Chapter 1 Introduction – Patterns of Armed Conflict Since 1945

A changing pattern of conflict

Since the end of World War II, civil war has been the most frequent form of armed conflict. Interstate wars were never very numerous at any one time, but many interstate wars (and notably the two world wars) involved many countries and resulted in a very high number of fatalities. During the Cold War, interstate wars were few in number and in the post-Cold War era they have become even less frequent. While interstate conflicts still on average claim more battle deaths than civil wars, we have to go back to the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 to find one with more than 1,000 fatalities in a year and to the bloodiest year of the Vietnam War in 1972 to find one with more than 200,000 fatalities. Because of the sparsity of interstate war, civil wars now claim more lives overall than interstate war, and this has been true for every year since the end of the Cold War. This is a dramatic shift in the global pattern of armed conflict. However, an even more dramatic shift is the clear but uneven decline in the lethality of war generally since the peak represented by World War II.

Armed conflict

In this chapter we use the terminology of the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) and refer to armed conflict as a contested incompatibility over government or territory where the use of armed force between two parties results in at least 25 battle-related deaths in a calendar year. Of these two parties, at least one is the government of a state (Gleditsch et al. 2002: 618f). We shall refer to ‘war’ as an armed conflict with more than 1,000 battle-related deaths (military and civilian) in a given year. The dataset distinguishes between interstate armed conflict, intrastate armed conflict, and extra-systemic conflict, i.e. conflict between a state and a non-state group outside its own territory (Gleditsch et al. 2002: 619). Intrastate conflicts are subdivided into conflicts with and without intervention from other states. We return later to two other types of internal conflict that have occurred frequently during this period. We refer to internal armed conflicts as civil conflicts, or civil wars when they exceed the threshold of 1,000 battle deaths.

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1 The authors acknowledge financial support from the Research Council of Norway, the Norwegian Non-Fiction Writers Fund, the Norwegian Foreign Ministry, and … We are grateful for the research assistance from Ida Rudolfsen, …, and …
How many?
Since the end of World War II, 548 conflict dyads have been active in 254 conflicts active in 155 countries (Themnér & Wallensteen, 2014). The reason why the number of conflicts dyads is so much higher than the number of conflicts, is that many conflicts (interstate as well as civil) involve several parties on one side or both. For instance, in the territorial conflicts in Mindanao in the Philippines, the government is fighting three different insurgent groups. The conflict over government with the Communist Party is, however, counted as a separate conflict with just one dyad. The Figure 1 depicts the incidence (or occurrence) of armed conflicts 1945–2013. During this period there have been four to five times as many civil conflicts as interstate ones and 15 times as many conflict-years. While interstate wars have always been few in number, their incidence has declined even further in recent years. In nine of the years since the end of the Cold War, no interstate conflicts were recorded, although an increasing number of civil conflicts have been internationalized – currently as much as one quarter. Extra-systemic conflicts was more frequent than interstate conflict in the first 30 years after the end of World War II, but as the traditional colonial system was more or less wound up with the end of Portuguese colonial rule in the mid-1970s, this category is no longer used in the coding of new conflicts.

While interstate conflict declines, the incidence of civil conflict increased markedly during the Cold War period, from less than ten ongoing conflicts in a given year in the first decade to over 40 in the final years of the Cold War. To some extent, this increase is due to the decolonization that gained pace after 1960. Internal conflicts in colonies would not be recorded as state-based conflicts. After independence, they are counted as civil conflicts. Decolonialization also involved arbitrary and sometimes disputed national boundaries that easily developed into territorial conflicts. Many of the regimes in the new states were quite fragile and tempting targets for coups and other attempts to capture the government. Decolonialization also contributed to fragmentation of the state system – British India became two countries in 1947 (Burma had already been defined as a separate entity in 1937) and three with the independence of Bangladesh in 1971. Worldwide, there were 74 independent countries in 1946 and 185 in 1991 according to the Gleditsch and Ward list of independent states (Gleditsch & Ward, 1995). The probability that an independent country would experience civil war in a given year was nine percent in 1960 and 17.6 percent in 1991. Thus we still
see an increase during the Cold War, but less dramatic than if we simply count the number of on-
going conflicts.

