# **Data on Conflict-affected Countries for Assessing Investment Climate Intervention Opportunities**

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## Introduction

The Investment Climate (IC) team, Trade and Competitiveness GP of the World Bank Group, assists governments in reforming their business environments. As part of this work, the IC team is designing a global opportunity map for IC interventions. In this note, indicators for conflict-affected states are proposed that are intended to be included in the opportunity map.

Armed conflict shapes the risks and opportunities for investment climate interventions in many ways. Conflict directly impacts business opportunities by negatively affecting security, infrastructure, access to transport routes and electricity. In addition, countries in the post-conflict period present particular challenges. They have a particularly high risk of recurring violence (Collier, Elliott, Hegre, Reynal-Querol, & Sambanis, 2003; Hegre et al., 2017). Moreover, armed conflict has a persistent detrimental economic effect by weakening political institutions, undermining rule of law, and increasing corruption (Gates, Hegre, Nygård, & Strand, 2012; Peschka, 2010).

It is widely accepted in research that both the likelihood of future violence and detrimental economic effects of armed conflict tend to increase with 1) the severity (in deaths) of the conflict, 2) the duration of conflict and, 3) the closeness in time of the last conflict episode (Gates, Hegre, Nygård, & Strand, 2010; Gates et al., 2012; Hegre et al., 2017). Lastly, we know that conflicts rarely affect the entire population. Even during an ongoing conflict, there can be large areas of the country that remain largely unaffected by violence.

Capturing all of these dimensions in a simple indicator is challenging and requires some simplification. The definitions and thresholds employed here are informed by research on the development consequences of armed conflict, conflict traps as well as earlier attempts to identify conflict-affected countries (e.g. Gates et al., 2012; Hegre et al., 2017; Strand & Dahl, 2010).

In short, the following distinctions are made.

**Post-conflict:** A post-conflict country has no ongoing intra-state conflict in 2016, but experienced ongoing conflict at least one calendar year during the past 10 years in an intra-state armed conflict that in total has resulted in 1000 battle-related deaths since its start.

**Ongoing conflict:** A country is defined as being affected by ongoing conflict when there is a contested [incompatibility](http://www.pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/definitions/#incompatibility_2) that concerns [government](http://www.pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/definitions/#Government_2) and/or territory where the use of armed force between two parties, of which one is the government of a [state](http://www.pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/definitions/#State), results in at least 25 [battle-related deaths](http://www.pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/definitions/#Battle-related_deaths) in one calendar year ( cf. Melander et al. 2016).

**Spatially limited ongoing conflict:** For all countries with ongoing conflict as defined above, the extent of violence is established by measuring the population-weighted share of the country caught in organized violence (based on state-based, non-state and one-sided fatalities). The variable measures how much of the country is embroiled in violence, taking into account the size of the area and the estimated distribution of the population within the country. When conflict affects less than 20% of the population it is defined as spatially limited.

**Widespread ongoing conflict**: A country is defined as affected by widespread ongoing conflict when the conflict is ongoing and affects at least 20% of the population.

In addition to the categorical indicators, continuous variables are provided indicating the time since the last conflict (in years), as well as the share of the population affected (in percentage).

## Definitions and data sources

The indicators are produced using data from the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP). The UCDP covers systematic information on organized violence with global coverage. Data is collected based on public sources, such as books, newspapers and the reports of reputable non-governmental organisations. The UCDP data covers three dimensions of conflict-related violence, namely state-based, non-state and one-sided violence (Melander, Pettersson, & Themnér, 2016). The main focus is here on state-based conflict, and more specifically intrastate conflict, but non-state and one-sided violence are taken into account once there is an ongoing conflict.

The different categories of violence are defined as follows according to UCDP:

***State-based conflict:*** A state-based armed conflict is a contested [incompatibility](http://www.pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/definitions/#incompatibility_2) that concerns [government](http://www.pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/definitions/#Government_2) and/or territory where the use of armed force between two parties, of which at least one is the government of a [state](http://www.pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/definitions/#State), results in at least 25 [battle-related deaths](http://www.pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/definitions/#Battle-related_deaths) in one calendar year (Melander et al. 2016). State-based conflict is referred to as intra-state or civil conflict when one or several non-state groups fight against the government.

