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Armed Conflict 1946–2001: A New Dataset*

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In the period 1946–2001, there were 225 armed conflicts and 34 of them were active in all of or part of 2001. Armed conflict remains a serious problem in the post-Cold War period. For three decades, the Correlates of War project has served as the main supplier of reliable data used in longitudinal studies of external and internal armed conflict. The COW datasets on war use the relatively high threshold of 1,000 battle-deaths. The Uppsala dataset on armed conflict has a lower threshold, 25 annual battle-deaths, but has so far been available for only the post-Cold War period. This dataset has now been backdated to the end of World War II. This article presents a report on armed conflict based on this backdate as well as another annual update. It presents the procedures for the backdating, as well as trends over time and breakdowns for the type of conflict. It assesses the criteria for measuring armed conflict and discusses some directions for future data collection in this area.

*This is a joint article from the Conflict Data Project in the Department of Peace and Conflict Research at Uppsala University and the Conditions of War and Peace Programme at the International Peace Research Institute, Oslo (PRIO). Work on this dataset was supported by grants to PRIO from the Development Economics Research Group at the World Bank and the Research Council of Norway. The data collection for the post-Cold War period has largely been funded by the Ford Foundation, the Swedish Agency for Civil Emergency Planning, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Uppsala University. We are grateful to several colleagues in our respective institutions for comments and suggestions. The dataset also includes the geographical location data used in Buhaug & Gates (2002). Earlier versions of the article were presented to the 42nd Annual Convention of the International Studies Association, Chicago, IL, 20–24 February 2001, to the conference on 'Civil Wars and Post-Conflict Transitions' organized by the Center for Global Peace and Conflict Studies & World Bank at the University of California, Irvine, CA, 18–20 May 2001, and to the conference on 'Identifying Wars: Systematic Conflict Research and Its Utility in Conflict Resolution and Prevention', Uppsala University, 8–9 June 2001. We

acknowledge support from the European Union for the basic grant to the Uppsala Conference and from the World Bank, Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Swedish Agency for Civil Emergency Planning for additional financial support. We are grateful to Paul Collier, James Fearon, Scott Gates, Håvard Hegre, Birger Heldt, Andy Mack, Nicholas Sambanis, Meredith Reed Sarkees, Dan Smith, and other participants in these meetings for their comments, and to Lars Wilhelmsen and Naima Mouhleb, both at PRIO, for technical assistance and comments. All five authors share joint responsibility for the article. Within our collaborative effort, Håvard Strand generated the candidate database and performed all the calculations, while Margareta Sollenberg and Mikael Eriksson were responsible for checking whether or not the conflicts conformed to the Uppsala coding criteria and for identifying additional conflicts outside the candidate list. Halvard Buhaug and Jan Ketil Rød, both of NTNU, calculated the location data. That work was supported by a university grant for cross-disciplinary research at NTNU and by the Research Council of Norway. The complete list of all the armed conflicts, the statistical database in monadic and dyadic form, and the detailed list of definitions from the Uppsala Conflict Data project are available at www.prio.no/cwp/datasets.asp and at www.pcr.uu.se.

The State of Armed Conflict

The end of the Cold War has not eliminated armed conflict. A total of 115 armed conflicts have been recorded for the period 1989–2001. In all or parts of 2001, 34 conflicts were active in 28 countries. This included outbreaks of four new armed conflicts: In Macedonia in January, the UCK (Ushtria Çlirimtare Kombetare: National Liberation Army) launched a rebellion for constitutional changes concerning the status and rights of the Albanian population. In the Central African Republic in May, a military faction attempted a coup subsequently put down by the government supported by troops from Libya. In Guinea, the RFDG (Rassemblement des forces démocratiques de Guinée: Rally of Democratic Forces of Guinea), which had launched a rebellion in September 2000, continued fighting in 2001 with the support of former RUF (Revolutionary United Front) forces from Sierra Leone.¹ In the USA, the 11 September attacks on New York and Washington, DC by Al-Qaeda (The Base) signalled a major change in the activities of this organization, which had previously attacked US forces abroad in order to change US policy in the Middle East. The 11 September events made it clear that the aims had widened to include the destruction of the US economic, military, and political system. The attacks were followed by a worldwide campaign by the USA and allied forces against Al-Qaeda, with the military focus on the organization's bases in Afghanistan.² There is much discussion about the changing nature of violent conflict (Kaldor, 1999; Keen, 1998), but violence persists. The study of patterns of armed conflict is not just of historical interest, but also a matter of current concern.

