militants, who were trying to infiltrate the area around Aarsal. The next day, Hezbollah captured the strategic valley al-Khayl area on the outskirts of Aarsal, using RPGs and heavy artillery. At the same day, Hezbollah seized full control over territory at the Syrian side of the border. Until July 24, according to security sources, at least 130 militants were killed, while 19 Hezbollah fighters died. On July 25, LAF killed an HTS militant during a raid in a refugee camp near Aarsal. Two days later, a ceasefire agreement was reached between Hezbollah and HTS that ended the 6-day military offensive, in which altogether about 150 Sunni militants and 24 Hezbollah fighters were killed. Part of the ceasefire agreement was the withdrawal of a group of approx. 7,800 people, including more than 1,000 HTS militants, their families as well as Syrian refugees, from Lebanese territory to the Idlib Governorate in Syria. In addition, HTS and Hezbollah agreed upon an exchange of prisoners. A similar agreement had been met between Hezbollah and Saraya Ahl al-Sham on July 23. In consequence, 350 Sunni militants and their families together with 2,000 Syrian refugees moved from the Valley Hmeid in Lebanon to the Syrian town al-Rahiba, Rif Dimashq.

Besides the military offensives, LAF persecuted alleged members of Sunni militant groups throughout the year. For instance, on January 21, LAF thwarted a suicide attack outside a café on Hamra Street in the capital Beirut, detaining a Palestinian, a suspected supporter of the Sunni cleric Ahmed al-Assir. In the aftermath, LAF arrested several alleged members of the militant group affiliated with Ahmed al-Assir in the town of Sidon, South Governorate. Later this year, on September 28, a military court sentenced Ahmed al-Assir to death. He had been arrested in 2015 for his leadership during violent

clashes between his supporters and LAF in Sidon in 2013.
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LIBYA (INTER-TRIBAL TENSIONS)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 2012

Conflict parties: Tebu vs. Awlad Suleiman vs. Touareg vs. Qaddafi vs. Mahamid
Conflict items: subnational predominance, re-sources

The violent crisis over subnational predominance and resources among several tribes in southern Libya continued. The control of trafficking routes and scarce resources, such as hydrocarbons, and the struggle for cultural and political hegemony in the south, were issues of contention.

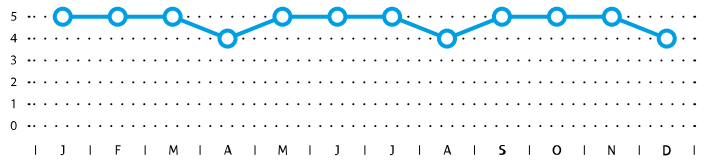
In the second half of the year, the situation in the south calmed, as ceasefires in Sebha and other ethnically mixed cities such as Ubari and Kufra, all capitals of the eponymous districts, were respected. In January, February and March, the situation in the city of Sebha remained fragile, but without major incident. On March 30, the Awlad Suleiman tribe, the Tebu and the Tuareg tribes negotiated a peace deal in Rome to put an end to the conflict, despite a similar peace agreement signed in Doha on 11/23/2015. However, on April 6 the National Tebu Assembly rejected the Rome agreement, arguing that the Tebu tribe negotiation delegation did not represent all constituent parts of the community. On April 25 and 26, clashes occurred between the Awlad Suleiman and Tebu tribes. The Libyan National Army (LNA) [→ Libya (opposition)], supporting the Awlad Suleiman tribe, conducted airstrikes on Tebu tribe headquarters in Sebha, killing five. On April 29, both tribes agreed to a ceasefire. Also in Sebha city, on May 4 and 5, combat between the Awlad Suleiman and the Mahamid tribe left six dead and twelve wounded, before an end to the fighting was negotiated. On June 26, one bystander was killed as a result of a shooting between Tebu and Qaddafi fighters on a commercial street in Sebha city. In July an Awlad Suleiman and a Tebu joined a delegation of several Libyan representatives to Brussels, aiming to foster peace between tribes in the south of the country. On July 17, delegations of both tribes also met with Government of National Accord (GNA) representatives to discuss the peace process. On November 30, Tebu militants occupied Sebha airport and several LNA checkpoints, without casualties.

Besides these tensions, tribes of the Libyan south attempted to coordinate investments from both the GNA and the House of Representatives [→ Libya (opposition)]. Subsequently, on July 17, the National Forces Assembly of Fezzan was created. Throughout the year, there were also several pledges by the Sebha Local Council for further investment in the south, especially for gasoline and electricity supplies. riv

LIBYA (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: 5 | Change: • | Start: 2011

Conflict parties: Hor, LNA vs. GNA, Misrata militias, Tripoli pro-GNS militias vs. GNS, BDB, BRSC, DMSC, Tripoli pro-GNS militias
Conflict items: system/ideology, national power



The war over national power and the orientation of the political system between rival state institutions backed by their armed forces, loyal or loosely affiliated militias, and armed groups, continued.

The UN-recognized Government of National Accord (GNA), based in Tripoli, was opposed by two coalitions who did not accept the UN-facilitated Libyan Political Agreement of 12/17/2015. On the one hand, the Tobruk-based House of Representatives (HoR), military backed by the Libyan National Army (LNA), opposed the submission of the LNA to the GNA. The LNA continued to control the east of Libya and the city of Zintan, Jabal al Gharbi District, in the west. On the other hand, the Islamist Tripoli-based Government of National Salvation (GNS) rejected the agreement, considering it an external imposition. Throughout the year, the area controlled by GNS-affiliates shrank to some neighborhoods around Tripoli. On May 2 and 3, GNA Prime Minister, Fayez al-Sarraj, and LNA leader Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar met in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and agreed to seek a settlement. However, the conflict between the LNA and GNA did not de-escalate until the beginning of June, when the LNA made significant territorial gains in the center of the country. On July 25 in Paris, al-Sarraj and Haftar agreed to a ceasefire, which was largely respected in the following months, and to organize general elections in 2018. During this period, the LNA intensified fighting against the Islamist strongholds of Benghazi and Derna, thereby asserting its role as the dominating actor in eastern Libya. In September and October, newly appointed UNSMIL chief Ghassan Salamé brokered negotiations in Tunis, Tunisia, between HoR and the GNA-allied High State Council, to amend the Libyan Political Agreement of 12/17/2015 in order to gain the approval of LNA-supporters. However, they did not agree on Haftar's future role, with the HoR refusing to put the LNA under GNA authority. In December, LNA supporters hindered the High National Elections Commission in east Libya. On December 12, LNA-affiliates raided an electoral registration center and announced that they had collected over one million signatures in favor of Haftar's presidential candidacy. Based on their interpretation of the Libyan Political Agreement, the LNA called for the dissolution of the GNA on December 17. The GNA and UNSMIL, however, declared the LNA's deadline to be invalid, arguing that the Libyan Political Agreement had not been ratified by HoR. Subsequently, senior LNA officials announced they would advance on Tripoli. Nevertheless, the LNA respected the ceasefire and there were

no military confrontations after December 17. After meeting the French Minister of Foreign Affairs on December 21, Haftar agreed to support the elections scheduled for early 2018. He further announced that he would become president if the UN plan failed.

Despite the ceasefire negotiated in July, fighting between the conflict parties continued throughout the year. Sporadic fighting took place in southern regions within the first three months. For instance, on February 10, clashes between pro-GNS Benghazi Defense Brigade (BDB) and the LNA killed eight and led to the destruction of an LNA helicopter. Confrontations intensified from April onwards, when an LNA airstrike hit Tamenhint airbase south of Sebha, capital of the eponymous district, controlled by Misrata's Third Force, a coalition of the GNA-affiliated Misrata's 13th Battalion and BDB. In a counter attack, they hit the LNA's Brak al-Shatti airbase in Wadi al-Shatti district, on April 6. On April 11, the permanent UNSC members demanded de-escalation in a joint communiqué. However, mutual attacks against airbases continued throughout April. On May 18, Misrata's 13th Battalion raided the Brak al-Shatti airbase, killing 141 LNA members. The GNA Ministry of Defense denied involvement in the attack. In the aftermath of the attack, local Sebha tribes forced Misrata's 13 Battalion and BDB to withdraw from Tamenhint airbase [→ Libya (inter-tribal)]. On June 2 and 3, LNA gained further Misrata and BDB positions in Jufra district, for example in the towns of Waddan and Sukna, as well as the Jufra Airbase, leaving a total of twelve fighters dead. Following these defeats, the Misrata Military Council ordered Misrata-based BDB to dissolve on June 6.

In the following months, LNA forces retained their territorial gains in southern Libya. The GNA and LNA stopped their fighting in the area and the Paris ceasefire agreement prevented further confrontations.

In Benghazi city, capital of the eponymous district, the LNA and the Islamist Benghazi Revolutionaries' Shura Council (BRSC) continued to fight, involving fighter planes and tanks. On March 18, after heavy combat, BRSC lost Benghazi's neighborhood of Ganfouda to the LNA. Throughout May, fighting between the LNA and BRSC in Benghazi continued in the quarters Sabri and central Suq al-Hout, resulting in hundreds of deaths on both sides and the destruction of major parts of the old city. Fighting continued until the end of July, despite Haftar's proclamation of the liberation of Benghazi on July 5. In August, the ICC issued arrest warrants against LNA senior official Mahmoud al-Werfalli for the execution of 33 prisoners, a crime denied by the LNA. Between August and October, several LNA fighters and civilians were killed by remnant BRSC cells and leftover IEDs. On November 11, the LNA declared the last area under BRSC control after six days of fighting in Sidi Akribesh district, which left at least three LNA soldiers dead. However, sporadic fighting between BRSC and the LNA occurred until December 29 in Khreibish district, when the last BRSC militiamen fled to the city of Derna, eponymous district. At least six BRSC and four LNA were killed in December.

In eastern Libya, LNA sieged the city of Derna, capital of the eponymous district, controlled by Islamists of the Derna Mujahidin Shura Council (DMSC). From January to April, LNA conducted several airstrikes, killing an unknown number of DMSC militants. On July 29, the DMSC shot down a LNA fighter jet

and executed one surviving pilot. The LNA subsequently relaunched their offensives. On August 6, UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Libya expressed concern over the situation of the civil population of Derna. Subsequently, two days later, the LNA allowed medical supplies to enter the city. From August until the end of the year, LNA airstrikes and occasional fighting continued. For instance, on October 30, an LNA airstrike left 15 people including an unknown number of civilians dead. Following UNSMIL condemnation of the attack, the LNA allowed the distribution of humanitarian aid.

Throughout the year, oil-producing regions such as the northern Sirte district were affected by fighting between the BDB and LNA. For instance, eleven days of fightings until March 14, featuring fighter jets and heaven weaponry, resulted in the capture of Ras Lanouf and Sidrah oil terminals and Sirte district by the LNA, leaving at least 14 BDB fighters dead.

In the capital Tripoli, several clashes between pro-GNS and pro-GNA militias occurred.

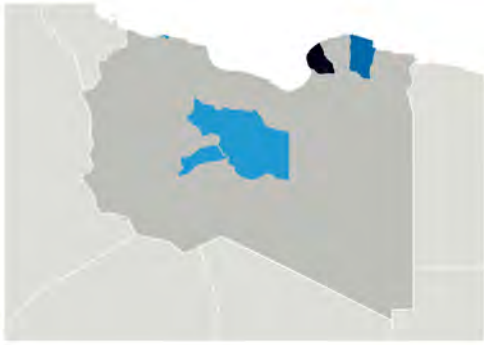
Throughout February, fighting took place on a daily basis with both sides using heavy artillery and tanks in densely populated areas. On March 15, pro-GNA militias captured the GNS-headquarters. Combats resumed in May. For instance, on May 27, the pro-GNA Tripoli Revolutionaries' Brigade (TRB) seized Hadba prison deploying tanks and heavy armory. At least 66 persons were killed on both sides.

On May 28, TRB forces retook the Tripoli International Airport after losing it to Islamists militias three years previously. From July 9 to July 11, there were clashes in Garabulli, east Tripoli, between pro-GNS fighters and TRB, killing at least four persons. In mid-October, fighting between pro-GNA militias and GNA police forces known as RADA, for the control of drug-trafficking areas, killed seven militiamen. In the first half of November, LNA forces and pro-GNA militiamen jointly defeated a Gaddafist militia in clashes near Tripoli, in the town of Aziziya, al-Jutfra district. About 3,000 people fled the combat zone.

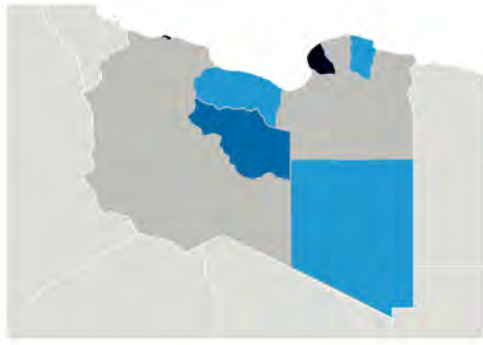
From mid-September to early October, the coastal village of Sabratha, Al Zawiya district, was the site of heavy fighting over the control of human trafficking routes to Italy. The Dabbashi clan, a local militia involved in smuggling migrants, agreed with the GNA to stop human trafficking activities in exchange for governmental payments, allegedly paid by Italy. Subsequently, a pro-GNA militia and an LNA affiliated Salafist group, united to continue human trafficking, clashed with the Dabbashi. On October 2, they gained control over the city. During the three weeks of combat, the groups used tanks and mortars in a densely populated area. At least 26 people were killed and 7,000 displaced. In August, Italy deployed a military vessel in Libyan waters to help the GNA to combat human trafficking, amid criticism by UN agencies and European NGOs concerning the humanitarian situation of migrants in Libya. In November, CNN broadcasted a video showing smugglers near Tripoli auctioning sub-Saharan migrants off as slaves.