***Non-state conflict:*** The use of [armed force](http://www.pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/definitions/#Armed_force__use_of) between two organised armed groups, neither of which is the [government](http://www.pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/definitions/#Government_2) of a [state](http://www.pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/definitions/#State), which results in at least 25 [battle-related deaths](http://www.pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/definitions/#Battle-related_deaths) (Melander et al. 2016). Non-state conflicts include fights between rebel groups and militias, such as that between Lord’s Resistance Army and Sudan People’s Liberation Movement/Army in the late 1990s and early 2000s, but also conflicts between informally organized groups, notably between groups with a common identification along ethnic, clan, religious, national, or tribal lines. Non-state conflicts are typically less violent than state-based conflicts (Melander et al., 2016).

***One-sided violence:*** The use of [armed force](http://www.pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/definitions/#Armed_force__use_of) by the [government](http://www.pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/definitions/#Government_2) of a [state](http://www.pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/definitions/#State) or by a formally organised group against civilians which results in at least 25 deaths in a year.[[2]](#footnote-2) Most fatalities in one-sided violence tend to occur in the context of state-based armed conflict (Melander et al. 2016). One-sided violence has resulted in some of the deadliest conflict events in recent history, such as the Rwandan Genocide.

As main source of information, the UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset (Allansson, Melander, & Themner, 2017) is used, combined with the UCDP GED dataset (Sundberg & Melander, 2013).

## Ongoing conflict

There are no established standards for when political violence is so severe that it is relevant to take into account in planning for investment climate interventions. Two dimensions are important. In particular, it is relevant if the conflict is expected to be 1) a severe disruption of economic activities and in addition, 2) that we can expect it to have a high chance of lasting or recurring.

Gates et al (2012) find that even minor conflict (25-999 deaths) is associated with post-conflict negative growth. Minor violence resulting from challenges against the state can have a profound effect on investments given the signals these events send. In addition, even minor conflicts tend to last in the future. Only 20% of countries seeing minor conflict in one year, do not see conflict the year after (Hegre et al., 2017). Therefore, data from 2016, especially on widespread violence, can approximate the situation of 2017 and beyond.

Another question is what form of violence to include. Traditionally, most studies focus on the number of deaths in fighting against the state (Gleditsch, Wallensteen, Eriksson, Sollenberg, & Strand, 2002; Strand & Dahl, 2010). Little is known about the economic consequences of conflict that is not directed against the state (Strand & Dahl, 2010). In addition, non-state conflict for example tends to fluctuate more over the years (Melander et al. 2016). It could therefore be more difficult to approximate future risk based on 2016 data. Therefore, a more conservative approach is chosen here focusing on intrastate conflict.

Yet, it is also known that different forms of violence often concur (Melander et al., 2016). Complex civil wars like in Syria often see fighting between different factions (non-state conflict), and massive violence against civilians (one-sided violence) along-side fighting against the state. When estimating the extent of ongoing conflict, therefore fatalities resulting from all forms of organized violence, non-state and state-based conflict as well as violence against civilians are used.

The threshold for ongoing conflict is therefore as follows.

**Ongoing conflict:** A country is defined as being affected by ongoing conflict when there is a contested [incompatibility](http://www.pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/definitions/#incompatibility_2) that concerns [government](http://www.pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/definitions/#Government_2) and/or territory where the use of armed force between two parties, of which one is the government of a [state](http://www.pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/definitions/#State), results in at least 25 [battle-related deaths](http://www.pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/definitions/#Battle-related_deaths) in one calendar year ( cf. Melander et al. 2016).

## Post-conflict countries

Conflict has large detrimental effects on many development outcomes that persist after the termination of fighting (Gates et al., 2012). Internal armed conflict exacerbates conditions that increase the chances of war breaking out again (Collier et al., 2003; Hegre et al., 2017). Only about one third of all civil conflict since 1946 have never recurred (Hegre et al., 2017).

The main specification of post-conflict countries is restricted to all countries with at least one intrastate armed conflict resulting in 1000 deaths in total cumulatively since the conflict started. This high number of fatalities is clearly more likely for longer conflicts and short intense conflicts. Therefore, it should provide a useful restriction for identifying highly destructive situations that are particularly likely to recur (cf. (Strand & Dahl, 2010)). The more restrictive threshold is established based on the Cumulative Intensity *(cumint* variable) provided in the UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset version 17.1.