The end of the Cold War led to the breakup of former Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. Both of these involved violence, although not at a scale experienced in the break-up of the four empires (Austria, Germany, Czarist Russia, and the Ottoman) at the end of World War I. Most of these conflicts ended relatively quickly and a number of Cold-War related conflicts in Africa and Central America ended when the two superpowers lost interest in fighting by proxy. Thus, around the turn of the millennium the incidence of conflict had dropped by about 30%. Following the events of 11 September 2001, the decline halted and in the period since then the incidence of armed conflict has been relatively stable. The ups and downs in the most recent period can to some extent be attributed to the fact that some smaller conflicts pass in and out of the ‘active’ category because the number of battle deaths does not always exceed the lower threshold of 25.

The total number of ongoing conflicts has remained around 30–35 in the past decade, around the same level as in the mid-1970s. The probability that a given country has a conflict on its territory declined in the first phase of the Cold War, increased during the heyday of decolonization, but declined markedly after the end of the Cold War, as shown by Figure 2.

**Figure 2 Share of countries with internal armed conflict on their territory, 1946–2013**

![Figure 2](image_url)

Figure created by Ida Rudolfsen based on conflict locations reported by UCDP (Gleditsch et al., 2002).

Somewhat paradoxically, the share of countries participating in armed conflict has increased as shown in Figure 3. In other words, a given country is less likely to have armed conflict on its territory but more likely to participate in armed conflict! The Nordic countries, for instance, have not experienced war in the traditional sense involving their own territory, since World War II (and
Sweden not even then), But all of them have participated in armed conflict far from home several times after the end of the Cold War. The main reason for this is that a number of interstate and internationalized civil conflicts have been fought by large coalitions on one side. For instance, 28 countries fought against Iraq in the Gulf War of 1991, the invasion of Afghanistan and the subsequent attempts at stabilizing and defending the new regime obtained the support of 29 countries, and although the US only succeeded enlisting two countries on its side when invading Iraq in 2003, no less than 36 countries eventually participated in the stabilization force. The first peak in Figure 3 is due to a similar phenomenon – the large coalition fighting as a UN force in the Korean War. Of course, many countries participate in such coalitions mostly as acts of political solidarity, they make only very limited military contributions, and their governments tend to define it as peacekeeping or peacemaking rather than war.

**Figure 3. Share of countries participating in armed conflict, 1946–2013**

![Figure 3. Share of countries participating in armed conflict, 1946–2013](image)

Figure created by Ida Rudolfsen on the basis of the UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset.

**How long?**

Almost every year, some new conflicts emerge while others end. In 2013, for example, a new conflict broke out in Sabah in Malaysia response to an old territorial claim by the Sultan of Sulu in the Philippines. After three weeks of fighting and 70 deaths, the conflict ended. However, many conflicts are quite persistent. For instance, the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians goes back to the end of the 1940s, as does the territorial conflict in Kachin in Burma (Myanmar). Ending such enduring rivalries has proved to be very difficult. Nevertheless, the post-Cold War period has seen the end of major violence in some old conflicts such as those in the Basque region in Spain and in Northern
Ireland and there are hopes of a more peaceful future in Burma. The number of new conflicts is at a lower level than it was during most of the Cold War era.

**How violent?**

Armed conflicts vary enormously in their severity, measured by the number of battle-related deaths. The three bloodiest conflicts after World War II were the Vietnam War (best estimate around 2.1 mill. deaths), the Korean War (1.25 mill.) and the Chinese Civil War (1.2 mill.) (Lacina & Gleditsch, 2005: 154). Each of the last two lasted less than four years, so both exceeded the Vietnam War in annual battle deaths by a wide margin. At the other end of the scale, we find a number of conflicts that barely exceed the minimum threshold, such as the territorial conflict in India’s Bodoland, which is recorded in the UCDP database with a BE of 28 in 2013. Thus, figures for the number of on-going conflicts may present a somewhat misleading picture of the waxing and waning of war over time.