Throughout the observed period, international involvement increased in Libya. For the first time, on May 26, Egypt bombed the positions of DMSC in Derna with LNA consent. The Egyptian attack was conducted in retaliation to the killing of 28 Coptic Christians in central Egypt by Islamic State (IS), despite DMSC's openly hostility to IS [→ Syria, Iraq et al. (IS)]. On May 27, the Egyptian warplanes also targeted BDB and Misrata forces in Jufra district. On June 5, HoR, together with

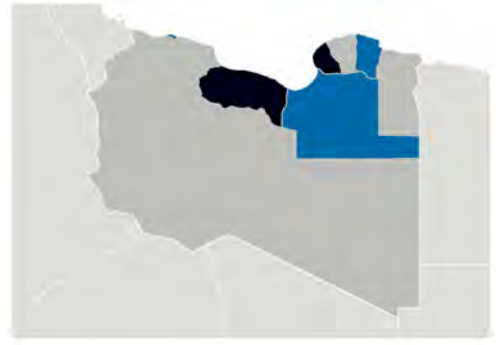
LIBYA (OPPOSITION)



January



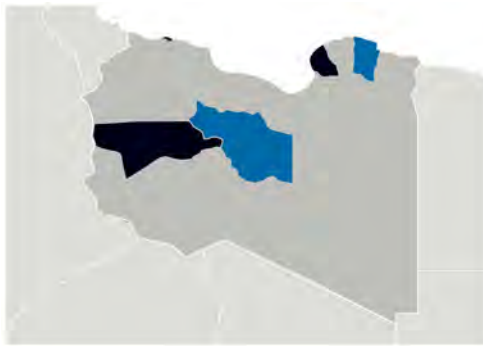
February



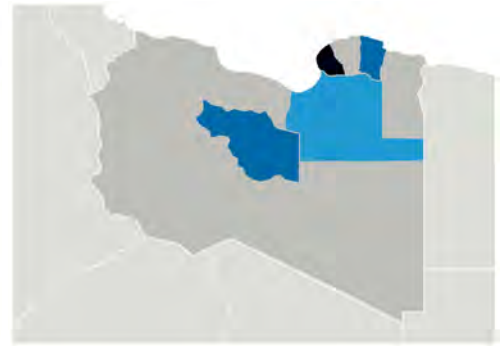
March



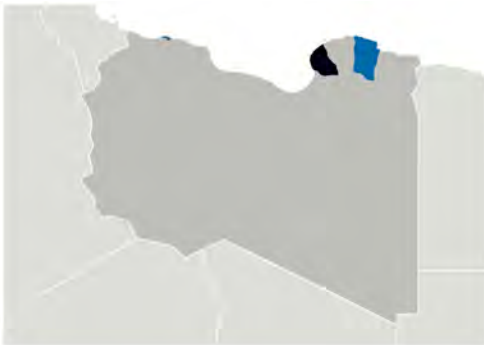
April



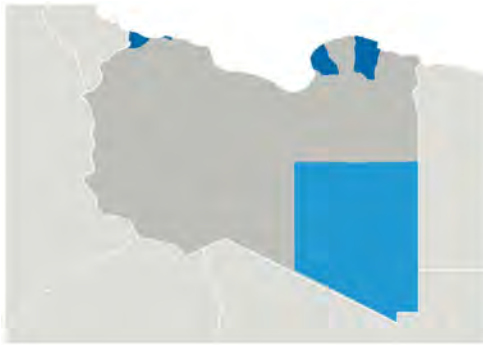
May



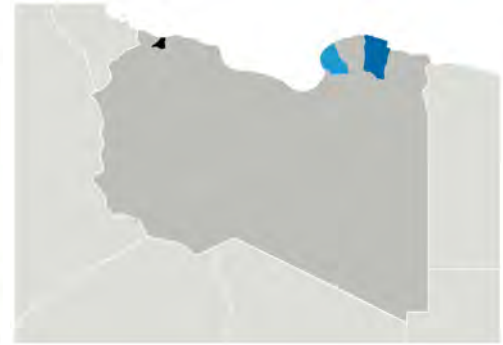
June



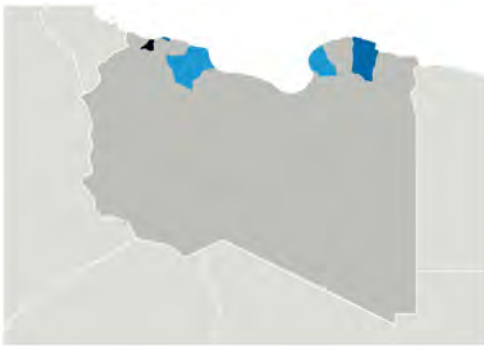
July



August



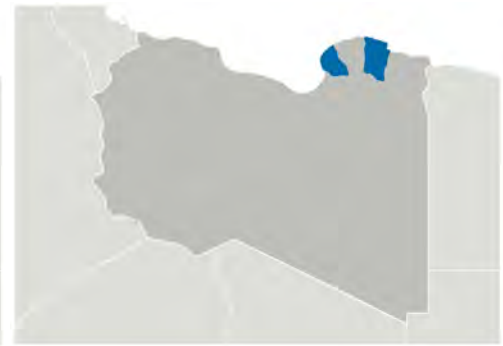
September



October



November



December

Egypt and Saudi Arabia, broke diplomatic ties with Qatar on the accusation of its financing its enemies, the GNA and the GNS, in western Libya [→ Qatar and Saudi Arabia]. US Special Ops intervened in Misrata on October 29 to detain an individual linked to the 09/12/2012 attack against the US Consulate in Benghazi. riv

MOROCCO (POLISARIO / WESTERN SAHARA)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 1975

Conflict parties: POLISARIO, Sahrawi protesters vs. government
Conflict items: secession

The violent crisis over the secession of Western Sahara between the Popular Front of the Liberation of Saguia al-Hamra and Rio de Oro (POLISARIO), claiming to represent the Sahrawi people inhabiting Western Sahara, as well as Sahrawi people living in the Moroccan parts of the disputed territories, on the one hand, and the government, on the other, continued. The Moroccan government continued to claim Western Sahara on grounds of the pre-colonial borders of the kingdom, and Sahrawi protesters and POLISARIO continued to uphold their demands for self-determination. In April, the UNSC unanimously adopted a resolution, calling for renewed talks between the government and POLISARIO. As in previous years, the proposed referendum over Western Saharan independence, which is part of MINURSO's mandate, was not implemented.

Throughout the year, demonstrators in different parts of Western Sahara protested alleged civil rights violations by the Moroccan government against the Sahrawi people. For example, on January 1, Moroccan police forces dispersed a protest of Sahrawis in the city of Al Ayun. The protesters demanded respect for their right to self-determination and independence, and also called for the release of all political Sahrawi prisoners. On July 19, the Moroccan Appeal Court in Rabat sentenced 23 Sahrawis to prison sentences between 20 years and life imprisonment, after they had previously been handed similar sentences by a military court. They were convicted for their alleged violent conduct against Moroccan security forces during protests in Gdeim Izik, Western Sahara, in 2010. Several of the condemned accused Moroccan authorities of having forced them to confess by use of torture. Morocco's alleged activities in the territorial waters off the coast of Western Sahara remained an issue. On May 3, South African authorities stopped a Moroccan ship carrying phosphates, due to a complaint issued by POLISARIO. On November 22, the POLISARIO Secretary General leader Brahim Ghali sent a letter to UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, condemning the alleged looting of natural resources in the Sahrawi parts of Western Sahara. Ghali argued that these activities would violate the right of the Sahrawi people to self-determination, a central part of the UN peace process agreed in 1991. The Moroccan government asserted that these activities were part of geomorphological studies in the area of Western Sahara.

According to Mauritanian observers, POLISARIO re-entered

Guerguerat in the buffer strip between Mauritania and the disputed southern West Sahara provinces on around December 17 to exercise military operations.

The Moroccan government continued to address the conflict internationally. In February, Morocco re-entered the AU after 30 years, despite the membership of the partially recognized Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR). According to diplomatic sources from within the AU, the Moroccan government was allegedly trying to limit SADR-influence within the AU. On October 27, Moroccan authorities expelled a delegation from the European Parliament's Group for Western Sahara. The group had been sent to assess the human rights situation in the disputed areas. sge; nsk

OMAN (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: 1 | Change: • | Start: 2011

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

The dispute between opposition groups and the government under Sultan Qaboos, over the orientation of the political system, continued.

On April 15 and 17, the Internal Security Service arrested blogger Khalid al-Ramadani and human rights advocate Ahmed al-Bahri. On the World Press Freedom Day on May 3, the independent online magazine "Mowaten" was relaunched for the first time after its deliberate shutdown in early 2016, due to the imprisonment of two of its journalists and the flight of its chief editor to the UK. The same day, the government shut it down again, after which the website remained closed in Oman and several other Gulf states. On May 23, a court in the capital Muscat sentenced the writer Mansour al-Mahrazi to three years in prison for insulting the sultan and undermining the prestige of the state.

In 2016, the Minister of Information shut down the independent Azamn newspaper and three of its senior editors were arrested. A court of appeal in Muscat had revoked the minister's directive on 12/26/2016, allowing Azamn to reopen. In 2017, the editor-in-chief Ibrahim al-Maamari and his deputy Yousuf al-Haj were released from prison on April 10 and October 23, respectively. The minister, however, renewed his directive to shut down the newspaper on May 8. After a ruling by the Supreme Court, the newspaper was ultimately forced to close on October 5. son

QATAR – SAUDI ARABIA ET AL.

Intensity: 2 | Change: **NEW** | Start: 2017

Conflict parties: Qatar vs. Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, Egypt
Conflict items: international power

A non-violent crisis over international power erupted between Qatar, on the one hand, and Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Egypt, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), on the other. The

conflict mainly revolved around Qatar's alleged interference in their internal affairs, its relations to Iran, and its alleged financial support for Islamist groups, notably the Muslim Brotherhood. The conflict intensity was driven by an import embargo imposed on Qatar in June. In the night from May 23 to 24, hackers attacked the website of the state-run Qatar News Agency, publishing an article in which the Emir of Qatar called Iran an "Islamic power". As a reaction, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Egypt, and the UAE cut their diplomatic relations with Qatar and imposed a sea and air blockade on the country on June 5, which led to a temporary food shortage. They justified the measure by accusing Qatar of sponsoring international terrorism and threatening regional security. Given that Qatar had been importing 80 percent of its food supplies from other Gulf countries prior to the conflict, Iran, Turkey, and European countries intervened by launching food airlifts. In mid-July, anonymous US intelligence officials alleged the UAE for either having carried out the hacks themselves or having contracted hackers to do so.

On June 22, the four states issued a ten-day ultimatum to Qatar, with a list of demands to be met for a lift of the blockade. The demands included the shutdown of Qatari media outlets, such as al-Jazeera, the rollback of diplomatic ties with Iran, and an end to the alleged support of Islamist groups. Qatar rejected all accusations and refused to accept the demands. For months, Kuwait mediated between the conflict parties who refused to communicate directly. On December 4, the Emir of Kuwait invited Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and the UAE to the annual Gulf Cooperation Council Summit in the capital Kuwait City, which constituted the first official direct communication between both sides since the eruption of the dispute. The meeting did not produce any tangible results and was terminated prematurely.

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SAUDI ARABIA (SHIITES)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 1979

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

The violent crisis over the orientation of the political system between the Shiite minority and the government continued. The police arrested Shiite citizens, raided villages in Qatif region, Eastern Province, where the majority of Shiites lived, and executed Shiite citizens for their anti-regime activities. Throughout the year, at least three soldiers, four police officers, and 25 civilians were killed, four civilians executed, and at least 31 injured. As in previous years, the government conducted similar measures against non-Shiite oppositional actors throughout the country [→ Saudi Arabia (opposition)]. After the mid-January death of detainee Mohammad Razi al-Hasawi in Dammam prison, Eastern Province, people protested for the release of political prisoners in his hometown al-Awamiyah, Eastern Province, on January 25. Between March 7 and 14, two policemen, two alleged terrorists, and one civilian died in police raids in the Qatif region. On March 28, soldiers raided the lands of executed Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr's relatives in al-Rames east of al-Awamiyah, killing two

of his cousins, injuring several people and arresting four others.

On May 10, the government started demolishing the historical al-Musawara neighborhood of the Shiite al-Awamiyah supposedly as part of an urban development project there. Later on during the project, the Ministry of Interior released footage supposedly showing "terrorist groups" attacking policemen and reconstruction personnel. As a consequence, clashes broke out between government forces and Shiite locals. In and around the neighborhood, between ten and 28 civilians and soldiers died, approx. 30 people were injured, and hundreds fled the town. On May 26, the Specialized Criminal Court sentenced 14 Shiites to death for participating in 2011 anti-regime demonstrations in the Eastern Province. Human Rights Watch (HRW), Amnesty International, and ten Nobel laureates condemned the rulings.

On July 11, four Shiites were executed for the same reason. On July 29, UK human rights groups demanded that Canada stop arms sales to Saudi Arabia. Previously, reports had shown that Canadian armored vehicles were being used against Shiite civilians in al-Awamiyah. On September 4, the Eastern Province municipality declared it had finalized the first part of the redevelopment project in al-Musawara and demolished 488 houses. On September 26, HRW reported that Saudi state clerics and institutions were inciting hatred and discrimination against the Shiite minority.

On November 4, the government announced stricter anti-terror laws, which would make it easier to impose death penalties on convicted militants as well as prison sentences on those funding them. The country's counter-terrorism policies have frequently been criticized by the international community. For instance, on May 4, the UN Special Rapporteur on counter-terrorism and human rights had already demanded that Saudi Arabia review its 2014 counter-terror law, as it did not comply with international standards.

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SYRIA (INTER-OPPOSITION RIVALRY)

Intensity: 5 | Change: • | Start: 2013

Conflict parties: Hayat Tahrir al-Sham vs. Ahrar al-Sham vs. Islamist groups vs. FSA
Conflict items: system/ideology, subnational predominance, resources



The war over resources, subnational predominance, and the orientation of the political system between the Free Syrian Army (FSA), various moderate and Islamist groups such as Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), and Ahrar al-Sham continued.

While the groups fought jointly against the government or so-called Islamic State (IS) on several occasions, tensions between Islamist and moderate groups as well as between different Islamist militias persisted [→ Syria (opposition); Syria, Iraq et al. (IS)].

On January 23, Jabhat Fateh al-Sham, formerly known as al-Nusra Front, attacked headquarters and positions of the FSA faction Jaish al-Mujahideen in the opposition-held west Aleppo countryside, eponymous governorate, and neighboring Idlib Governorate. Subsequently, the other FSA factions, Ahrar al-Sham and further militias took up arms against Jabhat Fateh al-Sham. One day later, the latter accused opposition groups that were simultaneously attending the first round of peace talks in Astana, Kazakhstan, of "conspiring against the group", primarily because the planned de-escalation zones between opposition groups and the government excluded Islamist groups like Jabhat Fateh al-Sham. On January 28, the latter, as well as Ansar al-Din Front, Jaish al-Sunna, Liwa al-Haqq and the Nour al-Din al-Zenki Movement merged into HTS. Until the end of January, at least 50 people were killed in the fighting between opposition groups.

After a meeting to solve their disputes on February 13, HTS and Liwa al-Aqsa, former Jund al-Aqsa, targeted one another in a series of suicide attacks, car bombs, and arrests near Jund-controlled Kafr Zeita, Hama Governorate, and Khan Sheikhoun, Idlib Governorate. According to state media, 50 people were killed. While preparing to retreat from Khan Sheikhoun, Liwa al-Aqsa executed 160 imprisoned FSA and HTS fighters on February 14. Eight days later, the last of Liwa al-Aqsa's 2,100 fighters left their final positions in Khan Sheikhoun, to join IS in Raqqqa Governorate, after a negotiated withdrawal deal with HTS and the Turkistan Islamic Party.