The literature suggests that the likelihood of recurring violence decreases with temporal distance to conflict so that with every additional year at peace, the risk of relapse into conflict decreases. Looking at minor armed conflict only 20% of all countries that had a minor armed conflict in one year were at peace during the next (Hegre et al. 2017). In contrast, as seen in the graph below, after 10 years of peace the risk of relapse into conflict is down to less than 5%. All countries within 10 years after a conflict should therefore still see a considerable risk of escalating again. The figure also shows that the risk of violence remains non-zero thereafter, but it does not longer decrease with every year. The threshold of 10 years is used for the main specification. The information on the peaceyears variable (see codebook below) can be used for extending the postconflict period to for example 20 years or log-transforming the variable as suggested in Hegre et al (2017). Given the threshold employed here (total of 1000 deaths), the risk may even be higher for the postconflict countries as defined here.



*Hazard function. Probability of transitioning from peace to conflict for each additional year at peace based on data on civil conflict from the Uppsala Conflict Data Program 1946-2014, graph taken from Hegre et al. 2017.*

**Post-conflict:** A post-conflict country has no ongoing intra-state conflict in 2016, but experienced ongoing conflict at least one year during the past 10 years in an intra-state armed conflict that in total has resulted in 1000 battle-related deaths since its start.

## Estimating the extent of armed conflict within a country

Conflicts rarely affect the entire population (Gates et al., 2010; Raleigh & Hegre, 2009). It is also widely accepted that countries harbouring armed conflicts tend to be larger than other countries (ibid). Thus, even for conflicts of higher intensity, we may see many areas within the affected country that are not directly affected by fighting. The variation in spatial extent of fighting is therefore important.

For all ongoing conflicts, as defined above, the spread and population affected within the country is estimated. The indicator on the extent of armed conflict within a countrymeasures the area and the population affected by the violence in relation to the total area and population of the country. This is done based on the assumption that the more limited the area and the share of the national population affected, the greater the opportunities for investment climate interventions to make a positive impact in spite of the ongoing violence. In particular, areas with little population, such as deserts or mountainous areas, should be of limited importance for the private sector. Accordingly, also areas spared by conflict that are largely unpopulated should be of comparably little economic importance and given little weight. In contrast, densely populated areas are often so because they are resource-rich or are strategically located, for example close to transport routes (Raleigh & Hegre, 2009). Therefore, violence in densely populated areas should have a larger economic impact than violence in rural sparsely populated areas.

Based on these considerations, for all ongoing conflicts as defined above, the extent of violence is established by measuring the population-weighted share of the country caught in political violence in 2016. The variable measures how much of the country is embroiled in violence, taking into account the size of the area and the estimated distribution of the population within the country.

## Material and methods for estimating the extent of armed conflict within a country

The indicator relies on data on the location of deadly events in armed conflict taken from the UCDP-GED dataset version 5.0. adding the year 2016 (data obtained prior to publication) (Sundberg & Melander, 2013)[[3]](#footnote-3). The [UCDP GED dataset](http://ucdp.uu.se/#/exploratory) provides information on the exact geographic location of all deadly events in state-based, non-state or one-sided violence since 1989. It is the only geo-referenced event dataset on armed conflict that is global in scope.

In order to estimate the spatial extent of the violence, the conflict events from the UCDP-GED dataset are assigned to standardized spatial units across the terrestrial areas of the globe. This is done using the PRIO-GRID dataset of 0,5 x 0,5 decimal degree cell resolution (about 55x55 km at the Equator) (Tollefsen, Strand, & Buhaug, 2012) ([PRIO-GRID 2.0](http://grid.prio.org/)). At this level of spatial aggregation also small countries are represented by several cells. It also constitutes a spatial resolution where the location of the UCDP-GED conflict events fairly accurately describes the true location of fighting (Weidmann, 2013). The use of the PRIO-GRID cells also facilitates the integration of population data.

The land area of the country and the respective cells is calculated based on the land area in square kilometres of the grid cell belonging to the allocated country for that year as given by the *gwarea* variable in the PRIO-GRID dataset (Tollefsen et al., 2012). Grid cells that cover the territory of two or more independent states are assigned to the country that covers the largest share of the cell's area (Tollefsen et al., 2012).

