ViEWS monthly forecasts, December 2019*

Summary of forecasts

Monday 9th December, 2019

Figure 1: Ensemble forecasts for December 2019

This report presents ViEWS forecasts for December 2019 as of 1 December 2019, which are based on data that are updated up to and including October 2019. The underlying conflict data were produced by the UCDP (http://ucdp.uu.se). The ViEWS compilation of these data and data from other sources are available at https://www.pcr.uu.se/research/views/data/downloads/.

We highlight developments in the most recent months. For a discussion of what underlies the forecasts in terms of slowly changing risk factors as well as methodological issues, see

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Figure 2: Change maps (cm) for November 2019 to December 2019

the ViEWS introductory article. Figure 1 shows our country-level forecasts for December 2019. Figure 3 the corresponding forecasts at detailed geographic locations (PRIO-GRID level, or pgm), and Figure 5 shows the most recent observed conflict events. Similar reports for previous months are available at http://www.pcr.uu.se/research/views/, along with other information on the ViEWS project.

1 Country-month forecasts for December 2019

The plots in Figure 1 show the ViEWS country-level forecasts for the immediate future – what will happen in December 2019 according to our forecasts? We show the probability of at least one event in each country in December 2019, based on data up to and including October 2019. Countries with a red color have been assigned with a forecast probability close to 1, whereas purple countries have been assigned with a probability of less than 0.1. When the forecasts indicate that no event is as likely as at least one event, countries are drawn with a light orange color.

Our forecasts for December 2019 are mostly similar to last month’s forecasts. The December 2019 run is using the same set of models as last month, so only changes to input variables will matter for the forecasts.

2PRIO-GRID is a grid structure that divides the terrestrial world into squares of approximately 55 by 55 kilometers. See http://grid.prio.org/
1.1 State-based conflict (sb)

We continue to forecast a high probability of state-based conflict in countries that have a recent history of conflict or protest events. Particularly in Egypt, Mali, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Cameroon, DR Congo, Somalia and Mozambique, the risk of at least one state-based conflict event is high and over 50%.

Figure 2a shows that compared to last month’s forecast, the greatest increase of the risk of a state-based conflict is in Burundi, where deadly clashes between militants and government security forces newly emerged in October. On 21 October, 24 people were killed in clashes between RED-TABARA and government security forces in Kayanga, Bubanza province. On 25 October, an additional 13 people were killed in clashes between unidentified militants and government security forces along with Imbonerakure, youth members of the CNDD-FDD.

We also find a strong increase of risk for Rwanda, where on 6 October, 19 members of the
FDLR were killed by Rwandan security forces in the Northern Province following an attack on civilians on 4 October in Musanze that had led to 14 deaths.

Additionally, we find mild increases of risk for Niger and Kenya. Niger faced violence from IS in both the southwestern (Tillabéri, Dosso) and southeastern (Diffa) border regions. On 15 October, for instance, 15 were killed in clashes between IS and government security forces in Diffa region. In Kenya, six Al-Shabaab militants were killed by Kenyan security forces on 1 October in Mombasa County. Eleven days later, 10 paramilitary police officers were killed by a Al-Shabaab roadside blast in Garisasa county bordering Somalia.

1.2 Non-state conflict (ns)

The forecast maps for non-state conflict follow partly the same patterns as sb, but the patterns of past events do differ across conflict types (see Figure 5). Mali, Nigeria, DR Congo, Kenya, and Somalia remain at particularly high risk of non-state violence this month.

Compared to last month’s forecast, the risk of non-state conflict has increased in Cameroon in particular, where on 7 October Boko Haram killed two local vigilantes of Comités Locaux de Vigilance in Far North Province’s Kerawa. Two more vigilante members were killed by Ambazonians in Bamenda town, North-West region, on 17 October. Ethnic Bamoun versus Bulu violence moreover led to one death in South Region on 9 October.