Figure 4 presents annual battle deaths over time for the period after World War II. The UCDP coding is a little more restrictive than PRIO’s, which is why the UCDP curve is lower for the years that overlap. The trend over time is very similar for the two datasets. For 2013, the figure includes a high estimate based on UN estimates and a low estimate based on UCDP for the conflict in Syria. No best estimate for that conflict is yet available from UCDP. The aggregate figure for 2013 is higher than that for 2012, and is also be higher than the previous peak from 1999 if the UN high number for Syria is used. In any case, the number of deaths in 2013 is considerably lower than the peaks during the Cold War period.

![Figure 4 The number of annual battle deaths, 1946–2013, PRIO and UCDP data](image)

The PRIO battle deaths data for 1946–2008 are found at [www.prio.no/cscw/cross/battledeaths](http://www.prio.no/cscw/cross/battledeaths) while the corresponding data from UCDP cover the years 1989–2012 and are found at [www.pcr.uu.se](http://www.pcr.uu.se). Battle deaths data for 2013 for all conflicts except Syria are found in Themnér & Wallensteen (2014). All the numbers used here are best estimates (BE). The two sources also supply high and low estimates (HE, LE). Some PRIO figures lack BEs; we have used the average of the HE and the LE except for ‘minor armed conflicts’ where we have used 500
or close to the average of the lower threshold for recording a conflict (25) and the threshold for war (1,000). A further caveat is that BEs are not always available on an annual basis. The distribution of the total battle deaths over the years the war lasted are explained in Lacina (2009). The high estimate for Syria is 61,816. This estimate is collected from a report commissioned by the UN published in August 2014 (Price et al., 2014). The report does not provide numbers by calendar year, and the estimate includes killings from May 2013 through April 2014 covering a full 12 months period, yet not the actual calendar year 2013. It should thus be considered a rough estimate: http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/SY/HRDAGUpdatedReportAug2014.pdf. For the low estimate, UCDP has published the number 19,085 on their Syria page in the online conflict encyclopedia: http://www.ucdp.uu.se/gpdatabase/gpcountry.php?id=150&regionSelect=10-Middle_East#.

This figure makes a much better case for the ‘waning of war’ or ‘decline of violence’ argument that has been made forcefully in several recent books (Payne, 2004; Goldstein, 2011, Pinker, 2011, see also Gleditsch et al., 2013). Clearly, the aggregate figure for a given year is extremely dependent on individual wars. The first peak is generated by the Chinese Civil War, immediately followed by the Korean War. The next peak is largely the Vietnam War. The third combines the Iran-Iraq interstate war plus the civil war in Afghanistan and the resistance to the intervention of the Soviet Union. The smaller peak in 1990–91 is mainly due to Eritrea’s fight for secession from the union with Ethiopia and the Gulf War between Iraq and the US-led coalition, and the one in 1999 from the interstate war between Eritrea and Ethiopia. The final peak, so far, chiefly results from the civil war in Syria. A striking point about these peaks is that they are progressively lower over time. The trend is clearly down, but the decline is not linear, not even monotonic.

A further argument for the waning of war is, of course, is provided by a comparison of these figures with figures for the two world wars (cf Lacina, Gleditsch & Russett, 2006: 677, Figure 2). Those two wars completely dwarf anything that has come later – in fact, when the entire 20th Century is graphed together it becomes difficult to see much change in the post-World War II era at all. We might interpret the confrontation between Soviet Union and the US and its allies as a third ‘world war’. Then there is the major difference that this war never involved direct military action between the two superpowers, that both sides practiced considerable restraint, and that the confrontation ended in the virtual capitulation of one side, although framed in language that was more complimentary to the loser.

Breaking down the battle deaths by type of war we find that interstate wars are generally the largest and account for some 32% of all battle deaths over the whole period despite being far fewer and on average lasting considerably shorter. However, the two largest wars mentioned above demonstrate the fragility of the boundary between interstate war and internationalized civil war. The third-largest war in terms of battle deaths, in China, was clearly a civil war with limited international participation. However, the two wars at the top of the list, Korea and Vietnam, initially were clashes between the two halves of countries arbitrarily divided after earlier wars. In fact, the Correlates of War project and the UCDP both classify the Vietnam War as a civil war in South Vietnam until 1964 and then as an interstate war from 1965 when the US started bombing North Vietnam and the Western intervention became the dominant feature of the war. The wars in Korea and Vietnam

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2 For a challenge to this interpretation, see Gohdes & Price (2013) and a response by Lacina & Gleditsch (2013).
3 The majority of battle deaths are located in a relatively small number of conflicts and countries. Globally, interpersonal violence represents a much more common form of violent deaths, with roughly nine times as many people dying from homicide than from civil wars (Hoefler & Fearon, 2014).
4 See Appendix 4 in Pettersson & Themnér (2012) and Small & Singer (1982).
could have been classified as internationalized civil wars, as is the Afghanistan War from 1980 onwards.