After Jaish al-Islam had attacked the local headquarters of HTS on April 28, fighting between Jaish al-Islam, on the one side, and Rahman Legion and HTS, on the other, erupted in the opposition-held region of East Ghouta, Rif Dimashq Governorate. One day later, masked gunmen stormed a hospital operated by Médecins Sans Frontières in the town of Hazzeh and forced the organization to suspend its activities in the area. On April 30, Jaish al-Islam announced it would fight against HTS and warned Rahman Legion not to support HTS. However, HTS, allied with Rahman Legion and Ahrar al-Sham, captured the towns of Jisrin and Hazzeh after heavy clashes on the same day. Around 3,000 residents of Arbin demonstrated against the fighting. A Jaish al-Islam fighter opened fire on the protesters, killing one and injuring 14. The attack was later condemned by the group. By the end of the month, the fighting had left at least 120 dead, among them 30 civilians. On May 1, Jaish al-Islam fighters entered the town of Zamalka, clashing with Rahman Legion and HTS. While Jaish al-Islam retook the town of Beit Sawa from Rahman Legion on May 3, HTS and Rahman Legion recaptured large parts of Arbin from Jaish al-Islam one day later. Subsequently, Jaish al-Islam announced to end fighting against HTS. Four days later, Jaish al-Islam once again declared war on HTS and the Rahman Legion. On May 11, Rahman Legion raided the headquarters of Ahrar al-Sham in Arbin and captured 15 of their fighters, followed by clashes. On May 15, Jaish al-Islam stormed HTS and Rahman Legion bases in the towns of Beit Sawa and Al-Asha'ari. On the same day, Jaish al-Islam also made progress against Rahman Legion in the outskirts of Hamouriyah. On May 30, Jaish al-Islam captured the Ashari farms from HTS and Rahman Legion but failed to secure the farms and were forced to retreat one day later, due to a counter-attack by the Rahman Legion. Ongoing clashes until the end of May left at least 400 dead, and caused the divide of the East Ghouta

region into two zones, controlled by each side respectively. 400 families were reportedly displaced.

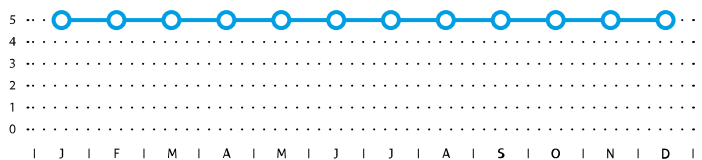
On July 18, fighting between HTS and Ahrar al-Sham erupted in the town of Iblin, Idlib Governorate, after the latter raised the Syrian revolutionary flag in the city. The incident led to further fighting all over the Idlib Governorate. Two days later, one of HTS' founding groups, the Nour al-Din al-Zenki Movement, and its approx. 7,000 fighters defected from HTS and declared itself independent, stating HTS's unwillingness to stop inter-oppositional fighting as its grounds. During fighting that lasted until July 23, HTS completely captured Idlib city, the Bab al-Hawa border crossing to Turkey, and almost all areas on the Turkish border. At least 90 people were killed. On August 6, following internal disputes, about 120 Ahrar al-Sham fighters in Arbin, Rif Dimashq Governorate, defected to al-Rahman Legion. Ahrar al-Sham accused the Rahman Legion of seizing their weapons. Reportedly, HTS had sided with Ahrar al-Sham against al-Rahman Legion in the following clashes. A ceasefire agreement between al-Rahman Legion and Ahrar al-Sham was implemented on August 9. In the aftermath, inter-oppositional fightings declined throughout the country as a result of new offensives by the government. ska

SYRIA (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: 5 | Change: • | Start: 2011

Conflict parties: NC, FSA, Hayat Tahrir al-Scham, Ahrar al-Sham vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology, national power



The war over national power and the orientation of the political system between opposition groups and the government of President Bashar al-Assad continued for the seventh consecutive year.

The opposition mainly consisted of the National Coalition for the Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces (NC), its military wing the Free Syrian Army (FSA), and Islamist umbrella groups, such as Ahrar al-Sham and Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS). The latter was formed in a merger of Jabhat Fateh al-Sham, formerly al-Nusra Front, the Ansar al-Din Front, Jaysh al-Sunna, Liwa al-Haqq, and the Nour al-Din al-Zenki Movement, on January 28. The government, with its Syrian Arab Army (SAA), was supported by Iran, various Shiite militias from Syria and neighboring countries, most prominently the Lebanon-based Hezbollah, and Russia. The latter has been supporting the government with airstrikes as well as ground forces since September 2015. Furthermore, the government, its allies, and opposition groups also fought against so-called Islamic State (IS). Fighting also took place between opposition groups [→Syria, Iraq et al. (IS); Syria (inter-opposition rivalry)].

The total number of fatalities since 2011 was disputed and varied from 300,000 to 481,000. In April 2016, UN Special

Envoy Staffan de Mistura estimated the total number of fatalities to be up to 400,000. As of December, at least 5.5 million people have sought refuge in neighboring countries, and 6.1 million have been internally displaced. On 12/23/16, President of Russia, Vladimir Putin, had announced that al-Assad, Iran, and Turkey had agreed on peace talks in the Kazakh capital of Astana. On 12/29/16, Turkey and Russia declared a countrywide ceasefire for Syria except for "terrorist organizations." The ceasefire collapsed throughout the country on February 14. The UN-brokered Geneva IV peace talks took place from February 23 to March 3 with no breakthrough.

Aleppo Governorate

On March 28, an agreement for the evacuation of four besieged towns in Syria was reached, including the two towns of al-Fu'ah and Kafriya in Idlib Governorate that were besieged by opposition forces. In exchange, it was agreed on that residents and opposition forces in Zabadani and Madaya, two towns under siege by government forces in Rif Dimashq Governorate, would be evacuated. On April 12, the agreement was implemented. Three days later, a convoy of buses carrying people from Al-Fu'ah and Kafriya to Aleppo was attacked by a suicide bomber in Rashideen district, killing at least 126 people.

In its northeastern offensive, from Hama Governorate, the SAA captured a strategic hilltop in the southern countryside of Aleppo, which led to the capture of the nearby town of al-Rashadiyah on November 24. Government troops then pushed out of Al-Rashadiyah, capturing four more nearby villages from opposition forces, and advancing to within 20 km of the Abu al-Duhur airbase, Idlib Governorate. By mid-December, the offensive had moved to southwestern Aleppo, with SAA capturing four villages and two hills between December 14 and 19. SAA's attempt to capture the village of al-Ramleh in the southeastern countryside of Aleppo Governorate was repelled on December 20, with HTS almost encircling the soldiers and killing six.

Hama and Idlib governorates

On March 21, opposition forces launched an offensive in northern Hama, when HTS suicide bombers detonated two car bombs on government positions in the town of Suran. In addition to Suran, the nearby villages of Maardis and Ma'an were attacked and all three of them were captured by HTS led militant groups by March 22. Reportedly, 6,000 HTS and allied militants were involved in the offensive. On March 23, HTS advanced to within 5 km of Hama city. One day later, six opposition groups led by Ahrar al-Sham launched a separate offensive, on the northwestern front of Hama, trying to surround and capture the town of Karnaz. Following the capture of three villages close to Karnaz, the militants were forced to retreat due to heavy artillery shelling. The same day, opposition forces attacked the town of Qomhana, north of Hama city. Following an attack by three suicide bombers, they managed to penetrate the town's defenses, and heavy fighting erupted. However, the attack was repelled after the SAA had encircled the militants inside Qomhana and expelled them. On March 28, Ahrar al-Sham launched another attack north of Mahardah, capturing the al-Qaramitah area. However, the attack was repelled later that day, as the SAA regained all the lost positions at al-Qaramitah and Sakhir. Three SAA tanks

were destroyed or damaged by BGM-71 TOW anti-tank missiles during the fighting. On March 31, SAA recaptured Khitab and five other villages along with several hills and checkpoints. They also reopened the highway between Hama and Mahardah and pushed oppositional fighters back to positions 11 km from Hama Military Airport.

On April 4, the HTS-controlled town of Khan Shaykhun, Idlib Governorate, was reportedly hit by a government airstrike, which caused massive chemical poisoning to the local population. According to the Idlib health authority, the release of toxic gases, including sarin or a similar gas, killed at least 74 people and injured approx. 560. The attack was the most fatal chemical weapons attack since the attack on East Ghouta in 2013. The OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism, the United States, United Kingdom, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, France, and Israel attributed the attack to government forces. The government denied using any chemical weapons in the airstrike. Russia stated that a Syrian aircraft had bombed a warehouse belonging to HTS which "may have contained a rebel chemical arms stockpile." On April 7, the US launched 59 cruise missiles at the governments' Shayrat Air Base, which they claimed to be the source of the alleged gas attack [→Syria – USA].

On April 16, following over 40 airstrikes against opposition supply lines, the SAA recaptured Suran after intense fighting, thereby reversing all gains made by the opposition during this year's offensive. Hours later, militants fired at least 40 Grad rockets towards Hama Military Airport, destroying a MIG-23 fighter jet and several ammunition depots. On April 20, heavy fighting erupted in the areas of Taybat al-Imam and Halfaya, as government forces tried to capture both towns. Over the previous two days, at least 400 airstrikes had been conducted in the northern Hama countryside. On April 22, SAA advanced on Taybat al-Imam and captured Halfaya the next day. These advances left government forces in control of all areas they had lost in an opposition offensive in late 2016. On April 28, opposition assaults in the region were repelled and the frontline stabilized. On May 5, a Russia-brokered ceasefire came into effect in four regions of Syria, including northern Hama and Idlib, and fighting paused.

On September 19, HTS, alongside the Turkistan Islamic Party in Syria and FSA, launched an offensive on pro-government positions monitoring the de-escalation process in Idlib. The opposition forces initially captured the villages of al-Qahirah, al-Shatheh, al-Tulaysiyah, and al-Talah al-Sawdaa in the northeastern countryside of Hama. Due to back-and-forth fighting, the villages changed hands several times and government forces recaptured all of the villages by September 22. Reportedly, 66 militants and 38 soldiers were killed during the offensive, and more than 40 civilians were killed over two days in approx. 500 airstrikes on 40 towns and villages in Hama and Idlib governorates. Russia conducted air and cruise missile strikes against HTS targets, reportedly including a large training camp in Nayrab, Idlib. On September 23, Russian airstrikes targeted opposition forces in Idlib and Hama governorates, including a Faylaq al-Sham headquarter in the area of Tal Mardiqh, Idlib, killing at least 45 militants. On September 27, another 43 deaths were reported in towns in Idlib, including Khan Shaykhun and Jisr al-Shughur, as a result of airstrikes. One day later, pro-opposition Syria Civil Defence reported that at least 152 civilians had been killed

in the bombings of the last days and that six hospitals had been targeted. The airstrikes stopped on September 29. HTS launched an attack northeast of Hama, capturing al-Msherfeh and other nearby areas on October 6. However, SAA recaptured most of the territory the next day, with the exceptions of al-Msherfeh and Tal Aswad. At least twelve militants and eight government soldiers died. On November 6, HTS alongside Jaysh al-Izza, Jaysh al-Nasr, and the Central Division started a large-scale offensive, capturing three villages in the northern countryside of Hama. However, two days later, two villages were recaptured by the SAA. On November 21, SAA advanced to positions close to the village of Rahjan. By this point, the military had captured 29 villages in the Hama countryside during the offensive. Between December 3 and 5, the army made three attempts to capture Rahjan, each time managing to enter the town before being pushed back. Government forces advanced in Idlib Governorate, capturing half a dozen villages on 9 and 10 December. SAA captured an Air Defense Battalion base and the hilltop of Tell al-Aswad, Idlib, on December 26. On the same day, HTS shot down a Syrian Arab Air Forces L-39 Albatross using a Strela-2 MANPADS in Hama, capturing the pilot and later executing him. Russian airstrikes were reported on December 28 and 29 alongside heavy fighting in the strategically important village of Abu Dali in southern Idlib. SAA reported a breakthrough against rebel forces on December 28, capturing three villages, and entering Abu Dali, which had allegedly been abandoned by opposition forces. UNHCR reported on 1/4/18 that more than 60,000 people had fled their homes in Hama and Idlib between November 1 and December 24 due to the fighting.

Latakia Governorate

On December 31, Russia's Hmeimim Air Base, central headquarters for its operations in Syria, was hit by a mortar attack that killed two Russian soldiers. Reportedly, two Su-35 and four Su-24 fighter jets were severely damaged and rendered inoperable. Russia, however, denied these reports.

Homs Governorate

On February 25, HTS suicide bombers attacked the headquarters of the Syrian military intelligence in Homs city, killing dozens of security officers. In response, the opposition-held neighborhood of al-Waer was bombed by the Syrian Air Force, wounding at least 50. The UN condemned the attacks and called them "deliberate" attempts to stall the ongoing peace negotiations in Geneva.

On May 7, the SAA and Iranian-backed militias launched an attack on the FSA in the Sabaa Biyar area in south-eastern Homs Governorate. One day later, SAA advanced about 45 km and captured several sites east of the Al-Seen Airbase. On May 18, government forces were getting close to al-Tanf and reached positions in a distance of approx. 27 km from the town, close to the Jordanian border, when the convoy was hit by US-led coalition airstrike. According to the US, the troops had been warned of coming too close to coalition forces stationed at al-Tanf but had not responded. Several vehicles were destroyed, including two tanks, and eight soldiers were killed. One day later, pro-government forces captured Zarqa junction near al-Tanf. On May 30, SAA, alongside the National Defense Forces and Iraqi militias, captured the Helba area in south-eastern Homs, getting as close as 50 km to the border with Iraq. One

day later, FSA launched a counter-offensive and fired BM-21 Grad rockets at government forces. In response, the Syrian and Russian air forces conducted airstrikes against the opposition forces. On June 9, government forces advanced eastwards around 70 km northeast of al-Tanf, reaching the Syrian-Iraqi border for the first time since 2015. The advance also blocked opposition groups off from the Deir ez-Zor Governorate.

Rif Dimashq Governorate

On January 2, opposition groups announced they would disengage from planned talks after alleged ceasefire violations by government forces in the Wadi Barada valley near the capital Damascus. The government stated that the region had been excluded from the ceasefire because of the presence of Fatah al-Sham, later HTS. However, their presence there was denied by local sources. By the end of January, government forces managed to capture Wadi Barada and thereby restored water supply to Damascus. Hezbollah, the Lebanese Armed Forces, and the SAA launched a major operation on July 21 to capture the positions of HTS and IS fighters on the Lebanon-Syria border [→ Lebanon (Islamist militants)]. Two days later, SAA captured 36 square miles of terrain on the Syrian side of the border.

On November 28, government forces started an offensive on the HTS-controlled Beit Jinn, southwest of Damascus and near the Golan Heights. On December 1, a government helicopter was shot down by HTS, grounding all helicopter airstrikes in the area until the end of the offensive. On December 14, SAA launched an offensive against HTS on the tallest hilltop in the area, Tal Al-Bayda. They captured the area after HTS had pulled back to the west. By December 16, the HTS-held pocket was almost cut in half. Five days later, Beit Jinn was completely encircled by government troops. On December 25, following advances of pro-government forces, negotiations for a surrender of HTS started. After an agreement had been reached, the evacuation of fighters and their families to opposition-held Idlib and parts of Daraa Governorate began on December 29.

