

**Conflicts over what?**

Conflicts have been fought over either government power or a specific territory within a state. Since 1989 these two types of conflicts have been equally common globally, with great variation between regions.

Whereas territorial issues are predominant in Asia, where 70% of the recorded conflicts are territorial, the opposite pattern is found in Africa, where the issue of government power constitutes approximately 70% of recorded conflicts.

In the Americas every conflict has involved a struggle for government power – with one exception – the territorial conflict between Peru and Ecuador

**Where do they fight?**

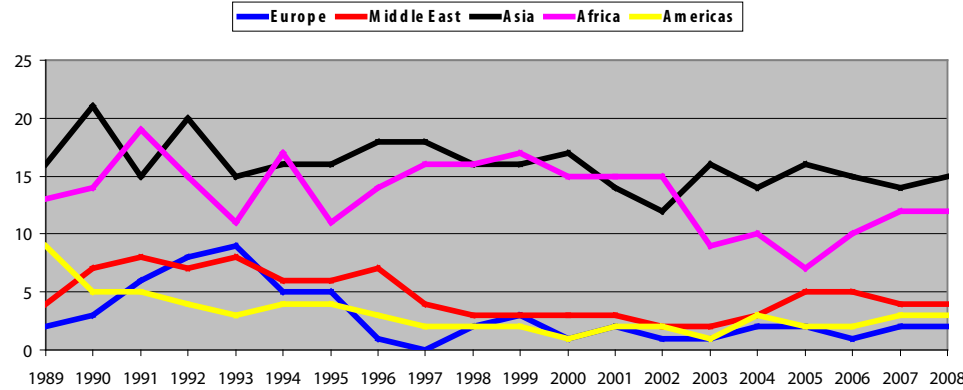
Contrary to common perceptions of Africa being the worst affected region in terms of conflicts and war, Asia has almost constantly experienced the highest number of conflicts – in recent times also the most intense ones.

The overall pattern for Africa is one of a gradual increase in conflict until the peak in the early 1990s, followed by a mixed pattern of decline and increase until 1997, and then a steady decline until 2005.

Conflicts in the Americas peaked in the late 1980s with intrastate conflicts raging in several countries, as well as a recorded interstate conflict between Panama and the USA. Since then, the number of conflicts has dropped significantly.

Europe has experienced a relatively low level of conflict since the peak years in the early 1990s, when the break-up of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union spawned several bloody intrastate conflicts.

**Armed Conflicts by Region, 1989-2008**



The Middle East has seen many high-intensity conflicts, especially in the early 1990s. The Israel-Palestine conflict, the Kurdish question in Turkey and Iran, and the continuous conflicts in Iraq have all contributed to this trend.

**A word of warning**

In recent years (2005-2008) the number of conflicts has again increased, breaking the positive downward trend visible from the peak years in the early 1990s and onwards. So far the number of wars remains at a comparatively low level, but this continuous increase is no doubt a cause for concern for the international community.

*The UCDP/PRIO dataset and a commentary on the trends in armed conflict is published annually in the Journal of Peace Research.*

*The dataset itself can be downloaded at [www.prio.no/CSCW/Datasets/Armed-Conflict/UCDP-PRIO/](http://www.prio.no/CSCW/Datasets/Armed-Conflict/UCDP-PRIO/) or at [www.ucdp.uu.se](http://www.ucdp.uu.se)*



**UCDP**  
Uppsala Conflict Data Program

Since 1979, the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) has recorded ongoing violent conflicts. This effort continues to the present day, now coupled with the collection of information on an ever broadening scope of aspects pertaining to organised violence.

UCDP data are one of the most accurate and well-used data-sources on global armed conflicts and its definition of armed conflict is becoming a standard in how conflicts are systematically defined and studied.

Contributions are annually published in States in Armed Conflict since 1987, the SIPRI Yearbook since 1988, the Journal of Peace Research since 1993, the Human Security Report since 2005 and Peace and Conflict since 2007.

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**PRIO**

Founded in 1959, PRIO, the International Peace Research Institute, is an independent research institute that conducts high-quality academic research on questions relevant to the promotion of a more peaceful world.

Research at the Institute is multidisciplinary and concentrates both on the driving forces behind violent conflict and on ways in which peace can be built, maintained and spread. PRIO engages in the promotion of peace through conflict resolution, dialogue and reconciliation, public information and policymaking activities.

The Institute hosts the editorial offices of two international peer-reviewed journals – Journal of Peace Research and Security Dialogue.

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**Patterns of Peace and Conflict**

**The UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset 1946-2008**



**UCDP**  
Uppsala Conflict Data Program

**Celebrating the 50th anniversary of PRIO**

**5th - 12th June 2009, Oslo**



**PATTERNS OF PEACE AND CONFLICT  
THE UCDP/PRIO 1946-2008 DATASET**

*Since the end of the Cold War the number of armed conflicts has declined steeply. Close cooperation between researchers at UCDP and PRIO has produced a world-leading dataset on armed conflicts, which makes this and other trends visible.*

The trends in armed conflicts since 1946 show a number of positive signs: the number of armed conflicts in the world as a whole has declined since the beginning of the 1990s, as has the severity of conflicts.