Some discussion over the intensity of conflict and the decline in conflict violence has arisen from the use of different data sources. While the UCDP and PRIO battle deaths estimates are based on a wide selection of secondary sources, some estimates of conflict casualties, mostly focusing on individual conflicts or countries, have relied on survey data. In a larger comparison of 13 conflicts between 1955 and 2002, Obermeyer et al. (2008) used WHO mortality survey data to estimate the number of violent war deaths. Based on sibling data the authors claimed that the PRIO battle deaths data underestimated overall battle deaths by a factor of three, and challenged the notion of a declining trend in deaths. While acknowledging the usefulness of survey data in principle, Spagat et al. (2009) claim that the two approaches are indeed compatible, and show that Obermeyer et al. (2008) both employ a broader definition of battle deaths and are selective in which countries are included. Another controversy arose over surveys collected in Iraq after the 2003 US-led invasion. In an article in *Lancet*, Burnham et al. (2006) claimed that more than 600,000 violent deaths had occurred in the 39 months following the invasion. However, as Johnson et al. (2008) show, there are major biases in the Burnham et al. estimate, one arising from the sampling of residential streets that are crossing main street, leading to the oversampling of households that are particularly exposed to violence. A follow-up survey involving Burnham among the authors (Hagopian et al. 2013) reports violent deaths that are much more in line with other surveys and the Iraq Body Count basing their estimates on news reports.

The human cost of war extends beyond those killed in violent events, as major losses of life and negative health effects may stem from indirect and long-term consequences of armed conflict. Some cross-national studies have documented a considerable increase in overall population mortality. Ghobarah, Huth & Russett (2003) look at whether the intensity of civil wars in the 1991-1997 period explain excess mortality measured by Disability Adjusted Life Years (DALYs) data from WHO. They find that the overall long-term effects on health in 1999 due to civil wars between 1991 and 1997 were equivalent to 8.01 million DALYs lost, compared to a total of 8.44 million DALYs lost directly in international and civil wars globally in the same year. Hence, their conclusion is that almost as many died from indirect causes attributable to conflict, as those who died at gun-point. These findings illustrate that the victims of armed conflicts extend well beyond those who are killed in the battlefields. But the numbers are far less dramatic than the often-cited ratio of 9 indirect deaths to each battle death, lending credence to voices claiming that the number lacks empirical foundation (Murray et al., 2002). Other cross-national studies, such as Li & Wen (2005) and Plümper & Neumayer (2006), also find considerable excess mortality both during and after conflict.

In order to assess what the indirect effects of conflict are in individual countries, one faces some challenging counterfactuals: what would the situation have been had it not been for the armed conflict. Such counterfactuals involve much greater uncertainties as do estimates of battle-related deaths. One of the most controversial attempts to assess the overall human consequences of war involves the civil war in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The International Rescue Committee (IRC) carried out five retrospective mortality surveys in the DRC between 1998 and 2007. Following the fifth survey the IRC concluded that a total of 5.4 million people had died as a consequence of the war, with more than 90% being victims of disease, malnutrition and other non-violent causes. However, in a review of the IRC estimates, the 2009/2010 Human Security Report (Mack, 2010) argues that the IRC numbers are subject to several flaws, including the assumption that
mortality before the war was much lower, and mortality during war much higher, than it actually was, and that survey locations for the first two surveys were inappropriately selected. When recalculating the IRC numbers with more plausible assumptions, the Human Security Report finds that the best estimate of the excess death toll shrinks to less than a third. Although it may be possible to come up with a plausible figure for war-related deaths for single conflicts, it seems unlikely that we will have reliable figures for global war deaths in the near future.