Damascus Governorate

On February 18, SAA started an offensive to capture the HTS-controlled suburbs of Qabun and Barzeh, launching rockets and heavy artillery fire on HTS positions. Following the refusal of HTS to surrender after six days of long negotiations, SAA resumed the shelling of HTS positions on February 24. Two days later, SAA started a ground assault and reportedly captured the majority of the farm area between Qaboun and Barzeh. This was followed by a week-long artillery campaign on HTS positions. On March 19, opposition forces, comprising HTS, FSA, and al-Rahman Legion, from outside the Qaboun and Barzeh area launched an attack on SAA positions to link Jobar district with Qaboun and Barzeh. After fierce fighting, SAA forces pushed back militants from positions the latter had gained in their attempted offensive. According to the SAA, 72 soldiers and at least 80 rebel fighters were killed. On April 28, intense inter-opposition fighting erupted in the Eastern Ghouta region, with Jaysh al-Islam fighters attacking HTS and al-Rahman Legion forces. Concurrently, the army once again advanced in Qaboun. On May 12, an agreement was reached to evacuate opposition fighters and their family

members from Barzeh and the Tishreen neighborhood. By the end of the day, about 700 rebels and family members were evacuated to opposition-held areas of East Ghouta. From June 14 to 18, the Syrian and Russian air forces launched dozens of airstrikes on Jobar to prepare for a ground offensive. Subsequently, government forces started a major military operation in Jobar, a opposition stronghold in eastern Damascus, on June 20. One day later, the military reportedly made advances in both Jobar and the Ain Terma area. On June 29, SAA captured the Ayn Tarma junction, threatening to disrupt the opposition's main supply route to Jobar. Government airstrikes continued throughout mid-July on Ayn Tarma, Hazazah, and Zamalka as part of the offensive on Jobar. On July 22, a ceasefire was brokered for the East Ghouta region by Egypt, Russia, Jaysh al-Islam, and Syria's Tomorrow Movement. Al-Rahman Legion and HTS were excluded from the ceasefire. One day later, Ayn Tarma, Harasta, Arbeen, and Douma were hit by several airstrikes. Further clashes in Jobar between al-Rahman Legion and SAA erupted overnight between July 25 and 26. Reportedly, SAA made advances at the al-Manasher roundabout of Jobar on August 12. One day later, a tunnel bomb blast killed at least 16 soldiers in Jobar district. On September 28, an underground tunnel complex was blown up by al-Rahman Legion, resulting in massive destruction in the western part of Ayn Tarma and the death of 45 soldiers, as well as injuries to dozens more. On October 15, opposition fighters shelled the Old City of Damascus, killing four people and injuring nine. SAA responded with airstrikes on Misraba, Saqba, and Ayn Tarma. On November 14, opposition forces, led by Ahrar al-Sham, launched an assault against SAA positions in the Harasta suburb. Two positions had been captured by militants the following morning, but were reportedly regained by the army in the evening, amid Russian airstrikes on opposition positions. The government considered the attack a violation of the Russian-brokered de-escalation zones implemented in May. In retaliation, airstrikes and mortar shelling hit the towns of Harasta, Irbin, Mesraba, Hamouriyah, and Saqba in Eastern Ghouta region. At least eight civilians were killed and approx 94 wounded. The WHO reported that 84 people were killed and 659 injured between November 14 and 17. Government aircrafts allegedly bombed a crowded market in Misraba as part of its attack on rebel positions on November 26, killing at least 16 civilians. According to pro-opposition sources, over 400 airstrikes were conducted on Eastern Ghouta from November 14 to 30, leaving at least 127 people dead. Harasta and other opposition-held parts of Eastern Ghouta were considered to be suffering from a humanitarian crisis during the fighting. Residents were "so short of food that they are eating trash, fainting from hunger and forcing their children to eat on alternate days", the UN WFP stated. On December 29, Ahrar al-Sham, HTS, and al-Rahman Legion seized over 50 buildings west of a base in Harasta, cutting off all supply lines and killing 47 soldiers and National Defence Forces militiamen. According to the UN, the government and Russia began a new air and land offensive on December 31 to gain ground in Eastern Ghouta.

Suwayda Governorate

On May 18, SAA and the National Defense Forces militia advanced 35 km into opposition-held areas in eastern Suwayda Governorate. Two days later, SAA and allies captured the

al-Zuluf area. In response to the government advances, FSA groups in the area launched an operation to fight the pro-government forces. On May 22, the army captured the Al-Rahbeh area, 25 km north of the Zuluf dam. SAA also managed to secure 70 km of the Syrian-Jordanian border. These advances brought the government forces close to completely encircling and cutting off opposition forces in the southeastern part of Damascus governorate from their allies in and around Al-Tanf, Homs.

On July 10, SAA and Iranian-backed militias launched an assault on eight opposition-held villages east of Khalkhalah airbase in a mainly Druze inhabited desert area, capturing the hilltop of Tal al-Asfar. Simultaneously, they launched further assaults on opposition positions in Suwayda and Rif-Dimashq governorates near al-Seen airbase. During the first day of the renewed push, government forces captured 3,000 square km of territory from opposition groups. Until July 13, SAA and allied forces captured an additional 200 square km, advancing within 20 km of completely encircling a large opposition-held desert area in eastern Suwayda and Rif-Dimashq governorates.

Daraa Governorate

Several opposition groups formed the al-Bunyan al-Marsous Operations Room (BM) in June 2016, comprising several Southern Front factions and Islamist groups such as Jaish al-Islam, Ahrar al-Sham, and a small HTS contingent. Between February 12 and 15, BM started its first phase of an attack on Daraa city. HTS launched two car bombs on government positions, claiming to have killed four soldiers. The Syrian army answered with artillery and lob bombs. On March 5, SAA launched a new counter-attack and reportedly captured several buildings in al-Bilad, taking advantage of reduced opposition manpower, which was shifted to repel an IS offensive in the region. On March 16, SAA attacked multiple opposition-held districts of the city, reportedly killing at least 14 militants. Nine days later, the government resumed its attack, using artillery and missiles. According to pro-government sources, these destroyed three bases and killed 20 militants. On April 4, BM launched a new eight-day assault on the southern and western parts of Manshiyah district. BM detonated a car bomb inside the government-held parts of Manshiyah on April 6, forcing the SAA to retreat. During the fighting, BM seized three buildings which had served as headquarter for the SAA. By April 15, BM was in control of approx. 70 to 90 percent of Manshiyah. On May 5, a Russia-brokered ceasefire came into effect in four regions of Syria, including Daraa, and fighting paused.

However, fighting broke out again on May 17. Pro-government media reported a failed opposition offensive, in which two HTS and one FSA commander were killed. In late May, despite Russia's declaration of a de-escalation zone in the area, multiple airstrikes on Daraa were reported. On June 2, BM reported a new government offensive and fierce fighting, but no territorial changes, while one day later pro-government sources reported that a new opposition attack in Manshiyah had been repelled. 31 fighters were killed on both sides. On June 7, the SAA started an offensive with more than 20 airstrikes, as well as surface-to-surface missiles, hitting the opposition controlled areas of al-Balad and al-Sad Road. A

ceasefire agreement was reached on July 7. However, sporadic fighting continued.

Quneitra Governorate

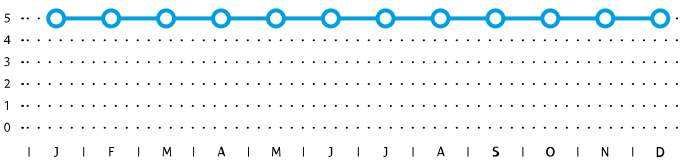
Throughout the year, cross border shelling towards Israeli-occupied territory in the Golan Heights caused by clashes between SAA, opposition groups, and IS led to several attacks on the SAA by the Israeli Defence Forces [→ Israel – Syria]. For example, on June 24, fighters of HTS and FSA launched an attack on SAA positions in Madinat al-Baath, also known as Baath City. During the attack, Israeli combat jets bombed SAA positions at the entrance of the town. According to Israeli officials, this was in retaliation for a rocket fire that had hit Israeli-controlled territory. ska

SYRIA, IRAQ ET AL. (IS)

Intensity: 5 | Change: • | Start: 2014

Conflict parties: IS vs. Egypt, Yemen, Turkey, Lebanon, Iraq, Syria, Libya, Hezbollah, Syrian opposition groups, YPG, al-Houthi, et al.

Conflict items: system/ideology, international power, resources



The war over the orientation of the international system and the control of resources such as oil between so-called Islamic State (IS), on the one hand, and Syria and Iraq as well as other governments and several militant groups, on the other, continued.

Following its founding on 06/29/14 by Iraqi citizen Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, IS had brought under its control large territories in Syria and Iraq. It has also claimed the caliphate, implemented its interpretation of Sharia law, and set up state-like administration as well as social services. Due to large-scale mobilization on social media, foreign fighters from over a hundred countries have joined the group. IS expanded its operations to Afghanistan, Lebanon, Egypt, Libya, and Algeria in 2014, followed by Yemen, Tunisia, and Turkey in 2015, as well as Saudi-Arabia in 2016. Outside the Middle East and Maghreb region, IS operated in Pakistan [→ Pakistan (Islamist militant groups)]. Various militant groups in the Middle East and Maghreb, and other parts of the world, pledged allegiance to IS, including an al-Shabaab faction, a Boko Haram faction, the Caucasus Emirate, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan as well as Taliban splinter groups, Jemaah Islamiyah, Abu Sayyaf, and Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters [→ Somalia (ISS); Nigeria (Boko Haram); Russia (Islamist militants / Northern Caucasus); Afghanistan (Taliban et al.); Tajikistan (Islamist militant groups); Indonesia (Islamist militant groups); Philippines (Abu Sayyaf); Philippines (BIFF, BIFM – MILF, government). In order to halt the advances of IS, a US-led coalition had started to launch air strikes in Iraq in August 2014, expanding oper-

ations to Syria under the name "Operation Inherent Resolve" one month later. Russia justified its military intervention in Syria starting in September 2015 as a fight against radical Islamist militants, referring to IS and then al-Qaeda affiliated Jabhat al-Nusra, now Hayat Tahrir al-Sham [→ Syria (opposition)]. In 2016, Turkey intervened in Syria and pushed IS back from its border. The significant territorial losses in Syria and Iraq by IS in 2016 continued in 2017. (ska)

SYRIA

In the Aleppo Governorate, IS mainly clashed with government forces, Free Syrian Army (FSA) fighters, and Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) fighters. Moreover, Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) continued the military operation "Euphrates Shield" in cooperation with FSA. The aim of the operation was to clear the border region from IS militants and to prevent the Kurdish People's Protection Unit (YPG), which were part of the SDF, from controlling the northern part of Syria.

In the first two weeks of January, TAF and FSA advanced towards the IS-controlled town of al-Bab with tanks, artillery fire and warplanes. According to the Turkish military, at least 100 IS fighters were killed and dozens injured. Russian warplanes conducted airstrikes against IS positions in the nearby town of Tadeh on January 13, and on al-Bab on January 16 and 17. On January 18, Russia and Turkey started a joint air operation against IS in al-Bab. Between January 22 and 25, government troops and allied militias advanced from eastern Aleppo Governorate towards al-Bab, seizing several villages.

In a joint operation between February 2 and 8, TAF and the US-led coalition attacked IS in and around al-Bab. The US-led coalition conducted several airstrikes, while Turkey-backed FSA fighters clashed with IS, leaving at least 200 IS fighters dead. After FSA had seized most parts of al-Bab on February 23, IS suicide bombers killed 59 people, including two Turkish soldiers, and wounded 40 in two separate attacks in and around al-Bab one day later. Clashes between government forces and IS continued until June in eastern and south-eastern Aleppo. After weeks of heavy clashes, government forces seized the Jirah airbase on May 12, and continued their advance towards the town of Maskanah, seizing it on June 3. Towards the end of June, government forces cleared the Ithriya-Resafa Highway in southern Aleppo, forcing IS to withdraw completely from Aleppo to ar-Raqqa Governorate by June 30.

In ar-Raqqa Governorate, the SDF, backed by the US-led coalition, seized the city of Raqqa throughout the year. From November 2016 to February 2017, the outskirts of the city of Raqqa were retaken, including the strategically important Tabqa Dam. On May 22, SDF cut off the last supply route to Raqqa city. Supported by US-led air strikes and additional arms deliveries, SDF forces captured the western neighborhoods of al-Mashlab and Sabahiya on June 11, following a ten-day offensive. High numbers of civilian deaths and refugee movements were reported. By mid-June, SDF announced that 312 IS fighters have been killed since the beginning of the offensive. Also the UN's Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria has stated that, before the beginning of June, approx. 160,000 civilians were internally displaced. On July 3, entering Raqqa from the south, SDF moved towards the center of the city, gaining control of several neighborhoods such as al-Sinaaya, al-Hetin, and

al-Roumaniyah by mid-July. One day later, SDF fighters managed to enter Raqqa's Old City. On July 24, SDF also began to target the neighborhoods of al-Muazzafin, al-Hamra and Nazlat Shehada. US-led coalition air strikes reportedly killed 29 people in Raqqa on July 26. Despite SDF's seizures, fighting continued in the city, leading the US-led coalition to increase the airstrikes. By the end of July, SDF forces controlled about half of Raqqa. On August 12, the SDF's eastern and western fronts merged in the south of the city, cutting off IS's access to the Euphrates. Shortly after, SDF spokesman Talal Silo announced that 60 percent of the city was under their control. On August 17, five SDF and 78 IS fighters were reportedly killed in fightings. In early September, SDF controlled all of Raqqa's Old City and evacuated a large number of civilians. By the end of the month, SDF stated that they had seized 80 percent of the city, after IS had withdrawn from key neighborhoods in the north. On October 17, SDF announced that Raqqa was now completely under their control.

In Homs Governorate, clashes between government troops and their allies, on the one hand, and IS, on the other, continued. After IS had seized the city of Palmyra on 12/11/2016, the group attempted to advance towards the Tayfur military airport, which was countered by Russian airstrikes and led to heavy clashes with pro-government fighters between January 16 and 19. At least 40 government soldiers and 18 IS fighters were reportedly killed. On March 2, the Syrian government recaptured the city of Palmyra with the support of Hezbollah, Iranian militias and Russian airstrikes, forcing IS to retreat eastwards.

In the same month, government forces recaptured the Jazal gas field, the al-Amriyah mountains northeast of Palmyra, the Mashrou Subkhat area, and the al-Antar mountains. An IS counter-attack at military outposts on al-Mazar mountain and nearby gas fields was thwarted on March 23, whereby 24 IS fighters were left dead and twelve wounded. On April 27, Russian-backed pro-government forces seized the al-Shaer gas fields as well as the Arak gas field on June 14. In the next two months, heavy clashes continued. The government recaptured the Hayl gas field in mid-July and after a week of clashes the town of Sukhna on August 13. According to state sources, at least 80 IS fighters were killed and wounded in the fight over Sukhna, while IS claimed to have killed 70 soldiers. Between August 18 and 23, Hezbollah and government troops conducted a joint operation to clear the Lebanon bordering Western Qalamoun Mountains from IS. Meanwhile, the Lebanese Armed Forces conducted the Operation Fajr al-Jaroud on the Lebanese side of the border region to clear it from IS fighters. On August 24, IS asked for negotiations concerning their withdrawal. Both sides agreed that IS would hand over the bodies of Hezbollah fighters, one Iranian fighter and one Hezbollah captive. In turn, Hezbollah and pro-government forces would transfer the remaining 308 IS fighters and 331 family members to the IS-held town of al-Bukamal, Deir ez-Zor Governorate. The transfer was interrupted by US-led coalition airstrikes on August 30, who criticized the move. On September 2, state sources said that they had fulfilled their obligations of transferring the IS fighters "without exposing them". On October 1, IS fighters captured the town of Qaryatayn in Eastern Qalamoun. After government forces had recaptured the town on October 21, they found the bodies of 70 civilians killed by IS for allegedly

cooperating with the government. As IS retreated from the town they abducted dozens of civilians. 27 of them escaped and returned on October 29.