The number of current armed conflicts in 2001 was the same as the year before (with

¹ Guinea was listed as an unclear case in 2000, but revision showed that it should have been listed as a minor armed conflict. This has now been rectified in the dataset and the appendices.

the adjustment for Guinea in 2000), and the number of countries affected by armed conflict also stayed the same. The number of conflicts remains at a much lower level than at the end of the Cold War and has been fairly stable since 1995. In addition to the four new conflicts already mentioned, one conflict recommenced: Myanmar (Shan). Four conflicts listed for 2000 are no longer active: Eritrea-Ethiopia, India (Manipur), Sierra Leone, and Uzbekistan. Two conflicts escalated (in Rwanda and in Nepal), while two conflicts (in Mindanao in the Philippines, and in the Democratic Republic of Congo) de-escalated. As in 2000, very few conflicts were interstate – in 2001, the only interstate conflict was the one between India and Pakistan over Kashmir. The regional pattern varied very little from earlier years: Most of the conflicts were in Africa (14) or Asia (13), while the Middle East continued as the most conflict-prone region, measured as the probability that a given country will be in conflict. The number of minor conflicts was down one, and so was the number of wars (i.e. armed conflicts with more than 1,000 battle-related deaths in the year).

² The USA and the Multinational Coalition also entered the internal armed conflict in Afghanistan supporting the UIFSA (United Islamic Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan) in order to overthrow the government of Afghanistan. Although the conflict between Al-Qaeda and the USA was militarily inseparable from the internal conflict in Afghanistan, the conflicts are treated as two separate conflicts, as the incompatibility between Al-Qaeda and the USA is unrelated to that of Afghanistan. The stated incompatibility by Al-Qaeda is unique compared to governmental incompatibilities otherwise included in this dataset, in that the aim is the destruction of the United States, in particular its military and economic system, rather than introducing a specific alternative to the status quo. Still, we have judged it to concern governmental power in the USA. Al-Qaeda has several other stated incompatibilities with governments in the Middle East (e.g. Israel, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt), but they are not using armed force against those governments. It should also be noted that at the time of the bombings of the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998, the stated goal of Al-Qaeda was to change US policies in the Middle East, which is not covered by the definition of armed conflict. Thus, although those attacks meet the criterion of more than 25 battle-related deaths, the 1998 events are not included in the dataset.

However, the number of intermediate conflicts (i.e. conflicts with a cumulative number of battle-related deaths exceeding 1,000) was up two. Altogether, the overall picture of global armed conflict remained very stable in 2001, although the emotional and political repercussions of 11 September will remain important.

A complete list of all armed conflicts that were active in 2001 is found in Appendix 1. A list of unclear cases in 2001 is found in Appendix 2.

Measures of Armed Conflict

For almost three decades, the Correlates of War project (Singer & Small, 1972; Small & Singer, 1982; Singer & Small, 1994) has supplied the leading dataset on armed conflict with comparable data over a long time period. Among the COW project's many virtues is its emphasis on strict and transparent operational procedures. The COW project requires a minimum of 1,000 battle-deaths for a conflict to qualify as a war. The Uppsala dataset on armed conflict, with a lower threshold of 25 battle casualties, has been updated annually in this journal since 1993, but so far has covered only the post-Cold War period. This year, in addition to the annual update, we are also able to present a backdate for the entire post-World War II period.

The relatively high COW limit of 1,000 battle-deaths has some disadvantages. While it may seem intuitively reasonable to include the Basque conflict, for instance, it has not accumulated enough deaths to qualify by even the most inclusive of the COW thresholds, 1,000 battle-deaths for the entire conflict. The Northern Ireland conflict, which broke out in 1969, exceeded 25 annual battle-deaths every year during the period 1971–93, and again in 1998, has claimed more than 3,000 casualties altogether, but does not qualify for the stricter COW threshold of

more than 1,000 deaths in a single year.³ Apart from the apparent anomaly of excluding such well-known conflicts from a dataset on armed conflict, there is a statistical reason why a lower threshold is useful. As multivariate models of conflict become more fully specified, there are simply 'not enough wars' for statistical analyses over shorter periods of time. Extending the analysis to a very long time period in order to get enough data raises several problems: Are the theoretical explanations equally reasonable for the whole period? Do variables like 'degree of democracy' and 'economic development' mean the same thing in 1825 as in 1985? Dividing the material into periods of more reasonable length, on the other hand, may produce insignificant results. Lowering the threshold for inclusion will yield more conflicts and thus more flexibility.

On the other hand, we do not want to lower the threshold too much, and concentrate on a clutter of small incidents unlikely to have much impact on political or economic life. The lower threshold adopted here – 25 deaths in a single year – is high enough for the violence to represent a politically significant event, although the precise local and international impact may vary.