Where?
Major parts of the world such as North America and most of Europe are now free of armed conflict. Figure 5 shows a map of conflict zones for the years 2006–08. By conflict zones we mean parts of a country that are directly affected by fighting. A similar map for countries involved in armed conflict or even for countries with armed conflict somewhere on their territory would portray armed conflict as much more extensive. For instance, Russia has a long-standing civil war in Chechnya, but the military action takes place only in a very small part of the country.

Figure 5 Conflict zones, 2006–08

Source: Map created on the basis of data from Hallberg (2012). For updated information on what countries have civil conflict on their soil, see Themnér & Wallensteen (2014) and earlier annual updates from UCDP.

Broadly speaking, we can identify three clusters of conflict in the period after World War II. One extends through Central America and into South America. Most of these conflicts ended after the cold War and only the one in Columbia has persisted over a long period and was still active in 2014. A second cluster extends from the Middle East in a southeasterly direction all the way to the Philippines. In the 1990s this cluster extended all the way into former Yugoslavia on the Western side and in the 1970s all the countries in Indochina were embroiled in wars of different kinds. Thus, this cluster is also now more limited geographically than it has been in the past. Finally, Africa has experienced a number of armed conflicts spread out over most of the continent. Of the 54 independent countries in the continent, 43 have experienced civil armed conflict or interstate conflict after independence. In the three years featured in this map, the African conflict cluster was concentrated in North and Central Africa and this pattern largely persists today.

The geographical clustering of armed conflict is usually attributed to the similarity of neighboring countries in terms of conflict-inducing factors such as poverty and weak states. But there

\[5\] Or after World War II, in the rare cases that independence occurred first.
are also elements of contagion between conflicts generated, for instance, by refugees, rebel forces that seek sanctuaries across the border, or transnational ethnic ties (Buhaug & Gleditsch, 2008).

There have been major regional shifts in the incidence and severity of war during the post-World War II period. Initially, the most serious armed confrontations occurred in East Asia, as illustrated by the fact that the three largest wars occurred there. The next peak was due to wars in West Asia (Afghanistan and Iran-Iraq). Currently, the largest wars are raging in the Middle East … And, of course, just before our period, Europe was the exclusive arena for World War I and the dominant arena for its successor.

**Figure 6 Battle deaths by region, 1946–2008**

From *Human Security Report 2009–2010* (Mack, 2010: 167, Figure 10.4). Red area: East Asia, Southeast Asia and Oceania. Dark blue area: MENA. Light blue area: Central Asia and South Asia. Grey area: Europe. Green area: The Americas. Yellow area: SSA. Iran and Iraq are counted into the ME. This figure will be updated for the next revision.

Such regional breakdown does not reflect well that the human losses may stem from outside the regions in question. In great power interventions, soldiers from these powers who die in the conflict are counted as casualties in the area the conflict took part. However, great power human losses were often small compared to losses among the local fighters. An arguably more significant factor in producing geographically skewed battle deaths was the fighting by proxy among the great powers. The major conflicts in East Asia after the Second World War more than anything else reflected that the great powers were fighting by proxy in the region.

Rather than comparing conventional geographical regions, Huntington (1996) proposed that the global pattern of conflict would increasingly be dominated by a ‘clash of civilizations’, where his definition of civilizations was largely based on religion. Huntington was not alone in suggesting that conflicts between the Muslim world and the Christian West would be particularly serious. Although aspects of the conflicts after the end of the Cold War, notably in former Yugoslavia, ran along religious dividing lines, statistical studies have failed to find robust evidence of a greater prevalence
of conflict between than within civilizations (Russett, Oneal & Cox, 2000; Huntington, 2000). However, Huntington (1996: 257f) had in fact written that ‘Islam’s borders are bloody and so are its innards’ and on the latter point he may have come closer to the mark. In fact, in 2012 there were only six intrastate wars – in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Sudan, Somalia, Syria, and Yemen. All of them occurred in countries with a majority of Muslims and all of them involved Muslim insurgents (Rudolfesen & Gleditsch, 2014). There is no evidence that there is a rise in conflicts in Muslim countries or involving Muslim insurgents. But the decline in other types of conflict means that the share of conflicts that involve Muslim insurgents or where a majority of the inhabitants are Muslims, or both, is increasing. This does not mean that religion itself as an issue in all these conflicts, though in some conflicts it clearly is.