In Deir ez-Zor Governorate, Russian-backed government troops, Hezbollah, and other Shiite fighters attacked IS positions throughout the year, mainly operating south of the Euphrates river. The US-backed SDF started an operation against IS on February 21, advancing from al-Hasakah Governorate down to the Euphrates and seizing several oil and gas fields as well as villages from IS.

On January 14, IS started an offensive to fully capture Deir ez-Zor city. Twelve soldiers and 20 IS fighters were killed during clashes. As a response, Russia heavily bombarded IS positions between January 14 and 25. Some airstrikes were conducted from Russian soil, using Tu-22 strategic bombers. Heavy airstrikes and clashes on the ground continued in Deir ez-Zor city until pro-government fighters seized the remaining IS-held neighborhoods on November 2. For instance, 180 IS fighters were killed between June 6 and 8 near the city by Russian airstrikes and on August 21, about 200 IS fighters heading to Deir ez-Zor were killed by Russian airstrikes.

On September 9, the Tamer oil field in southern Deir ez-Zor was recaptured by pro-government forces. The next day, they secured the highway that connects Deir ez-Zor city to the capital Damascus, from IS as well as the highway linking Palmyra to Deir ez-Zor on September 29. Meanwhile, IS captured the town of al-Shoula, close to the Palmyra-Deir ez-Zor highway, killing at least ten Hezbollah fighters and 40 soldiers according to IS sources.

Starting in mid-September, government units and Iranian Shiite fighters, backed with Russian warplanes, conducted an attack to clear southern Deir ez-Zor, and recapture the town of al-Bukamal and the border area. After heavy clashes with IS beginning on October 4, pro-government forces retook al-Mayadeen on October 13. During the operation the Iranian commander Brigadier General Abdollah Khosravih from the special unit Fatehin of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) was killed. On October 26, pro-government forces seized the T2 pumping station close to al-Bukamal. On November 3, a spokesperson of an Iraqi Shiite militia, operating close to the Syrian border on the Iraqi side, announced to support the government seizure of al-Bukamal. The town was captured on November 19 with a joint force consisting of fighters from IRGC, Hezbollah, and Iraqi People's Mobilization Front militiamen. On November 13, six Chechen IS fighters wearing Russian uniforms infiltrated the Deir ez-Zor military airbase and staged a suicide bomb attack, killing at least 13 government forces and destroying several warplanes.

On February 21, the US-backed SDF alliance crossed from al-Hasakah into Deir ez-Zor, seizing a dozen villages from IS. In a further advance against IS, they cut the road linking ar-Raqqa and Deir ez-Zor on March 6. Between August 10 and 16, 200 US troops and 100 opposition fighters arrived in the town of Shaddadi, al-Hasakah, for operations in Deir ez-Zor. A group linked to the SDF, the Syrian Elite Forces were also deployed to al-Hasakah. Reportedly, on August 16 about 600 fighters deserted from the Syrian Elite Forces to conduct operations in Deir ez-Zor with local tribal forces. On August 25, the Deir ez-Zor military council acting under the SDF banner, announced that the operation to liberate the governorate from IS would begin soon. The military council consisted of

4,000 mostly local fighters. Between September 9 and 10, the SDF launched the operation to clear northern and eastern Deir ez-Zor from IS. On September 23, SDF fighters seized Conoco gas field and the Omar oil field on October 22. By end of November, roughly 2,000 SDF fighters had advanced to north of al-Bukamal. In the beginning of December, a joint operation room between Russia and SDF to clear IS from the border region was confirmed. Operations to clear Deir ez-Zor from IS continued until the rest of the year.

In Idlib Governorate, IS cells staged several suicide bomb attacks. On July 7, Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) arrested over 100 suspected IS fighters, seizing weapons, money and explosive belts. On July 23, a bomb was detonated at an HTS meeting in Idlib city, killing at least eleven people. The next day, HTS killed two suspected IS fighters in the city and accused IS of repeatedly staging bomb attacks against HTS. On November 30, HTS fighters who were fighting against IS cells in northern Hama, entered southern Idlib to continue the operation, killing five IS militants.

In Hama Governorate, government forces fought IS from May onwards, mostly in the eastern part of the governorate. On May 18, IS attacked the majority-Shiite towns Mabujjah and Aqarib al-Safiyah, killing at least 50 civilians. On the same day, government forces recaptured the town supported by Russian airstrikes.

In June, fighting between both sides concentrated especially around the town of Salameya, leading to no progress on either side. In July, pro-government forces started an offensive to seize the last IS-stronghold in Hama, Uqayribat district. On September 1, pro-government forces temporarily seized the town Uqairabat. During the clashes over 120 IS and 35 pro-government fighters were killed. On September 21, the government and IS agreed on a deal that would allow 1,500 IS fighters and civilians to leave Eastern Hama towards Idlib. Due to ongoing clashes, the deal was suspended the next day. Pro-government forces continuously advanced amidst mutual artillery shelling and Russian airstrikes, stating that it had ousted IS from the area. Starting on October 9, IS opened a new front as it attacked HTS in northern and eastern Hama, seizing 15 villages. Clashes between IS and HTS continued, both sides using artillery fire and anti-tank missiles. According to HTS sources, the group seized more than 30 villages from IS, killing 170, injuring 200, and capturing ten. On November 21, IS temporarily seized several villages in eastern Hama, using artillery fire and mortar shells. A week later, HTS announced to have retaken the village of Abu Ajwa, killing 24 IS fighters. A following IS advance in northeastern Hama by the end of November and December, enabled the group to enter southern Idlib.

In Rif Dimashq Governorate, IS attacked pro-government troops near the al-Seen airport, capturing several positions and killing 14 soldiers on February 1. Between March 23 and 28, opposition groups staged an offensive against IS, seizing several villages. Before the end of April, the groups launched an attack against IS in the eastern Qalamoun mountains, securing large swaths of land from IS. On July 12, IS members were arrested after clashes with opposition fighters in Babila town.

In Damascus Governorate, clashes between IS and pro-government troops as well as IS and HTS occasionally erupted, while IS used IEDs or suicide bombs in government-held ar-

eas. For instance, IS conducted a triple suicide car bomb attack against a police station in the al-Midan district, killing at least 15 policemen, on October 2. A similar attack was conducted on October 11, as IS fighters detonated three suicide vests close to the police headquarters in central Damascus, killing at least five and injuring six people. Two days later, the government conducted airstrikes against IS-positions in the Hajar al-Aswad district. Clashes occasionally erupted between IS and HTS as well as Jaish al-Islam in the Palestinian refugee camp of Yarmouk. A government deal from April that included HTS evacuation of the camp was not fulfilled. On August 2, IS forced civilians to leave some of the areas inside of the camp and declared a new "military zone" bordering the HTS-part of the camp. On November 12, the government closed the entrances into Yarmouk camp.

In Daraa Governorate, the IS-affiliated Jaysh Khalid ibn al-Walid repeatedly clashed with opposition groups throughout the year. Additionally, the IS-affiliate was attacked by warplanes of the government, the US-led coalition as well as Israel. The main operating area of the group was the Yarmouk basin in southwestern Daraa. On February 20, Jaysh Khalid ibn al-Walid attacked FSA and HTS positions, seizing several villages and a hill in the Yarmouk Basin, after having activated sleeper cells in the villages as well as having attacked from outside. HTS and FSA launched a counteroffensive near the town of Tasil on February 28, which was ultimately repelled. On the same day, fighters from 16 FSA-affiliated groups formed the Nawa Operations Room to combat IS and prevent further advances towards Nawa town. In total, at least 170 fighters were killed from February 20 to 28. Both sides were heavily equipped with tanks, artillery and self-propelled anti-aircraft guns. Clashes continued until the end of the year. On June 7, the General Commander of Jaysh Khalid ibn al-Walid was killed by an unidentified warplane in Western Daraa. On August 11, alleged US-led coalition warplanes targeted a courthouse used by Jaysh Khalid ibn al-Walid in Shajara, killing a commander and 30 others. On October 23, Israeli warplanes killed twelve after targeting a Jaysh Khalid ibn al-Walid headquarters in Saham al-Golan.

In Suwayda Governorate, clashes between pro-government forces and IS on the one hand, and opposition groups and IS on the other, occurred until end of March. After IS had withdrawn, the FSA claimed to have seized all major IS-strongholds in the governorate on March 27. (yal, daj)

IRAQ

In Iraq, IS lost most of its territory, especially in the governorates of Nineveh and al-Anbar. However, IS continued to control exclaves in the two governorates, as well as on the regional border between Kirkuk and Salahuddin Governorates. IS fought against the government which was backed by Shiite militias known as People's Mobilization Front (PMF), Sunni tribesmen, Iran, and the US-led coalition as well as Peshmerga forces of the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG). While losing territory, IS intensified attacks in areas that were not under their control. The US-led air strikes continued throughout the year, mostly targeting IS positions in Nineveh. According to the UN, the violence caused at least 3,290 civilian fatalities in 2017, and left 2,568,966 internally displaced since the beginning of the conflict.

Since taking control over large parts of the Nineveh Gover-

norate by IS in 2014, one of the key aims in the military intervention against IS was to recapture the regional capital city of Mosul and the surrounding Nineveh Governorate. The so-called Battle of Mosul began on the 10/17/2016 and ended on July 9. More than 500 people were killed in fighting over the eastern part of the city, which was fully recaptured on January 24. In February, the Iraqi army advanced into western Mosul and in March, they fought over the southwestern part of the city. On April 4, six civilians were killed and 29 injured in an IS gas bomb attack. In total around 3,500 people were killed during the battle over Mosul in April. The following month, fights proceeded to the old city center and the northwest of Mosul. At the end of May, more than 95 percent of Mosul were recaptured by Iraqi forces. In June, battles continued over the last four IS-held districts in the west of Mosul. On July 9, Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi formally declared victory over IS in Mosul. According to the UN, tens of thousands were killed and more than 930,000 people displaced since the beginning of the battle. Out of the 54 districts of Mosul, at least 23 were destroyed. Apart from shooting down 130 drones, Iraqi forces destroyed 1,247 booby-trapped cars and 1,500 IS vehicles. By the end of the year 230,000 IDPs had returned to the city.

On August 20, Iraqi security forces, including Iraqi Special Operations Forces and the Iraqi Air Force started an offensive to retake the Tal Afar region from IS. On August 30, the Iraqi Army, PMF, Federal Police, Rapid Response, and Counter-Terrorism Service (CTS) recaptured the sub-district of al-A'yaziyah. Furthermore, 21 villages and the al-Sasan mountainous range were also retaken from IS. The Iraqi Army took full control of the area by September 2.

In Al-Anbar Governorate the Iraqi Army started an offensive on the IS-controlled western parts in January, but halted the attack after the recapturing the towns of Sagra and Zawiya to prepare for the attack on western Mosul. From September 16 to 21, the Iraqi Army advanced further west recapturing the towns of Akashat and Anah. On October 26, the Iraqi Army started an offensive on the town of al-Qaim to recapture the last IS-controlled areas in al-Anbar. The fighting continued until November 3, when the Iraqi Army and PMF forces recaptured the al-Qaim border crossing to Syria and all surrounding areas, claiming to have killed at least 75 IS militants.

On September 20, the Iraqi Army and its supporters started the Hawija offensive on the remaining IS-held territory, comprised of large parts of Kirkuk Governorate as well as smaller parts of Salahuddin and Diyala governorates. Hawija city in Kirkuk Governorate, was recaptured on October 4. Four days later, the last IS-controlled areas in the three governorates were seized.

Baghdad Governorate was targeted by IS bombings on a daily basis. For instance, they conducted at least three suicide car bombings in the predominantly Shiite district of Sadr City, as well as close to two hospitals, killing 56 people and injuring at least 120 others on January 2. IS detonated a car bomb at a car market in south Baghdad killing at least 52 and injuring approx. 55 on February 16. During Ramadan on May 30, an ice cream parlor in Karrada district was attacked by an IS suicide bomber, killing at least 26 people.

In Salahuddin Governorate, IS militants killed at least 35 people, including 14 security forces, in Tikrit city by attacking security checkpoints and storming several houses in Zuhou

neighbourhood on April 4.

In the predominantly Shiite Najaf Governorate, IS killed six policemen in a suicide bombing in Najaf city on January 1. After the attacks the PMF announced on January 15 the formation of two regiments to control the desert of Najaf and protect the holy city of Najaf.

In Dhi Qar Governorate, a IS suicide bombing targeted a PMF gathering at Umm Oneij on April 4, killing four and wounding dozens. IS staged multiple attacks on the outskirts of Nasiriyah on September 24, killing at least 84 people and injuring 93. After several militants had attacked a restaurant with guns, grenades, and a suicide bomb, two suicide bombers attacked a nearby police checkpoint. IS claimed to have targeted PMF members, although most of those killed were Iranian and Iraqi pilgrims. (ska, lru, mas)

AFGHANISTAN

Activities of the IS branch in Afghanistan and Pakistan, the so-called Islamic State in Khorasan Province (ISKP), continued to focus on but were not limited to Nangarhar province.

Throughout the year, ISKP conducted numerous attacks against civilians, Afghan and foreign officials as well as journalists in several parts of the country with a high number of them taking place in the capital Kabul. On March 8, at least 30 persons, including civilians, were killed and dozens injured in an attack on a military hospital in Kabul city. ISKP gunmen dressed up as doctors stormed the facility following a suicide bombing at the gate and engaged in an hours-long gun battle with security forces. On May 17, ISKP fighters stormed a national television and radio station in the city of Jalalabad, Nangarhar province, shooting at least six people dead. Three attackers were killed by security forces in an ensuing gun battle. On July 31, a complex attack on the Iraqi embassy in Kabul, ISKP killed at least two embassy employees and injured three policemen. A suicide bomber blew up himself at the entrance while three gunmen stormed the building. All attackers were killed in the fight with security forces. An IED blast on a compound comprising a news agency, a Shiite cultural centre and a religious school in Kabul city, on December, 28 killed at least 40 people and wounded dozens.

Throughout the year, ISKP increasingly targeted Shiites at their places of worship. For instance, on August 1, a suicide attack on a Shiite mosque in the city of Herat in the eponymous province killed at least 29 and injured 60. On August 25, at least 28 were killed and 50 injured in a suicide blast in a Shiite mosque in Kabul and the ensuing gunfire. On September 29, five civilians were killed in a blast near a Shiite mosque in Kabul city, two days before Ashura, the Shiites' most important holiday. On October 20, another attack on a Shiite mosque in Kabul left at least 39 people dead and 45 injured.