We also find a mild increase for Ethiopia, where ethnic violence across the country led to a reported total of 76 people killed.3

1.3 One-sided violence (os)

The probability of one-sided violence events remains especially pronounced this month in Mali and Burkina Faso, Nigeria (predominantly given Boko Haram/IS), DR Congo, Mozambique, and Somalia (predominantly given Al-Shabaab).

Compared to our October forecast (figure 2c) the model ensemble responds strongly to the case of Niger in particular, where IS killed five civilians in different locations within the southeastern Diffa region in October. Rwanda also shows a relevant increase in the risk of state-based violence, given the killing of 14 civilians in Musanze noted above.

2 PRIO-GRID-month forecasts for December 2019

Figure 3 presents forecasts at fine-grained sub-national geographical locations for December 2019, for each of the three outcomes. The color mapping is the same as for the country-month forecasts.

2.1 State-based conflict (sb)

The densest risk clusters at pgm level for state-based conflict continue to be in northeastern Nigeria, the Anglophone region of Cameroon, Ituri and the North and South Kivu provinces in DR Congo, Somalia (its southern states in particular), Egypt’s Sinai, and the northeastern Cabo Delgado Province of Mozambique where an Islamist insurgency emerged at the end of 2017. The risk of violence in Mali also remains high but is more spread out geographically. Most of these regions have been facing violence for years as shown in Figure 5, reflecting that countries’ recent conflict history is the strongest predictor of future violence. More recent violence has led to clear clusters in northern Burkina Faso, Libya’s Tripoli, and Egypt’s Cairo.

Compared to last month (see Figure 4a), we find the strongest increases in the risk of state-based violence in Burkina Faso’s Centre-North, where the prevalence of clashes between Islamist militants (JNIM, Ansaroul Islam) and security forces intensified during October. Of note is IS’s first claim of an attack on Nigerian security forces in northwestern Nigeria’s Sokoto state, which they report to have led to one soldier killed.

Changes at the pgm level moreover corroborate the elevated risk at the country level for Rwanda and Burundi. Mozambique shows a new cluster of risk in the country’s center Sofala and Manica Provinces, where violence between the Renamo military junta and Mozambican security forces erupted in October following disputed results of the 15 October general election, leading to around 10 people reported killed.

2.2 Non-state conflict (ns) and one-sided violence (os)

The forecasts for non-state conflict and one-sided violence depend on the same factors although with somewhat different implications. The strongest non-state clusters are found in Mali, southern and central Nigeria, eastern DR Congo, and Somalia. For one-sided violence, we find strong and persistent clusters in Mali and Burkina Faso, northeastern Nigeria as well as the Lagos and Delta states, the eastern DR Congo, around Mogadishu in Somalia, and

\footnote{See \url{https://ucdp.uu.se/#/actor/7032}.}

\footnote{While this claim is yet to be confirmed, it has been included in the UCDP’s October candidate event data.
Cabo Delgado province in Mozambique. South Africa’s Johannesburg also now shows as a high-risk location of one-sided violence.

Compared to last month (see Figure 4b), we find no strong increases in the risk of non-state violence of note. The general mild decrease in south Nigeria and DR Congo’s Ituri province is relevant.

Regarding one-sided violence (see Figure 4c), of particular note is a uniform and strong increase in Burkina Faso’s northern and now also Centre-North regions. One-sided violence in Cameroon’s Anglophone region during October, perpetrated both by Ambazonians and the country’s military, moreover causes a strong increase in the risk there. Escalated Mayi-Mayi attacks on civilians in south Kivu of the Democratic Republic of Congo additionally has led to a strong increase in the risk there this month.

3 History of UCDP organized violence

Figure 5 presents the the recent history of violence in each PRIO-GRID cell. Red cells experienced violence in October 2019, and purple ones have not seen armed conflict in many years.

Figures 5a, 5b, 5c show state-based, non-state, and one-sided violence respectively from the UCDP. Figure 5d shows data on protests from ACLED (https://www.acleddata.com).
Figure 5: Decay function maps of observed conflict for October 2019