ViEWS monthly forecasts, August 2019*

Summary of forecasts

Tuesday 13th August, 2019

Figure 1: Ensemble forecasts for August 2019

This report presents ViEWS forecasts for August 2019 as of 1 August 2019, which are based on data that are updated up to and including June 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 the

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ViEWS introductory article.\footnote{https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0022343319823860.} Figure 1 shows our country-level forecasts for August 2019, Figure 3 the corresponding forecasts at detailed geographic locations (PRIO-GRID level, or pgm)\footnote{PRIO-GRID is a grid structure that divides the terrestrial world into squares of approximately 55 by 55 kilometers. See http://grid.prio.org/}, 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 August 2019

The plots in Figure 1 show the ViEWS country-level forecasts for the immediate future – what will happen in August 2019 according to our forecasts? We show the probability of at least one event in each country in August 2019, based on data up to and including June 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 August 2019 are mostly similar to last month’s forecasts. The August 2019 run is using the same set of models as last month, so only changes to input variables will matter for the forecasts.
1.1 State-based conflict (sb)

We continue to forecast a high probability of state-based conflict (sb) in countries that have a recent history of conflict or protest events. Particularly in Mali, Nigeria, DR Congo, Somalia, and Egypt the risk of at least one conflict event is high. We also continue to forecast a high probability of state-based conflict in Cameroon, as the recent separatist violence and clashes between government forces and IS (often referred to generally as Boko Haram in this region) proceeds (see Figure 5a).³

Figure 2a shows that compared to last month’s forecast, no drastic increases in the probability of state-based violence have occurred. We do however forecast a relevant higher risk of state-based violence in Sudan, given nationwide protests and security forces reportedly killing over 120 unarmed protesters in June. Ethiopia shows an increased risk too, given

³See https://ucdp.uu.se/#/statebased/640.
a streak of high-level killings linked to an alleged coup attempt in Amhara state in June, leading to around 78 deaths in total.

1.2 Non-state conflict (ns)

The forecast maps for non-state conflict (ns) follow partly the same patterns as sb, but the patterns of past events do differ across conflict types (see Figure 5). Egypt and Mozambique for instance have not had much ns conflict, yet have seen significant one-sided violence, whereas for Libya the inverse has recently been true. Mali, Nigeria, DR Congo, Kenya, Ethiopia, and Libya in particular remain at high risk of non-state violence this month, the latter being reflective of spreading hostilities between the UN-backed Government of National Accord (GNA) and the Libyan National Army (LNA), which the UCDP codes as non-state actors.4

Figure 2b shows that compared to last month’s forecast, the risk of ns conflict has increased in Cameroon in particular, where at least six people were killed as a consequence of clashes between Fulani and Ambazonians. Niger also shows an elevated risk given clashes between Fulani and Kanuri tribes, leading to four fatalities in UCDP’s candidate event data, as well as violence between farmers and herders leading to a total of 11 dead in June.

1.3 One-sided violence (os)

The forecasts for os respond to about the same factors as ns, but are less clearly related to protests and regime change. They also in general occur more frequently in newly independent countries. The probability of one-sided violence events remains pronounced in Mali and Burkina Faso, Nigeria (predominantly given Boko Haram), DR Congo, Sudan, and Somalia (predominantly given Al-Shabaab). Mozambique continues to be at high risk of one-sided violence as well, given continued militant civilian killings in Cabo Delgado Province.

Compared to our July forecast (figure 2c), we find an elevated risk in Guinea given violent state repression of protests against constitutional reform on 13 June, killing one person and wounding 28 others. Liberia also shows an increase, given large-scale protests against the sitting government in Monrovia on 7 June, as well as reported violent repression of protesters in Kingsville.5 Madagascar shows a heightened risk of one-sided violence this month given three civilians killed by government forces in Ambohimahasoa area on 8 June. Egypt, finally, also shows an increase, likely given the killing of four civilian construction workers by IS in el-Arish on 22 June.6

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4See https://ucdp.uu.se/#/actor/7072.
2 PRIO-GRID-month forecasts for August 2019

Figure 3 presents forecasts at fine-grained sub-national geographical locations for August 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, the North and South Kivu provinces in DR Congo, Somalia (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.\(^7\)

The risk of violence in Mali and Burkina Faso 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.

Compared to last month (see Figure 4a), we find the strongest increases in the risk of state-based violence in the northeast of Nigeria given ramped up security operations in the region since April. Interestingly, the risk appears to have increased this month in the northern parts of Borno State, while the risk has decreased in its southern parts. Nonetheless, the risk remains significant across the region. While the cluster of violence in central Mali and northern Burkina Faso has shown a decline in the probability of state-based violence compared to last month, the risk does appear to have fanned out to more remote regions including west Niger. The Anglophone areas of Cameroon show a slightly decreased risk of state-based violence in July, while by contrast in DR Congo, the risk has increased significantly in Ituri province. Continued clashes with Islamist militants in the Cabo Delgado province of Mozambique furthermore produces a significant elevation in the risk of state-based violence there. In Somalia, finally, we find an unclear pattern of increase and decrease in its southern regions and around the country’s capital.

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. For ns, we most notably predict a worsened cluster of non-state violence in the northeastern DR Congo province of Ituri, given escalated ethnic violence between ethnic Hema and Lenuda, leaving at least 170 dead in Djugu area by 18 June.\(^8\)

\(^7\)See https://ucdp.uu.se/#/actor/7032.

in central Nigeria, despite escalated herder-farmer violence in and after April of this year. With regard to the risk of one-sided violence, finally, we again find a strong increase in Ituri province given escalated violence perpetrated by the ADF.\(^9\)

### 3 History of UCDP organized violence

Figure 5 presents the recent history of violence in each PRIO-GRID cell. Red cells experienced violence in June 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).

\(^9\)See https://ucdp.uu.se/#onesided/1027
Figure 5: Decay function maps of observed conflict for June 2019