As in 2016, ISKP frequently clashed with Afghan National Defence Security Forces (ANDSF). For instance, on February 3, 12 ISKP militants and five Afghan Local Police forces were killed in clashes in Kot district, Nangarhar province. ANDSF targeted ISKP in numerous military operations, mainly in Nangarhar province, where the group had established foothold since its emergence in Afghanistan. On May 8, airstrikes by the Afghan Air Force in Nazyan and Achin districts, Nangarhar province, killed around 34 militants and destroyed a radio station operated by ISKP. On June 17, ANDSF took control

of the Tora Bora complex, Nangarhar province two days after ISKP had seized the region from the Taliban [→ Afghanistan (Taliban et al.)]. At least 22 ISKP fighters were killed in the course of the operation.

International coalition forces continued to support ANDSF in fighting ISKP presence in Afghanistan. US forces stepped up efforts to combat Islamist militants by deploying 3000 additional troops starting in September. On April 13, the US military dropped its largest conventional bomb, with a payload of 11 tons, informally called "mother of all bombs", on an IS tunnel complex in Achin district, Nangarhar province killing at least 94 militants. In May, US forces confirmed the killing of the ISKP leader in Afghanistan during an operation in Nangarhar province the month before. Another US airstrike killed his successor on July 11 in Kunar province. Throughout the year, ISKP clashed with Taliban fighters in contested areas. In fightings between both groups on April 25 and 26, at least 91 militants were killed and 69 wounded on both sides in Komarleg, Aqsai and Khak-i-Shahidan villages in Darzab district, Jawzjan province. On June 25, an IS commander announced that Taliban members and its supporters everywhere should be killed and their properties seized. However, both groups occasionally conducted joint attacks, for instance on August 4, when more than 40 Shiite Hazara villagers were killed in a raid on Mirzawalang, Sayad district, Sar-i-Pul province.

ALGERIA

In Algeria, the local IS-branch Jund al-Khalifa continued to attack police forces as well as the People's National Army (ANP), while the latter conducted several operations against the group, dismantling hideouts, seizing equipment, and arresting alleged militants. As in previous years, violence mostly occurred in north-eastern Algeria.

During a search mission between February 15 and 17 near El Adjiba, Bouira province, seven soldiers and 14 alleged IS militants were killed. On February 26, an IS suicide attacker was shot by a policeman in front of a police station in Bab el Kantra, Constantine. The following blast of his explosive belt injured two policemen and killed the attacker. Two days later, nine alleged IS militants were killed by ANP forces in Azeffoune, Tizi Ouzou province. On March 25, ANP soldiers killed two militants in Djebel Ouach, Constantine, including the leader of El Ghoraba, a militant group affiliated with IS. Another suicide attack targeted the local police in El Haria, Constantine, on April 19. While one attacker was killed by setting of his bomb, another was arrested before detonating his. On May 31, five militants attacked a police patrol in Larbaa, Blida province, wounding five policemen. IS later claimed responsibility for the attack. In late July, ANP forces dismantled an IS cell in Tipaza province, arresting, among others, one militant linked to the Paris supermarket attack in 2015. On August 31, a suicide attacker killed two policemen at a police station in Tiaret, eponymous province. In an operation carried out in late September and early October in the town of El Kseur, Bejaia province, ANP forces killed five members of a militant group that had just recently switched allegiance from AQIM to IS. On December 23, five alleged IS militants were arrested for planning an attack on the New Year's festivities in the western province of Tlemcen. (aht)

EGYPT

The Egyptian branch of the IS, called Sinai Province, and the Egyptian government, supported by Bedouin activists, clashed throughout the year [→ Egypt (Bedouin activists)]. Sinai Province evolved from the Islamist group Ansar Beit Al-Maqdis which had pledged allegiance to IS at the end of 2014 [→ Egypt (militants / Sinai Peninsula)]. In 2017, clashes between Egyptian security forces and IS militants, as well as IS attacks on civilians and Bedouins, left at least 635 people dead. Most attacks by IS militants targeted Egyptian Armed Forces (EAF) and Egyptian National Police (ENP). Supporting the Egyptian security forces, Bedouin tribes also clashed with IS several times. On January 9, around 20 IS militants attacked a police checkpoint in al-Arish, North Sinai Governorate. The assailants killed at least seven policemen, wounded further eight and killed one civilian, while injuring four others. In response, ENP killed five IS militants and wounded three. On February 8, IS militants fired four BM 21-Grad rockets towards the city of Eilat in Israel's southern District from North Sinai. There were no reported casualties. In a raid in North Sinai on March 26, EAF killed five IS militants, including a leading figure. Security forces shot dead seven IS militants during a raid in Assiut, Assiut Governorate, on April 10, claiming that they were planning attacks on Coptic Christians [→ Egypt (Muslims – Christians)]. They also destroyed several weapons and ammunition. On April 18, a group of IS militants attacked a security checkpoint on the road leading to St. Catherine's Monastery in South Sinai Governorate, killing a policeman and leaving three wounded. Two days later, EAF killed 21 IS militants, including three prominent senior figures, in raids and airstrikes in North Sinai. On May 2, members of the Bedouin Tarabin tribe clashed with IS militants in Rafah, North Sinai, thereby killing eight militants. A few days later, on May 10, IS militants attacked a security checkpoint manned by members of the Tarabin tribe close to Rafah, killing at least ten tribesmen. Following this event, the Bedouin tribe al-Sawarka announced its participation in the fight against Sinai Province, supporting security forces and the Tarabin tribe. On July 7, dozens of IS militants attacked a military compound close to Rafah. In a shootout after the attack of an IS suicide car bomber, 23 EAF members and 40 IS militants were killed. Raiding an IS hideout on July 10 in Dayrot, Assuit, ENP killed at least six militants. In an attack on a patrol car in al-Arish, North Sinai, IS militants shot dead four policemen on August 9. On September 11, IS militants attacked a security convoy near al-Arish, using IEDs and fire guns. They killed 18 security forces and wounded at least four. In al-Arish, IS militants killed six soldiers on October 13. In their attack on a security checkpoint, they used grenades and automatic rifles. In response to the attack, EAF killed several IS militants. Two days later, IS militants attacked another security checkpoint in North Sinai with RPGs and car bombs, killing six soldiers and wounding 20. In response to the attack, EAF killed 24 IS militants. On December 19, IS militants killed a soldier and wounded two by firing a shell at al-Arish airport. The following day, security forces clashed with IS militants near the airport, leaving five IS militants dead. An EAF captain was also killed in the clashes.

The deadliest attacks conducted by IS targeted civilians, especially Coptic Christians and Sufi Muslims. Throughout the year, at least 411 civilians were killed by IS militants. On

February 12, IS militants shot dead five civilians in North Sinai, accusing them of spying for the EAF. Ten days later, IS militants killed two Coptic Christians by shooting one and burning the other alive in al-Arish. Shortly after this incident, hundreds of Coptic families and 200 Coptic students fled al-Arish. On Palm Sunday, April 9, IS militants killed at least 27 civilians and injured at least 78 in a suicide bombing inside Mari Girgis Church in Tanta, Gharbia Governorate. Following the Palm Sunday attacks, Israel decided to close the Taba Border Crossing, stating that this decision had been taken through fear of an attack on Israelis. Moments after the border closure, IS militants fired a rocket towards southern Israel close to the Gazan and Egyptian border, without casualties. On May 26, IS militants killed at least 28 Coptic Christians and injured further 25 by targeting a bus heading to St. Samuel Monastery in the Minya desert, Minya Governorate. While robbing a bank and attacking a church in al-Arish on October 16, IS militants' use of RPGs left three civilians and four security officers dead, and 15 injured. On November 24, IS militants attacked a Sufi mosque in Bir al-Abed, North Sinai, killing at least 311 civilians and injuring further 128. Between 25 and 30 men, carrying an IS flag and armed with automatic machine guns, opened fire on worshipers during the Friday prayers. After the attack, President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi ordered the EAF to use "all force necessary" to secure the Sinai Peninsula within three months. On December 29, IS militants killed eight civilians and a policeman in Helwan, Cairo Governorate, by attacking first a Coptic-owned shop and then a Coptic church. (ppr)

LEBANON

During the first half of the year, IS frequently clashed with Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF), allied with Hezbollah and partly supported by the Syrian Armed Forces (SAF), and also clashed with Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), a coalition of Jabhat Fatah al-Sham and other groups involved in the conflicts in Syria [→ Syria (opposition)]. Most clashes took place on the outskirts of the towns of Arsal, Ras Baalbek and al-Qaa, Baalbek-Hermel Governorate.

On January 20, Hezbollah attacked an IS stronghold in northern Beqaa Valley close to Ras Baalbek with a rocket, killing and wounding four militants. On April 22, LAF raided an IS hideout in the valley al-Hosn near Arsal, killing an IS Emir and arresting nine IS fighters. Two days later, LAF shelled IS posts close to the towns of Ras Baalbek and al-Qaa, using heavy artillery and a military helicopter, killing and wounding several IS militants. Occasionally, clashes between IS and HTS erupted. For instance, on May 27, IS militants attacked HTS strongholds in the periphery of Arsal and the western Qalamoun Mountains in the Rif Dimashq Governorate in Syria, causing the death of at least 30 IS and five HTS militants. During August, LAF and Hezbollah intensified their efforts to expel IS militants out of their strongholds on the outskirts of al-Qaa and Ras Baalbek. On August 19, LAF started an offensive against approx. 600 IS militants in this region. At the first day of this offensive, LAF recaptured 30 out of approx. 120 square km controlled by IS and killed at least 20 militants. Meanwhile, Hezbollah, backed by the SAF, targeted IS militants and seized some of their strategic points on the Syrian side of the border in Rif Dimashq. On the second day of the offensive, LAF killed at least 15 IS militants. On the same day, a landmine of IS killed

three Lebanese soldiers and wounded another one close to Arsal. On August 22, Hezbollah targeted IS militants by using combat drones and captured strategic hilltops at the Syrian side of the border with the help of SAF. On the same day, LAF gained control over more territory on the outskirts of Ras Baalbek, enlarging the recaptured area to 100 square km including the strategic height Ras al-Kaf. On the same day, close to Arsal, an IED of IS killed one LAF soldier and wounded another four. The following two days, LAF cleared the area from landmines and IEDs, and repositioned their troops. On August 25, approx. 100 IS militants at the Syrian side of the border surrendered to Hezbollah, while LAF continued to target IS at their last Lebanese stronghold in Martabia valley near Arsal, using aircraft shelling and artillery. On the same day, an IS attack killed one LAF soldier close to Ras Baalbek. On August 27, LAF, Hezbollah, and SAF reached a ceasefire agreement with IS, comprising the withdrawal of hundreds of IS militants and their families from their strongholds in Lebanon to Deir al-Zor Governorate, Syria. In exchange, IS revealed the location of nine killed Lebanese soldiers, taken hostage in 2014, and handed over the corpses of two killed Hezbollah fighters. In total, eleven Hezbollah fighters were killed during the military operation.

After the end of the offensive on August 29, LAF continued to persecute suspected IS members all over the country. On September 13, as part of the aforementioned deal, IS released a Hezbollah fighter after the IS convoy had reached Deir ez-Zor. (jhe)

LIBYA

IS continued to be present in Libya in 2017. However, the rural outskirts of the city of Sirte, capital of the eponymous district, were the only stronghold it could permanently maintain.

After the troops of pro-GNA Misrata's Military Council had retaken the city of Sirte at the end of 2016, IS members had fled to the desert areas of the eponymous district. The Government of National Accord (GNA) and the Libyan National Army (LNA), the two most powerful actors in Libya [→ Libya (opposition)], continued to fight IS despite their rivalries.

On January 5, 19 IS militants and 21 LNA soldiers were killed when IS militants broke the siege of LNA to Benghazi, capital of the eponymous district. In May, the pro-GNA Misrata Third Force clashed with the IS on two occasions. On May 7, IS fighters killed two Misrata Third Force fighters in an road ambush between Sirte and Jufra, capitals of the eponymous districts. On May 26, the Misrata Third Force killed four IS militants near Bani Walid, Misrata District. In June, IS increased its activities in Sirte District. On June 26, an IS member blew himself in an LNA checkpoint, leaving no casualties. Subsequently, in August, the Misrata Military Council and the LNA sent reinforcements to Sirte. On August 2, IS members raided an LNA checkpoint on the road connecting Sirte to Jufra and beheaded nine soldiers and two civilians. On August 18, IS fighters ambushed an LNA unit, killing one soldier in a remote area in Wadi al-Shatii District. On August 31, an IS suicide bomber drove into an LNA checkpoint in Nufliya, west Sirte, killing four soldiers. On September 1, LNA war aircrafts and ground forces attacked IS members in the desert of Sirte District. The operation resulted in the killing of an unspecified number of IS fighters and the destruction of several vehicles.

On October 4, IS members attacked the Court of Justice in Misrata the day IS suspects were going to be trialed. After an IS fighter detonated an explosive belt inside the Court, others started shooting RPGs from outside the building. The press reported three death and approx. 20 injured people. On October 25, IS fighters seven vehicles raided an LNA outpost near Ajdabiya, al-Wahat District, killing two LNA soldiers, beheading another and abducting an unconfirmed number of soldiers. On December 11, the Islamist anti-LNA militia Derna Mujahideen Shura Council (DMSC) killed an IS member after accusing him of setting up a car bomb to murder a senior DMSC militiaman.