In order to estimate not only the area, but also the population affected by violence, the subnational distribution of each country’s population is taken into account. The subnational distribution of the population is estimated using widely-used data by [CIESIN](http://sedac.ciesin.columbia.edu/data/collection/gpw-v3) at Columbia university (the Gridded Population of the World version 3 data) (CIESIN & CIAT, 2005) aggregated to PRIO-GRID cells with values taken from the PRIO-GRID 2.0. dataset. The variable is available every fifth year up to 2005 and is extrapolated (linearly) to cover the time period until 2016. While the data due to extrapolation should be seen as an approximation, it should still reasonably well capture the distribution of population within the country.

All PRIO-GRID cells that contain at least one deadly conflict event during the year as given by the UCDP-GED dataset are defined as conflict zone. The final indicator is aggregated to the country and presents the (population-weighted) share of the conflict zone compared to the (population-weighted) area in the country outside of this zone. This means for example that for a conflict zone of the same absolute size, the indicator will give a higher value for a small country compared to a larger country. The variable is called *pop\_affected.*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Postconflict  | Limited  | Widespread  |
| Burundi | Algeria | Afghanistan |
| Chad | Azerbaijan | Bangladesh |
| DRC | Cameroon | Congo |
| Indonesia | Colombia | Iraq |
| Iran | Egypt | Nigeria |
| Israel | Ethiopia | Pakistan |
| Nepal | India | Philippines |
| Peru | Jordan | Somalia |
| Senegal | Kenya | Syria |
| Sri Lanka | Libya | Yemen |
| Tajikistan | Mali |  |
|  | Mozambique |  |
|  | Myanmar  |  |
|  | Niger |  |
|  | Russia  |  |
|  | Rwanda |  |
|  | South Sudan |  |
|  | Sudan |  |
|  | Thailand |  |
|  | Turkey |  |
|  | Uganda |  |
|  | Ukraine |  |

 Table 1: Conflict affected countries as of 2016



Figure 1: Share of population affected for ongoing conflicts in 2016

## **Comparison to alternative approaches**

There exists a variety of definitions of conflict-affected countries, but to my knowledge, there is no country-level global indicator of armed conflict that takes into account the spatial extent fighting in a country. As way of validation, the indicator has been compared to other measures of fragility and in particular, 1) a conventional measure of number of annual deaths in intrastate conflict, 2) an alternative measure taking account only the spatial extent of fighting in the countries.

**Validation 1: Comparison to number of deaths in organized violence**

It was investigated how well the indicator correlates with the severity of violence. For testing this, the best estimate of fatalities from intrastate conflict is correlated with the population affected. The fatalities measure is logged. The two variables correlate positively as expected (Pearson’s r 0.62) and the most violent wars also see a higher share of population in conflict as demonstrated in figure 2. We also see that for countries like Turkey and India, the measure on the population affected captures that this violence is rather limited in extent as intended with this measure. Yet, there are a few outliers, in particular Congo, a relatively small country, where even limited violence affects a high share of the population. Potentially, this could be corrected for by deviating from the measure established here.



Figure 2: Share of population and fatalities from intra-state conflict 2016

**Validation 2: Comparison to area in conflict without population-weighting**

In addition, it was checked how the variable compares to an alternative measure that only takes into account the area affected by conflict, without taking into account the distribution of population. These two measures are highly correlated (Pearson’s r 0.86). This alternative measure correlates with the number of battle-deaths, too, but the relationship is less strong (Pearson’s r 0.52) compared to the preferred population weighted measure.



Figure 3: Population affected vs area affected by conflict in 2016

## **Limitations and further development**

The main indicators presented here largely follow standard definitions of ongoing armed conflict used widely in both research and policy by focusing on armed challenges against the state. They take into account other dimensions of organized violence when estimating the extent of armed conflict in the country. Yet, the restriction to intrastate conflict means they miss out on local situations of fragility where the government is only indirectly implicated, such as high level of gang-related violence in Mexico causing hundreds of deaths.