Since the end of the Second World War, a total of 240 armed conflicts have been active in 151 locations throughout the world. At 36 the number of conflicts in 2008 remains at a much lower level than in the early 1990s, when the number of conflicts peaked as 54 conflicts were recorded in 1992.

Over the past few years, the number of active conflicts has not changed drastically from one year to the next. However, the number of armed conflicts has increased by nearly one quarter since 2003, which was the year with the lowest number of active armed conflicts since the 1970s.

**Types of armed conflict, 1946-2008**

Ever since the end of the Second World War, the number of intrastate conflicts (e.g. civil wars) has exceeded the number of interstate conflicts (conflicts between states). The general increase in conflicts between 1946 and 2008 is to a large extent explained by an increase in intrastate conflicts.

The number of conflicts between states has been fairly stable during this period, ranging from zero to six. The trend of a majority of conflicts being intrastate has become even clearer in the last two decades. In the 1990s, only one or two interstate conflicts were fought each year, the conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia being the most intense one.

The ceasefire between India and Pakistan that was reached in late 2003 and which has held since, heralded the first time in the post-Cold War era that the conflict between these two countries was not active, apart from a period of calm between 1993 and 1995. The 2003 ceasefire also marked the beginning of the longest recorded period without interstate conflict in the international system.

This interlude ended in 2008 when an interstate conflict broke out between Djibouti and Eritrea.

**Internationalised conflicts**

By supporting one of the warring sides in an intrastate conflict with troops, states can fight each other without being engaged in an interstate conflict. Intrastate conflicts with this type of international involvement are defined as being internationalised.

The number of internationalised conflicts peaked in 1981, with seven such conflicts being recorded, including the interventions in Afghanistan and the involvement of Cuban troops in Angola and Ethiopia. In recent years, we have seen internationalised conflicts in Afghanistan, Iraq, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia and Georgia, to mention a few.

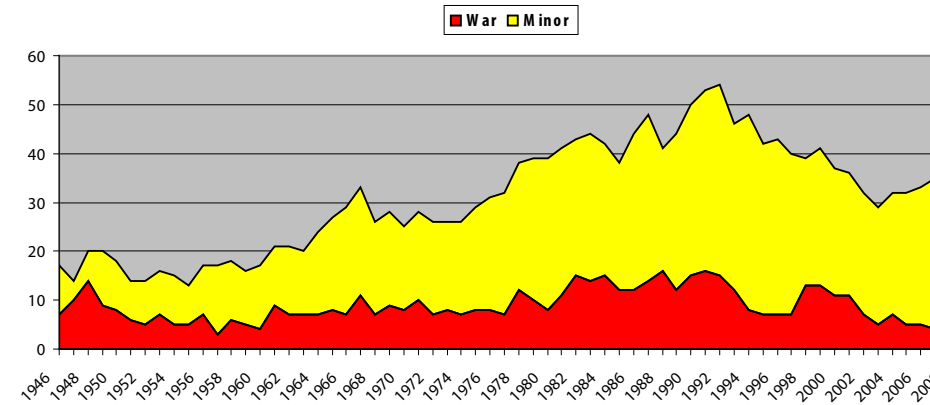
**Great power interventions**

Apart from neighbouring states intervening in intrastate conflicts, great powers such as the United Kingdom (UK), the United States (US), France, and Russia have been heavily involved in such activities. Since 1989, the UK has sent troops to five conflicts; the US to three; France to five; and Russia to two conflicts. Many of these are high profile conflicts such as Kosovo in 1999, Afghanistan (2001 and 2003-), Iraq (2004-), and Georgia (2008). Support has been given either to governments or rebel groups. Interestingly, China has not been involved in this category of conflict.

**The "War on Terror"**

Many of the internationalised conflicts since 2001 have been linked to the so called War on Terror. International support has been provided to the Northern Alliance to topple the Taliban government, to the US

**Armed Conflicts by Intensity, 1946-2008**



struggle against al-Qaeda, and to the US invasion of Iraq in 2003. Dozens of countries have also supported the new governments of Afghanistan, Iraq and Somalia in the continuous conflicts waged there.

**The intensity of armed conflicts**

In the last decade, a positive trend of fewer wars (conflicts with over 1,000 battle-related deaths) has become discernible. The number of wars increased in the early 1980s with conflicts such as the ones in the Philippines, Sudan, El Salvador and Nicaragua escalating into war, adding to ongoing ones in Afghanistan, Ethiopia and Angola.

The number of wars peaked at 16 in 1988 and 1991, after which a dramatic decrease was recorded in 1994. After a new peak in the late 1990s and early 2000s the number of wars has remained on a very low level over the past few years, down by two thirds from the early 1990s. In fact, in the entire post-Second World War period, only three years have seen a lower number of wars than 2008 (1957, 1960 and 2007).

Most of the recent wars have taken place in Asia; a pattern visible throughout most of the period following the Second World War. Another disturbing trend is that Asian conflicts tend to last longer than conflicts in other regions.

(continued on next page)

**Armed Conflicts by Type, 1946-2008**