The US supported both GNA and LNA in fighting IS. On January 19, two US B-2 bomb attacks on two training camps killed at least 90 IS militants in the southwest of Sirte. Following this attack, on January 26, pro-GNA forces from Misrata searched the area of the blasts and killed four IS members. On September 24 and 25, US bombers and drones targeted an IS camp in Sirte District, killing at least 17 militants. On November 15, the LNA air force bombed another IS camp in the district of Sirte. The attack was followed by two US drone strikes on November 17 and 19 in Jufra District, killing an unknown number of militants. (riv)

SAUDI ARABIA

The conflict between IS and the government of Saudi Arabia was marked by several police actions against suspected IS members and supporters. On January 7, police forces surrounded a house in the capital Riyadh and opened fire on suspected IS supporters, after the latter had refused to surrender. The gunfight left the two suspects dead and one policeman wounded. In the city of Jeddah, Mecca Province, two suspects blew themselves up during a battle with police forces on January 24. On February 16, the Saudi Arabian authorities announced that security forces had arrested 18 suspected members and supporters of IS in four different provinces of the kingdom since February 11. On April 30, security forces arrested 46 suspects over the 2016 Medina mosque attack. On June 9, IS published a video in which it threatened to carry out further attacks in the country. On June 23, a suspected IS supporter blew himself up in the city of Mecca, in the eponymous province, after being surrounded by police forces. As a result, a three-storey building collapsed, wounding five policemen and six civilians. The specialized criminal court in Jeddah sentenced a Saudi IS supporter to seven years in prison and banned him from travelling for ten years on July 26. On October 4, police forces raided the districts of al-Rimal, al-Namar, and al-Ghanamiya in Riyadh, allegedly connected to an IS cell. In al-Rimal, for instance, a suspect, surrounded by police forces, blew himself up, killing himself and damaging a house and a car. In al-Namar a surrounded suspect was shot dead by police forces. (son)

TUNISIA

Violence between IS and the Tunisian government as well as attacks by IS fighters on civilians continued, but decreased in comparison to 2016. Furthermore, the judiciary continued prosecution in the cases related to the attacks by IS fighters on a hotel in Sousse and the Bardo museum in 2015, in which 60 people were killed. On February 28, six guards were charged with failure to render

assistance to the tourists during the Sousse attack. The trial over 26 suspects was adjourned to October 3. Additionally, on June 11, authorities commenced trials against 24 people because of their role in the Bardo museum attack, most of them being charged with voluntary homicide and forming a terrorist organization, while another 30 were tried in absence. Violence occurred in the mountainous region near the town of Sidi Bouzid, eponymous governorate. On June 3, armed forces found the beheaded body of a shepherd who was abducted the day before in the Mount Mghilla area. Despite the fact that mostly AQIM-aligned fighters were active in this region, IS claimed responsibility and accused the dead of spying for the Tunisian intelligence and later released a video of the killing. In response to that video, the National Guard conducted a security operation on August 7 in Bireno Mountain, Kasserine, targeting AQIM-affiliated militants [→ Algeria, Mali et al. (AQIM et al.)]. (wih)

TURKEY

In Turkey, an IS militant conducted an attack on a nightclub in Istanbul, Istanbul Province, on January 1, killing 39 civilians and wounding 70. In the following month, the Turkish security forces raided several houses all over the country and arrested about 820 suspected IS members. On May 21, police raided an IS hideout in the capital Ankara and killed two suspects. On July 5, security forces detained six IS affiliates, claiming they had planned to attack an opposition protest march. On July 5 and 7, security forces conducted two operations against IS structures in Istanbul and several provinces, arresting 77 suspected IS members. On July 12, a raid against an IS hideout in Konya City, Konya Province, resulted in five dead IS fighters and four wounded policemen. On August 14, an arrested IS member stabbed a policeman to death in Istanbul. On September 6, the police shot an IS militant who tried to conduct a suicide attack on a police station in the city of Mersin, Mersin province. Throughout October and November, security forces conducted several raids against IS members all over Turkey, arresting over 100 suspects. On October 19, the police killed an IS fighter in gunfight in the city of Ankara. On december, security forces conducted two operations against IS suspects in the city of Istanbul and Ankara province, arresting 120. (mhb)

YEMEN

In 2017, IS carried out attacks in al-Bayda, Ibb and Aden governorate holding up a steady presence in the country. IS Wilayat al-Bayda fought against al-Houthi-Saleh forces in the north-western and western part of al-Bayda governorate, using artillery, machine guns and small arms. Over the course of the year the fights left approx. 42 al-Houthi-Saleh forces dead. Following their attacks, IS often distributed pictures that showed IS militants fighting, praying and distributing gifts to civilians. On several occasions IS fighters cooperated with tribal militias and al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) on a tactical level, even though AQAP criticized IS Wilayat al-Bayda for supposed weakness and lying to their followers in a social media post on July 20. Al-Houthi-Saleh forces claimed to have arrested two suspected IS fighters on March 21. On September 12, the Indian priest Father Tom Uzhunnalil, had been abducted by suspected IS militants in March 2016, was released after an intervention by Omani au-

thorities. Four US airstrikes in October and November killed about 73 IS militants.

As its first action since December 2015, IS Wilayat Liwa al-Akhdar (Green Brigade), based in Ibb governorate, claimed having committed a suicide attack on an al-Houthi-Saleh checkpoint in al-Radmah district, Ibb governorate, on January 24. An AQAP-affiliated source praised the attack and expressed hope that IS would stay on the "right path".

Mainly focused on Aden city, IS Wilayat Aden-Abyan continued to carry out suicide attacks and assassinations of high-ranked policemen, for instance on January 31, November 25 and 27. Four suicide attacks targeted the Emirati-backed al-Hizam Security forces. The most elaborated incident occurred on November 5 when several IS militants stormed the Criminal Investigations Department in Khormaksar district, Aden city, after they had detonated a SVBIED at the entrance. As security force members attempted to retake the building, IS fighters detonated suicide vests. Local news sources claimed that the attack had left 23 counterterrorism troops dead and 30 wounded while IS-affiliated sources spoke of 69 deaths. In their fight against the militants, security forces impounded a vehicle carrying explosive components that could be used to build VBIEDs as it tried to enter Aden on January 5. They also arrested two suspected IS militants in Aden city on January 12 and 13. On April 8, an undercover security official killed a suspected IS suicide bomber when the latter approached a military base in al-Tawahi district, Aden city.

On October 25, the US and Saudi Arabia imposed sanctions on eight Yemeni individuals and one organization believed to sponsor AQAP and IS. The US House of Representatives also passed a non-binding resolution clarifying that the US military actions in Yemen are only authorized to target Salafi-jihadi groups. (sbr) skla

TUNISIA (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 2010

Conflict parties: civil society movements vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology

The violent crisis between various opposition groups, such as civil society movements, on the one hand, and the government, on the other, continued. The conflict was marked by several large-scale protests that took place all over the country. The demonstrations focused on the economic situation as well as security and political issues. The nationwide state of emergency that had been imposed in November 2015, after several Islamist attacks, was extended several times, lastly on November 11 for a further three months.

Numerous protests considered the economic situation. For instance, on January 12, hundreds of youths protested the lack of jobs in Ben Guerdane, Médenine governorate. Some protesters threw stones, petrol bombs, and ignited tyres, while the police used teargas to disperse the crowd. On January 13 and 14, protests spread to the city of Gafsa in the eponymous governorate and Sidi Bouzid, Manzel Bouziane, and Meknassi, Sidi Bouzid governorate. In Gafsa, local youth

threw stones and blocked roads, protesting President Beji Caid Essebsi who was visiting the town in remembrance of the 2011 uprisings. As the protests had partially interrupted the state-run export of phosphates, Essebsi announced economic investments in Gafsa. Between late April and mid-May, protesters at the El-Kamour oilfield, southern Tataouine governorate, called for employment opportunities for the local population and an increased share in revenues from the area's natural resources. The protests mainly revolved around foreign-owned oil and gas facilities and spread to the governorates of Kebili, Kasserine, and Sousse. On May 17, Essebsi deployed troops to protect the oil and gas fields as well as other energy and phosphate facilities in the respective regions. This was the first time that Tunisian troops were deployed to protect industrial installations. Three days later, they fired warning shots when protesters tried to block a gas facility in Tataouine. On May 21, one protester died after he was hit by a police car in Tataouine. Subsequently, protesters torched two local police stations, which led to police forces withdrawing from the area. On June 16, protesters and the government reached an agreement that promised new jobs and infrastructure investments in the region.

On September 8, Prime Minister Youssef Chahed assigned cabinet positions to several officials from the administration of former president Ben Ali. Ben Ali had been ousted in 2011, after large-scale protests had erupted in Tunisia and later spread to various countries in the Arab world. On September 13, parliament passed a law granting amnesty to numerous officials who had been accused of corruption during Ben Ali's presidency. Three days later, around 1.500 people, led by opposition leaders, protested this law in the capital Tunis. In early October, the Independent High Authority for the Elections in Tunisia postponed the municipality elections that were expected to take place on December 17 until 03/25/18, after tensions had arisen concerning the composition of the electoral commission. Tunisian human rights and civil rights organizations criticized the postponement. These elections would be the first on municipal level since fall of Ben Ali.

Other protests revolved around security issues, such as the return of alleged militants from fighting abroad or Islamist attacks [→ Syria, Iraq et al. (IS)]. For instance, on January 8, around 1,000 people in the Tunis demanded the government prevent people who had fought as militants abroad from returning to Tunisia. wih

TURKEY (OPPOSITION)

Intensity: 2 | Change: ↓ | Start: 2013

Conflict parties: Opposition Groups, Gülen Movement vs. government

Conflict items: system/ideology, national power

The conflict over national power and the orientation of the political system between opposition groups as well as the Islamic Gülen movement, on the one hand, and the government under President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, on the other hand, escalated to a non-violent crisis.

While the former demanded the preservation of the state's

secular and republican orientation, the Gülen movement sought a political shift towards an Islamic democracy. After an attempted military coup in July 2016, the government had declared a state of emergency, which has been extended several times, lastly on October 17. At the end of 2017, about 150 journalists were imprisoned, many of them accused of supporting terrorist organizations [→ Turkey (PKK, TAK)]. Throughout the year, several opposition MPs were arrested. For instance, on June 14, the main opposition Republican People's Party's (CHP) MP Enis Berberoğlu was sentenced to 25 years in prison for leaking state secrets. CHP officials started a protest march from Istanbul to the capital Ankara in the aftermath, in which hundreds of people participated.

Throughout the year, the government expelled several thousands of public employees and academics based on the emergency decree, accusing them of supporting the military coup. For instance, on February 7, the government dismissed 4,574 public workers and 330 university employees. On December 24, the government passed two decrees that ordered the dismissals of more than 2,750 government workers, a ban on 17 civil organizations, and impunity for all who had taken action in favor of the government during and in the aftermath of the coup.


On April 16, Erdogan's Justice and Development Party (AKP) initiated a constitutional referendum, which proposed the shift to a presidential system. The reform, which should have given the president more control over the juridical system as well as the legislative procedure, was accompanied by protest campaigns both for and against the referendum. On April 16, it was approved by 51.41 percent of the voters. CHP and pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party challenged the legitimacy of the referendum's conduction and demanded its annulment, due to alleged irregularities such as unsealed ballot papers. On April 19, the Supreme Election Board (YSK) rejected all objections. A following appeal by the CHP to the Council of State was also rejected. From April 17 to 19, around 100 people were arrested for protesting the referendum's result and YSK's decision across the country. On April 29, the access to the online encyclopaedia Wikipedia was blocked based on a law, which allowed to ban websites that were considered obscene or a threat to national security.

In the following months, the government enforced several reforms of the judicial system, which were criticised by opposition voices as a threat to judicial independence. For instance, the number of members of the Board of Judges and Prosecutors' (HSK) was reduced from 22 to 13. On May 9 and July 13, the newly composed HSK replaced approx. 1,200 judges and prosecutors all over the country. On August 25, the government extended the powers of the National Intelligence Agency (MIT) on grounds of a state of emergency decree and subordinated the agency directly to Erdogan.

The Government's call upon countries of the European Union and the United States to close Gülen-associated facilities and to extradite several alleged coup members resulted in diplomatic tensions. For instance, in December, Greek authorities granted asylum to eight Turkish soldiers who had fled the country during the coup.

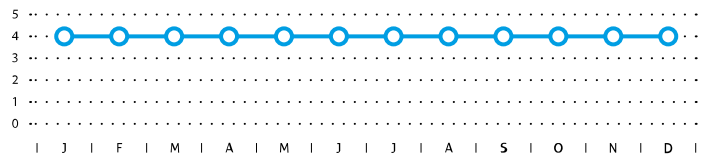
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TURKEY (PKK, TAK)

Intensity: 4 | Change:  | Start: 1974

Conflict parties: Government vs. TAK, PKK

Conflict items: autonomy



The conflict over autonomy between the Turkish government, on the one hand, and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), and the PKK's alleged offshoot, the Kurdistan Freedom Falcons (TAK), on the other, de-escalated to a limited war.

The government extended the post-coup state of emergency for three months on several occasions, most recently on October 16, claiming that it could not be lifted because of PKK activities in the southeast.

Throughout the year, at least 2,455 people were arrested nationwide due to alleged PKK-links, with at least 472 in December alone. The number of arrests increased especially ahead of the constitutional referendum on April 16 [→ Turkey (opposition)]. For example, following a TAK-claimed bomb attack on January 5 on a courthouse in Izmir, capital of the eponymous province, which killed four and injured six, security forces arrested 18 people accused of links to PKK. On February 18, 834 people from 37 provinces were arrested due to alleged PKK-links. On March 18, security forces detained another 740 people. Foreign citizens were also arrested due to alleged PKK-links, which strained bilateral relations between Turkey and other countries, primarily Germany and France. The government resumed accusations against the oppositional Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) of being linked to PKK. In this course, the parliament stripped several HDP members of their status as MPs and detained twelve of them. On January 17, the HDP leaders Selahattin Demirtas and Figen Yuksekdağ were sentenced to 142 and 83 years imprisonment, respectively. In February, the government announced its plans to hire around 25,000 new village guards, a pro-government militia operating in the south-east.

Clashes between the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) and PKK mostly affected the provinces of Diyarbakir, Hakkari, Sirnak and Tunceli. In northern Iraq, clashes took place primarily in the Zab region, Asos region and Sinjar. Sporadic clashes also occurred in additional provinces in eastern Turkey and northern Iraq, as well as the southwestern province of Mugla, and the province of Trabzon on the Black Sea. Since March, at least seven attacks on local ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) officials and civilians have taken place in the south east. Two of these were claimed by PKK and one by PKK's women urban youth wing Civil Protection Units-Women, while the government attributed the others to PKK. For example, PKK abducted and killed a teacher in Sanliurfa Province for allegedly collaborating with Turkish Security Forces on June 16. Furthermore, PKK attacked the car of the mayor of Kozluk, Batman Province, killing one civilian on June 9. In mid-February, TAF conducted operations in Nusaybin district of

the town of Mardin in the eponymous province, killing at least four supposed PKK militants. On February 18, security forces detained 26 people after an alleged PKK car bomb attack that killed two civilians and wounded 17 in Viransehir district, Sanliurfa Province. On March 5, TAF operations in Diyarbakir's Lice District and Bingöl Province involving around 7,000 soldiers resulted in the death of at least 26 PKK militants and three soldiers. Another 14 PKK militants were killed in air strikes in Tunceli Province on March 27. In April, May and June, tensions intensified. Clashes, air strikes and bomb attacks killed at least 34 TAF-members, five security personnel and 167 PKK militants in Turkey. In northern Iraq and Syria, TAF claimed to have killed at least 116 militants, mainly in Sinjar, Nineveh Governorate, Iraq. Following two PKK attacks on AKP officials in Van and Diyarbakir Provinces on July 1, TAF conducted several air strikes in Mardin, Bingöl, Diyarbakir Provinces and northern Iraq on the same day, killing at least 18 militants. On July 17, a PKK bomb attack on a military vehicle wounded 17 soldiers in Hakkari Province. The government also accused PKK of killing six civilians in July and August. On September 17, TAF killed twelve PKK militants in Eruh district, Siirt Province, and six militants in Hakkari and Mardin Province. On September 29, three PKK militants and one TAF member were killed in a clash in the Kanimasi area of Iraq's Dahuk region. An alleged PKK bomb attack on a police bus in the town of Mersin, Mersin Province, wounded 18 persons on September 30. At the end of October, clashes increased in Hakkari Province. For instance, on October 30, six soldiers, two village guards and five PKK militants were killed in clashes in Semdinli district. Three days later, six soldiers, five militants and two security guards were killed in clashes when PKK militants tried to cross the border from Iraq. On November 29, TAF claimed to have killed 80 militants in an air strike in northern Iraq. Besides the Izmir incident, TAK did not carry out any major attacks. However, on June 6, they threatened new attacks on major cities and tourist sites. kar

YEMEN (AL-HIRAK / SOUTHERN YEMEN)

Intensity: 2 | Change: • | Start: 2007

Conflict parties: al-Hirak vs. government
Conflict items: secession

The non-violent crisis between al-Hirak, also known as the Southern Movement, and the government of internationally recognized President Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi over the secession of southern Yemen continued.

