ViEWS monthly forecasts, May 2019*

Summary of forecasts

Monday 6\textsuperscript{th} May, 2019

This report presents ViEWS forecasts for May 2019 as of 2 May 2019. The forecasts are based on data that are updated up to and including March 2019. The underlying conflict data were produced by the UCDP (\url{http://ucdp.uu.se}). The ViEWS compilation of these data and data from other sources are available at \url{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

\footnote{This report was prepared by Håvard Hegre, Marie Allansson, Mihai Croicu, Frederick Hoyles, Stina Höglbladh, and Remco Jansen. The research was funded by the European Research Council, project H2020-ERC-2015-AdG 694640 (ViEWS). The simulations were performed on resources provided by the Swedish National Infrastructure for Computing (SNIC) at Uppsala Multidisciplinary Center for Advanced Computational Science (UPPMAx).}

Figure 1: Ensemble forecasts for May 2019

(a) State-based conflict (sb), May 2019
(b) Non-state conflict (ns), May 2019
(c) One-sided violence (os), May 2019
the ViEWS introductory article. Figure 1 shows our country-level forecasts for May 2019, Figure 2 the corresponding forecasts at detailed geographic locations (PRIO-GRID level, or pgm), and Figure 3 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 Forecasts for May 2019

The plots in Figure 1 show the ViEWS country-level forecasts for the immediate future – what do we forecast will happen in May 2019? We show the probability of at least one event in each country in May 2019, based on data up to and including March 2019. Countries with red color have forecast probabilities close to 1, whereas purple countries have forecasts at 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.

(a) State-based conflict (sb), May 2019
(b) Non-state conflict (ns), May 2019
(c) One-sided violence (os), May 2019

Figure 2: Ensemble forecasts for May 2019

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

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, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, South Sudan, DR Congo, Somalia, and Egypt the risk of at least one conflict event is high. We continue also to forecast a high probability of state-based conflict in Cameroon, as the

---

2 PRIO-GRID is a grid structure that divides the terrestrial world into squares of approximately 55 by 55 kilometers. See http://grid.prio.org/
recent separatist violence and clashes between government forces and IS (often referred to generally as Boko Haram in this region) continues (see Figure 3a). Despite weekly mass protests in Algeria throughout March calling for an end to President Bouteflika’s regime, we forecast a lower probability of state-based violence in May 2019. Although Bouteflika has since resigned, growing protests in April against the transitional military regime were repressed and may escalate in May.

The forecast maps for non-state conflict (ns) and one-sided violence (os) follow partly the same patterns as sb, but the patterns of past events do differ across conflict types (see Figure 3). Cameroon and Egypt, for instance, have not had much ns conflict, whereas Libya and Kenya have continued to experience it in recent months. Notably, the risk of ns conflict has reduced in Ethiopia, while escalated ethnic violence in central Mali as well as Nigeria continue to put the countries at high risk in May 2019. In Mali, at least 173 people were reported to have died in March as a result of violence between Dogon and Bambara farmers and Fulani herders. DR Congo, Kenya, and Libya remain at high risk too, the latter being reflective of the advance into the south west and recently on the capital Tripoli of east-based Libyan National Army (LNA), which the UCDP codes as a non-state actor.

The forecasts for os respond to about the same factors, 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 is pronounced in Mali and Burkina Faso, Nigeria and Cameroon (predominantly given Boko Haram), DR Congo, Sudan, Central African Republic, and Somalia and Kenya (predominantly given Al-Shabaab). The risk of one-sided violence continues to be pronounced in Burundi, too, which has experienced recurrent violence against real and perceived political opponents since 2015. Also striking is the elevated risk in Zimbabwe, resulting from violent repression of political opposition and protests earlier this year. Compared to last month’s predictions, finally, the risk of one-sided violence in Libya is more elevated in May, likely given the recent escalation of armed conflict in the country.

Figure 2 presents forecasts at fine-grained sub-national geographical locations for May 2019, for each of the three outcomes. The color mapping is the same as for the cm forecasts.

The densest risk clusters at pgm level for state-based conflict continue to be in northeastern Nigeria, 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. The risk of violence in Mali and Burkina Faso is also increasing, but more spread out geographically. Most of these regions

---

3See the monthly report for June for some more details on Cameroon.
4See https://www.crisisgroup.org/crisiswatch/.
5See Figure 3c and https://ucdp.uu.se/#country/516.
have been facing violence for years as shown in Figure 3, reflecting that countries’ recent conflict history is the strongest predictor of future violence. Of note, too, is that Comoros shows a relatively elevated risk of state-based violence in May as a consequence of protests over disputed results of the presidential elections in March.

The forecasts for non-state conflict and one-sided violence depend on the same factors although with somewhat different implications. For ns, we forecast elevated risk in central Mali, given the noted increased ethnic tensions. We also forecast a comparatively high risk of one-sided violence in central and southern Nigeria, Central African Republic, North and South Kivu, Darfur, the Kenyan Rift Valley, as well as Northern (Coastal) Libya. Southwestern Libya, too, has seen an escalated risk of non-state violence over the last several months, again reflecting the advance into the south west of east-based Libyan National Army (LNA).

For os, northeastern Nigeria as well as southern Nigeria and neighboring Anglophone Cameroon, the Kivus, Burundi, and Somalia (Mogadishu area) continue to be primary hotspots in May 2019. Furthermore, the main city areas of Zimbabwe have over the last months shown an increased risk of one-sided violence given violent repression of protests and reports of extrajudicial killings. Risk has also been elevated for the northeastern Cabo Delgado Province of Mozambique, where attacks on civilians by suspected militants continued throughout March.

2 History of UCDP organized violence

Figure 3 presents the the recent history of violence in each PRIO-GRID cell. Red cells had conflict in March 2019, and purple ones have not seen conflict in many years.

Figures 3a, 3b, 3c show state-based, non-state, and one-sided violence respectively from the UCDP. Figure 3d shows data on protests from ACLED (https://www.acleddata.com).
Figure 3: Decay function maps of observed conflict for March 2019

(a) State-based conflict (sb), March 2019

(b) Non-state conflict (ns), March 2019

(c) One-sided violence (os), March 2019

(d) Protests (pr), March 2019