The definitions and thresholds employed here are informed by research on the development consequences of armed conflict, conflict traps as well as earlier attempts to identify conflict-affected countries (e.g. Gates et al., 2012; Hegre et al., 2017; Strand & Dahl, 2010). Yet, to some extent, thresholds for categorical variables are arbitrary. Based on the dataset provided, both a more nuanced analysis on the time since last conflict and the extent of fighting is possible, as continuous variables are provided. In addition, it is easy to add additional information such as the number of years the country has been in conflict.

Further nuances and more detailed information can be obtained using the underlying data sources. The indicators presented here were developed at the country level. Yet, far more detailed information on the location of fighting within a country is available and underlying these indicators with the UCDP-GED dataset (Sundberg & Melander, 2013). For example, data could easily be aggregated to the level of first-order administrative units such as provinces.

Lastly, future developments in conflict research will allow for a more nuanced assessment of current and future risks. For example, the UCDP plans to publish monthly updated events on armed conflict starting 2018. This will facilitate for a regularly updated view on the spread of violence in conflict-affected countries. In addition, more fine-grained assessments of future risk are possible. [The ViEWS project](http://www.pcr.uu.se/research/views/), for instance, makes use of data similar to those used here to estimate the risk of future violent events at a detailed geographic resolution.

## **Codebook**

The datasets provided contain the following variables

**gwno:** country code Gleditsch/Ward

**country:** Name of country Gleditsch/Ward

**year**: year

**ongoing:** dummy variable coded 1 for more than 25 deaths in intrastate conflict and 0 otherwise according to UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset 17.1.

**postconflicthigh:** A post-conflict country has no ongoing intra-state conflict in 2016, but experienced ongoing conflict at least one year during the past 10 years in an intra-state armed conflict that in total has resulted in 1000 battle-related deaths since its start. A post conflict is given the value 1 on the categorical indicator and 0 otherwise.

**gwsum\_bestdeaths**: best estimate of deaths in all categories of violence (non-state, one-sided and state-based) recorded by the Uppsala Conflict Data Program in the country based on the UCDP GED dataset (unpublished 2016 data). The location of these events is used for estimating the extent of violence.

**gwsum\_best\_sb:** best estimate of deaths in state-based conflict recorded by the Uppsala Conflict Data Program in the country based on the UCDP GED dataset (unpublished 2016 data). Note that in a few cases this does not corresponds to ongoing conflict as ongoing may also involve events in other countries (e.g. Rwandan government fighting against Rwandan rebel groups in DRC).

**pop\_affected:** Share of population affected by violence in percentage (0 to 100) measured as described above based on population data from CIESIN, the PRIO-GRID structure as well as UCDP GED.

**peaceyears:** Counts the years since the last minor conflict since 1970 (all conflicts in included). Note that if no conflict occurred since 1970, the variable will count the number of years since 1970 or since the country became independent.

**peaceyearshigh**: Counts the years since the last conflict since 1970 that has resulted in at least 1000 battle-related deaths in total since its onset. Based on the max of all conflicts taking place simultaneously in one year/country on the variable cumint in the UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset 17.1. (Allansson et al. 2017). Note that if no conflict occurred since 1970, the variable will count the number of years since 1970 or since the country became independent.

**confl\_1:** "conflict ordinal no threshold”: Coded as 1=postconflict, 2=limited ongoing, 3 widespread ongoing" as defined above and 0 otherwise.

**confl\_2:** "conflict ordinal 1000 threshold”: Coded as 1=postconflicthigh (1000 deaths), 2=limited ongoing, 3 widespread ongoing as defined above and 0 otherwise.

**Additional variables for time-series dataset**

**maxintensity:** Two different intensity levels are coded: minor armed conflicts (1) and wars (2), Takes the max intensity of conflict in the country so that it is coded 2 if there is at least one war (>=1000 deaths in intrastate conflict) during the year. Data from UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset 17.1.

**maxcumulativeintensity:** gives for all countries information on whether at least one statebased conflict since its start resulted in at least 1000 deaths. Only provided for ongoing years up to and including 2015. Based on max of **cumint** from UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset 17.1.

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2. Extrajudicial killings in government facilities are excluded. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. For Syria, no UCDP GED conflict points have been estimated before 2016 due to the extreme intensity of the conflict and limited details in reporting. The years 2011-2015 have been set to missing in the current version of this data. Also, few battle events happening outside terrestrial areas (e.g. in the coastal zones of Sri Lanka, Phillippines) have been dismissed. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)