During the first third of the year, the various security forces in the provisional capital of Aden, those backed by the United Arab Emirates (UAE), which included numerous al-Hirak members, and those loyal to President Hadi, repeatedly clashed. For instance, on February 11, clashes erupted at Aden International Airport between UAE-backed airport security forces and Presidential Guard forces, leading to several deaths. In spite of the involvement of al-Hirak members, such violent measures were not directly linked to the conflict item of secession and, therefore, have not been considered with regard to conflict intensity.

On April 4, UAE-backed Aden governor, Aidarus al-Zubaidi, announced the establishment of a "national political leadership" for an independent South Yemen, during demonstrations in Aden city. On April 27, Hadi dismissed al-Zubaidi and Minister of State Hani bin Braik, who are both southern politicians backed by the UAE and leading al-Hirak figures. In response, supporters of al-Hirak demonstrated against the decision for several days. Aden media reported low-flying Emirati fighter jets on April 27 and explosions as well as the use of minor arms the following day in Aden's al-Mansoura district. On May 11, al-Zubaidi formed the UAE-backed Transitional Political Council of the South (STC), consisting of 26 members, with him as the council's president, and bin Braik as its vice president. The same day, President Hadi refused to recognize the STC. On May 21, thousands of people gathered at Aden's Tahrir Square to express their support for the STC and to call for the secession of South Yemen. In the course of the year, President Hadi replaced the governors of Hadramawt, Shabwah, Socotra, Abyan, Lahij, and al-Dhale due to their membership in the STC. During STC-organized demonstrations in Aden city on October 14, al-Zubaidi announced the formation of the STC's "National Assembly" and an upcoming independence referendum. From late-October to mid-November, he inaugurated the STC's local headquarters for the governorates of Aden, Shabwa, Hadramawt, al-Mahrah, Lahij, al-Dhalea, and Abyan. On November 30, al-Zubaidi announced the names of the eight local STC leaders as well as the National Assembly's 303 members, who held their first meeting on December 23. Throughout the year, the conflict saw limited use of weapons and the killing of at least one al-Hirak affiliate. Those responsible remain identified, however. On May 30, for instance, the Aden Electricity director's car was set on fire by anti-government protesters due to continued power outages in Aden city. On October 1, government security forces shot at protesters during demonstrations for southern independence in Zinjibar city, Abyan governorate. No casualties were reported. On November 30, one of the armed groups supporting al-Hirak, known as southern resistance, attacked Presidential Guard forces in Aden city, using small and medium arms. vks

YEMEN (AQAP – AL-HOUTHI FORCES)

Intensity: 3 | Change: • | Start: 2010

Conflict parties: AQAP, Ansar al-Sharia vs. al-Houthi forces, forces loyal to former president Saleh
Conflict items: system/ideology, subnational pre-dominance

The violent crisis over ideology between al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and its affiliate Ansar al-Sharia, on the one hand, and al-Houthi forces, on the other, continued. The latter fought in alliance with forces loyal to former president Ali Abdullah Saleh, until clashes broke out between them in late November, leading to the termination of the alliance and the killing of Saleh on December 4 [→ Yemen, Saudi Arabia (al-Houthi)].

As in previous years, AQAP used its military presence in

Yemen's southwestern governorates of al-Bayda, Ibb, and al-Dhale to fight alongside local tribal militias against al-Houthi-Saleh forces. AQAP regularly published videos in which it presented itself as the sole guardian of Sunni interests in Yemen, featuring attacks on al-Houthi positions, the interrogation of captive al-Houthi fighters, and eulogies of killed AQAP members. In comparison, the military operations of Houthi-Saleh forces focused primarily on protecting territories from AQAP attacks and on fighting AQAP cells within Houthi-Saleh controlled cities.

Between January 14 and 16, AQAP attacked al-Houthi positions across Ibb, killing one al-Houthi fighter with an IED on January 15. On January 26, AQAP militants and aligned Sunni tribal militants fended off an attack by al-Houthi forces and killed seven of their fighters in al-Dahimia village, east of Ibb city. On February 3, AQAP claimed to have killed ten al-Houthi-Saleh fighters in Dhi Kalib village, al-Bayda. Between February 20 and 24, AQAP militants fought against al-Houthi-Saleh forces in the northwest of al-Bayda. After the takeover of an al-Houthi-Saleh position in al-A'abal village and the seizure of Hamat Sarar village on February 20, AQAP claimed the repulsion of attacks by al-Houthi-Saleh forces in the following days. AQAP also stated to have killed seven al-Houthi fighters in al-A'abal on February 28. On March 2, Houthi-Saleh officers arrested an AQAP commander in Rada'a district, al-Bayda. On May 30, AQAP militants conducted an IED attack on al-Houthi forces in the south of al-Bayda, killing five. On July 10, four AQAP militants were executed after a Houthi-Saleh court in Sana'a had sentenced them to death for an attack in December 2014. On August 15, another AQAP member was sentenced to death. Three days later, AQAP responded by threatening to execute four Houthi-Saleh captives.

In 2017, AQAP claimed to have assassinated at least twelve Houthi-Saleh commanders. For example, on February 5, AQAP announced the assassination of two Houthi-Saleh commanders in Ibb via the Telegram mobile app, one close to al-Makhadir district and the other close to the governorate's border with al-Dhale. On April 10 and 16, AQAP fighters assassinated two Houthi-Saleh commanders in Yarim district and Ibb city in the eponymous governorate. pmu

known as Southern Movement, on the other, de-escalated to a limited war.

Throughout the year, AQAP continued its attacks against government troops, local forces loyal to Hadi, UAE-backed forces and al-Hirak in the governorates of Abyan, Hadramawt and Lahij. For instance, on February 2, AQAP claimed to have killed six of the UAE-backed al-Hizam, or Security Belt forces, in an IED attack in Lawder district, Abyan. On March 27, AQAP militants launched a SVBIED attack on the provincial government headquarters in al-Hawta city, Lahij. The attackers killed at least four security forces and wounded six. On August 24, AQAP militants killed at least two al-Hizam forces in an ambush. Between December 15 and 20, AQAP attacked several al-Hizam positions.

In the second half of the year, primarily UAE-backed forces pursued counterterrorism measures against AQAP strongholds in the southern governorates of Yemen. Starting on August 3, local Shabwani and Hadrami Elite Forces, supported by US and UAE Special Operations Forces (SOF), conducted a multi-day operation against AQAP militants to regain control over major cities in Shabwah governorate. In the following days, AQAP militants withdrew into northern Abyan and started attacks against Hadi-loyal security forces and al-Hizam forces stationed there. In mid-September, al-Hizam forces intensified their counterterrorism efforts in Abyan, attacking cities held by AQAP and conducting multiple raids against AQAP safe houses in liberated areas. In retaliation of the raids, AQAP attacked positions of the UAE-backed forces often using IEDs or mortar fire.

According to the Bureau of Investigative Journalism, the US carried out more than 120 air strikes, against AQAP positions, militants and training facilities in the governorates of Abyan, al-Bayda, Shabwah, Ma'rib, and Hadramawt throughout the year. For example, between March 2 and 6, the US launched more than 40 air strikes against AQAP, killing approx. 29 people. On January 29 and May 23, the US SOF conducted two ground raids, assisted by warplanes and drones. The first raid targeted an AQAP headquarter in Yakal village, al-Bayda, killing around 14 AQAP militants. At least eleven civilians and one US service member died. The second strike was directed at an AQAP associated compound in al-Jubah district, Ma'rib. The US claimed that its SOF had killed seven and wounded five AQAP militants. US air strikes predominantly provided support for local forces in their fight against AQAP. For instance, on September 14, the US killed three AQAP militants in a drone strike in Mudiya village, Abyan, to support the advancement of al-Hizam forces towards the village.

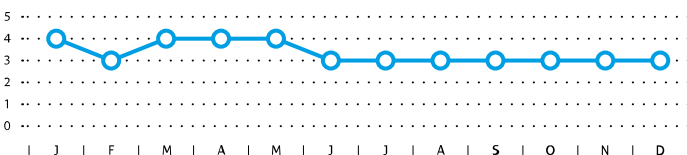
In addition to its ground attacks, AQAP frequently used its media channels for propaganda purposes. For instance, on April 2, AQAP released a video in which one of its senior officials called for local support for AQAP and jihad against the US. On September 17, AQAP released the eighth part of the propaganda series "Repulsion of Aggression", which denounced the foreign interference of the US and the UAE. On September 29, AQAP and al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb threatened the Saudi rulers in a joint statement. pmu

YEMEN (AQAP, ANSAR AL-SHARIA)

Intensity: 4 | Change: ▼ | Start: 1992

Conflict parties: AQAP, Ansar al-Sharia vs. UAE-backed forces, USA, government

Conflict items: system/ideology



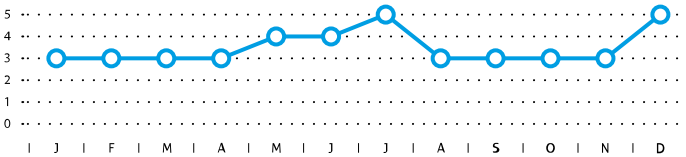
The conflict over ideology between al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and its insurgent arm Ansar al-Sharia, on the one hand, and the government of President Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi, local forces loyal to him, local UAE-backed counterterrorism forces and the USA, supported by al-Hirak, also

YEMEN, SAUDI ARABIA (AL-HOUSHI FORCES)

Intensity: 5 | Change: • | Start: 2004

Conflict parties: al-Houthi forces, troops loyal to former president Saleh vs. government

Conflict items: national power



The war over national power between the government of internationally recognized President Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi, supported by a Saudi Arabian-led coalition, anti-Houthi Popular Resistance forces, tribal forces, and the Islah party, on the one hand, and al-Houthi forces and troops loyal to former president Ali Abdullah Saleh, supported by Popular Committees affiliated with al-Houthi forces, on the other, continued. The Saudi-led coalition comprised - inter alia - Saudi Arabian, Emirati, and Sudanese forces, while Qatar was expelled from the alliance in June [→ Qatar– Saudi Arabia et al.]. On December 4, former president Saleh was killed by al-Houthi forces in Sana'a city, after clashes had broken out between the former allies in late November leading to the termination of their alliance.

As of December 14, the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights had documented 5,558 civilians killed and 9,065 injured since the beginning of the Saudi-led intervention in March 2015. The conflict has further resulted in the displacement of about 3 million Yemenis, of whom close to 1 million have returned to their homes, according to the UN Refugee Agency. Already declared the largest food security crisis in the world in early 2017, Yemen accounted for 17.8 million people defined as food insecure and 8.4 million at risk of famine by the end of the year. Furthermore, the country saw a second wave of cholera in late April, after the much less virulent outbreak in October 2016 had been showing steadily declining numbers. In July, the cholera outbreak became the largest ever recorded in one country in a single year, reaching 1 million suspected cases and more than 2,200 associated deaths by mid-December. UN agencies and INGOs repeatedly described the humanitarian crisis as a direct result of the ongoing conflict, which had slowed down the import of humanitarian and commercial commodities, left less than half of all health facilities fully functional, the water and sewage systems largely damaged, and the majority of public servants unpaid since 09/2016.

The Saudi-led coalition continued to support the government through airstrikes across Houthi-Saleh controlled governorates. Houthi-Saleh forces in turn conducted cross-border raids and launched ballistic missiles into Saudi territory, notably affecting Saudi Arabia's southern provinces bordering Yemen's Houthi-Saleh controlled north. For instance, between February 5 and 14, they attacked Saudi Border Guards in the Saudi province of Jazan, killing at least twelve. Both parties largely impeded humanitarian access throughout the year.

Throughout 2017, the frontlines between territories controlled by the warring parties to the conflict remained largely stable, with some changes to frontline dynamics along the Red Sea coast. On January 7, the Saudi-led coalition and Hadi-aligned forces launched "Operation Golden Spear" which aimed at retaking al-Hudaydah port in the eponymous governorate from Houthi-Saleh forces, whom they accused of using the port to smuggle weapons into Yemen. A group of anti-Houthi ground forces, comprised of Hadi-loyal military units, tribal forces, and Salafi militants, advanced north towards al-Hudaydah, supported by coalition airstrikes and seaborne missiles as well as tanks and special forces. By January 23, they had seized Mokha port and the center of Mokha city in Taiz governorate, south of al-Hudaydah, after a two-day standoff in which dozens had been killed on both sides. Houthi-Saleh forces withdrew north to al-Khokha city in southern al-Hudaydah governorate, where they deployed landmines to prevent Hadi-aligned ground forces from advancing north. In the following months, the humanitarian impact of a potential Hudaydah offensive dominated international discussions on Yemen, including a meeting of the UNSC on May 30. Following the meeting, the UN Special Envoy for Yemen, Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, proposed a plan for the port's security and logistic management with the aim of avoiding a Hudaydah offensive. The continued refusal of Houthi-Saleh forces to meet with the special envoy, however, prevented his plan from being implemented. On May 31, Houthi-Saleh forces attacked Hadi government forces near Camp Khaled ibn Walid east of Mokha city claiming to have killed more than twenty and wounded 48. In the following months, clashes in Taiz concentrated around Camp Khaled ibn Walid. In July alone, about 200 people were killed by coalition airstrikes and seaborne missiles as well as ground offensives conducted by both parties.

On November 4, Houthi-Saleh forces launched a ballistic missile at King Khalid International Airport in the Saudi capital Riyadh, describing the attack as retaliation for coalition airstrikes that had hit a hotel and a market in Sahar district, Sa'ada governorate, and had killed at least 31 on November 1. Claiming the missile had been smuggled into Yemen from Iran, the Saudi-led coalition imposed a blockade on all sea and air ports in Yemen two days later [→ Iran – Saudi Arabia]. This largely decreased humanitarian and commercial imports into the country, leading to a fall in supplies of basic commodities, fuel, and medicines, as well as an upsurge in prices. UN agencies and humanitarian organizations condemned the blockade, with the UN Humanitarian Coordinator warning that unless it was lifted, famine would occur in Yemen. On November 12, the coalition reopened the sea and air ports under the control of the government. Ten days later, it started to ease the blockade on ports under Houthi-Saleh control for humanitarian traffic only.

After the Houthi-Saleh alliance had seen increasing political tensions throughout the year, in late November, clashes broke out between both factions' forces in Sana'a city. On December 2, Saleh announced his willingness to turn a "new page" with the neighbouring states while calling for the fight against al-Houthi forces. Two days later, he was killed by the latter. As of December 5, the International Committee for the Red Cross had documented a total of 234 people killed and 400 injured in Sana'a city since the outbreak of clashes on

November 29. The coalition in turn intensified airstrikes on Houthis-controlled governorates, killing more than 200 civilians and wounding more than 100 in December, according to the UN.

Throughout the year, tensions also arose within the so-called pro-Hadi alliance between forces loyal to him and those backed by the United Arab Emirates (UAE), notably in the provisional capital of Aden. On February 10, for instance, Pres-

idential Guard forces were deployed to Aden International Airport to replace the UAE-backed airport security forces after they had shut down the facility for several hours due to unreceived salaries. The following day, clashes broke out between both forces, with the airport security forces later supported by Emirati helicopters, leading to several deaths.

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