Finally, looking at Figure 3 again, it is striking that conflicts tend to cluster around the Equator. Buhaug, Gleditsch & Wischnath (2013) found that for countries that had not had any intrastate conflict since 1950, the means distance from the capital to the Equator was 4,224 km, as against 2,325 km for countries with no intrastate conflicts since 1950. Nondemocratic regime types, weak states, low economic development, and Islam are also overrepresented in the low latitudes. The interactions between these factors and the role played by a tropical climate, if any, remain largely unexplored.

Conflicts by issue
There have been several calls for breaking down armed conflicts by issue (e.g. Diehl, 1992) and the Issues Correlates of War (ICOW) project maps territorial, river, maritime, and regime claims – but only for interstate conflict. A more limited typology is used by the UCDP, which distinguishes between conflicts over territory and over government. Figure 7 shows the trend in the two types of incompatibilities coded by UCDP. Whereas conflicts over government were relatively rare in the first decades after World War II, the number of governmental conflicts increased in the 1970s, and since then roughly half of all conflicts have been over territory and the other half over government.
Buhaug (2006) argued that the strength of the rebel group relative to the state would determine whether it was realistic to try to capture state or whether the rebels were more likely to settle for secession. He also found that territorial and governmental conflicts are shaped, in large part, by different causal mechanisms.

A majority of civil conflicts in the post-World War II period have been fought along ethnic lines. This is true for almost all secessionist conflicts, but even for almost half of the conflicts over government (Denny & Walter, 2014). That does not, however, imply that ethnicity itself is the issue. On the contrary, the conflict appears to be driven by the same grievances that account for other conflicts as well, but ethnicity provides a stable pattern of identification that facilitates the organization of an insurgency.

**How conflicts end**
For some countries, civil conflict has become a chronic condition. Approximately half of the nations that have experienced at least one onset of civil conflict during this period later experienced a relapse into renewed conflict, even after several years of inactivity. In an unpublished paper, Kreutz (2013) compares the number of civil conflict onset with the number of civil conflict terminations over time. Figure 8 shows that except for a few years, the rate of civil conflict onset was higher than the rate of termination throughout the Cold War, but the opposite has been true for the post-Cold War period with terminations outpacing onsets in all but a few years.
Kruetz (2010) coded the way in which civil conflicts ended in the period 1946-2005. There is a striking difference between the Cold War period and the post-Cold War period. The percentage of civil conflicts ending with a peace agreement increased from 9 percent to 18 percent, whereas victories by either side decreased from 58 percent to 14 percent. Also termination by ceasefire agreements became much more frequent in the post-Cold War period.

Other forms of internal conflict
Two other forms of internal conflict are conceptually distinct, yet closely related to civil war. Conflicts between organized groups without the direct participation of the government are often called intercommunal conflicts, or nonstate conflicts in the UCDP. Such conflicts are currently as numerous as state-based conflicts, but on average they are less violent. They often come into being because the state is too weak to put an end to them. If the state was strong enough to engage the warring parties, it would exercise its power to quash the violence before it escalated. Alternatively, the state would become the dominant actor on the other side and the conflict would be classified as a civil conflict.

Secondly, many governments use violence against unorganized people. Such conflicts are not defined as civil conflicts, but rather as one-sided violence (UCDP, cf Eck & Hultman, 2007), or as genocide or politicide (Harff, 2003) or an even broader category, democide (Rummel, 2005). In the twentieth century, this form of conflict probably claimed more lives by a wide margin than all wars. Using Rummel’s broad definition (which includes excess mortality in concentration camps and famines for which the government must be held responsible) democide claimed some four to five as many victims as war in the first three quarters of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century. The greatest catastrophe of its kind in the twentieth century, China’s Great Leap Forward in 1958–61 – the policy of forced industrialization and collectivization of agriculture – is now estimated to have caused some 45 million deaths (Dikötter, 2010). This is more than the total number of battle deaths in the twentieth century – although probably less than the elusive total number of deaths indirectly attributable to war. Figure 9 shows the number of deaths combined for nonstate, onesided and intrastate conflict. While in most years, most are victims of intrastate conflicts, the genocide in Rwanda represents a spike which results in casualties more than five times as high as any other year during the post-Cold War period.
A widespread claim is that civilians suffer more from civil war and war-like situations today than used to be the case in earlier periods of history. The very nature of war has changed in this regard according to several scholars, the most influential of whom is Mary Kaldor. In her 1999 book she coined the term “New Wars” for the type of conflict that has become predominant since the end of the Cold War, and both the term and her ideas are widely referred to since. Kaldor identifies three historical developments that in particular contributed to the shift to the New Wars: the increasing salience of identity in politics; the transformation of war economies; and the end of the bipolar world order of the Cold War. Wars based on identity politics are believed to be especially brutal toward members of the outgroup; transformed war economies means that armed groups increasingly come to depend on looting civilians; and the end of super power rivalry removed a restraining influence that the super powers exerted over their allies. Critics have argued that the impact of these changes is misunderstood in the theorizing about the changing nature of civil war. For example, Kalyvas (2001: 116) in a review of ethnographical studies compares civil post-Cold War period and earlier civil wars, and finds that ‘both the perception that violence in old civil wars is limited, disciplined, or understandable and the view that violence in new civil wars is senseless, gratuitous, and uncontrolled fails to find support in the available evidence’.

The claim that civilian suffering has increased with the advent of the New Wars can be interpreted in two ways. Either other forms of organized mass violence taking place outside the context of traditionally defined state-based civil conflict have increased, or the severity of civilian victimization as increased in ongoing civil conflict. Using the data that exists on other forms of organized violence the first possibility can be dismissed. As can be seen in Figure X above there is no increasing trend since 1989 in non-state conflict or in one-sided violence. The genocide in Rwanda in
1993 stands out as an exceptionally destructive event in the post-Cold War period, but mass killings of civilians happened more frequently during the Cold War according to data from the Political Instability Task Force.

The issue of civilian victimization in civil conflict was examined in a study by Melander, Hall and Öberg (2009). To gauge the extent of civilian victimization in civil conflicts they analyzed the average levels of politicide/genocide and forced displacement in country-years with civil conflict. Taking into account also other factors that might dampen the human impact of civil conflict, such as democracy and economic development, they found that to the extent that there is any trend in the data it is contrary to the New Wars thesis in that the wars of the post-Cold War period are less atrocious on average. Figures X and X are updated versions with slightly longer time series of two figures in the 2009 article, and the updated figures show that the patterns do not change with the addition of the newly available data: there is no evident trend in average levels of forced displacement in civil conflict, and there is a continued downward trend in the average magnitude of genocide happening during civil conflict.

**Figure 10 Average forced displacement in civil conflict, 1979-2008**
The future of conflict

It is tempting to map the future of conflict by prolonging current trends. The decline in armed conflict after the end of the Cold War gave rise to widespread optimism about world peace built on democracy and the market economy. The events of 11 September 2001, the drawn-out wars in Afghanistan and Iraq nullified much of this optimism. But such trend-prolongation, whether optimistic or pessimistic, is a hazardous exercise. For one thing, as we have shown, the severity of armed conflict in a given year has traditionally been dependent on single conflicts. Had nuclear war between the two superpowers broken out during the Cold War, it would have given us a peak higher than World War II. If the current crisis between Russia and the West were to escalate, it could have a similar result, although most observers would rate this as a much less probable development than an escalation during the Cold War.

In order to make more realistic projections about the future, we need to look at reasonable prognoses for the main causal factors behind conflict. On the basis of our current knowledge about the main factors promoting conflict (such as Collier & Hoeffler, 2004; Fearon & Laitin, 2003; Hegre et al., 2001; Hegre & Sambanis, 2006), Hegre et al. (2013) have worked out a forecasting model which projects a continued decline in the proportion of the world’s countries that have internal armed conflict, from about 15% in 2009 to 7% in 2050. The substantive of this forecasting model potentially spans the themes of all the other chapters of this book. As we gather more knowledge about the causes of civil war, we shall also be able to better assess its future.
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[In this first draft we cite most of the references in abbreviated form only. Full references will be added later.]
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