Apart from the usefulness of this dataset for statistical studies of conflict, data of high reliability and rigorous definitions should

³ Small & Singer (1982: 55) set a threshold for interstate wars of 1,000 battle-deaths for the whole conflict. (A state is considered a participant in such a war only if it suffers a minimum of 100 battle-deaths or commits a minimum of 1,000 armed personnel to active combat within the war theater.) For extra-systemic wars, the requirement was 1,000 battle-deaths in a single year, and only the battle casualties of the system member were counted (p. 56). The stricter criterion was used in order to avoid the inclusion of colonial and imperial wars that dragged on for years with little activity. The stricter criterion was also applied to civil wars (p. 213). In the COW update for 1992, the threshold was lowered for civil war (Singer & Small, 1994: 2), and this coding rule is repeated in the most recent project update (Sarkees, 2000: 129). For extra-systemic war (now called extra-state war), the stricter criterion is maintained (Sarkees, 2000: 129). The Northern Ireland conflict is still not included, however.

also be useful for descriptive purposes. Compilations of the number of conflicts are frequently given wide media attention, as are descriptions – frequently misleading – of data from individual conflicts.⁴

The aim of this article is to present a dataset based on the Uppsala criteria covering the entire post-World War II period. For the period 1989–2001, our dataset is the same (but for minor adjustments) as that reported in articles in *Journal of Peace Research* in previous years. For the earlier years, we went through three stages.⁵ First, we generated a ‘candidate database’, drawing on information found in a dozen datasets from various research projects.⁶ These sources are listed in Gleditsch et al. (2001: 5). This procedure generated a list of 4,219 candidate events, several of which overlapped.

Next, we examined critically the long list of candidate conflicts to see which of them fulfill the Uppsala criteria. This was primarily done by checking all potential cases against a selection of available sources, notably *Keesing's Contemporary Archives* and reference literature on various countries and regions. Particular focus was given to disentangling complex situations such as India and Burma, where conflicts have been lumped together in most datasets including earlier versions of our own.

The third step was to identify conflicts,

warring parties, and years of activity that had not been covered by any of the datasets. All countries were surveyed, and where there was reason to suspect the incidence of conflict, these countries were selected for in-depth studies. This exercise yielded a set of conflicts that were not reported in any of the datasets, notably in the Soviet Union just after World War II.

The conflicts that are included are as rigorously coded as the annual updates from the Uppsala group. There should be few false positives. On the other hand, we may have missed a few conflicts – but probably not too many. Two of the datasets that we used go well below what we are looking for in terms of casualties: The Militarized Interstate Dispute Dataset includes militarized conflicts with no actual violence, and KOSIMO includes a number of nonviolent actions. This makes it less likely that we have missed major events that should have been included. In Gleditsch et al. (2001: 14ff), we have compared the new dataset to some other leading datasets and argue that any discrepancies are generally due to differences in coding criteria rather than omissions on our part. Many candidate conflicts that look plausible at first sight turn out upon close inspection not to involve organized resistance, while others have an insufficient number of casualties.

Our work continues, particularly for the early years after World War II. Information is increasingly scarce the further back in time we go – as is the bias toward the Western hemisphere and the Great Powers – so there is ample reason to give additional attention to the earlier years of the period covered here. No dataset of this kind will ever be ‘final’, but we are reasonably confident that this dataset is the best one available for the period.

Criteria and Definitions

An *armed conflict* is defined by the Uppsala Conflict Data Project as a contested

⁴ A good discussion of conflicting estimates of casualties in the 1991 Gulf War is found in Mueller (1995).

⁵ The COW project initially followed a similar procedure. In compiling the original list of international wars, the first step of Small & Singer (1972: 18–19) was to list in chronological order all the deadly quarrels that had been identified as wars by Wright (1942/1965) and Richardson (1960), and others and subsequently weed out the ones that failed to meet their own criteria.

⁶ In Gleditsch et al. (2001: Appendix 2), we discuss another eight datasets that for various reasons were not included in the candidate set. Several of them were used as sources of reference when we identified additional conflicts not included in the candidate list. Including them in the candidate list would have made little if any difference to the final list.

incompatibility that concerns government or territory or both where the use of armed force between two parties results in at least 25 battle-related deaths. Of these two parties, at least one is the government of a state.

A state is defined as an internationally recognized sovereign government controlling a specified territory, or a non-recognized government whose sovereignty is not disputed by another internationally recognized sovereign government previously controlling the same territory. For the purpose of this article, we follow the COW set of nation-states. The COW country set differs marginally from that used in the data collection in Uppsala.⁷ For the purposes for which we use the data here, it makes little difference whether we use the COW set or the alternative set developed by Gleditsch & Ward (1999).

The Uppsala dataset includes in the definition of conflict a definition of the type of incompatibility involved: either *government* (type of political system, the replacement of the central government, or the change of its composition) or *territory* (a change from one state to another in the control of territory in an interstate conflict or demands for secession or autonomy in an internal conflict).

Armed conflict is divided into the following three subsets:

- *Minor Armed Conflict*: at least 25 battle-related deaths per year and fewer than 1,000 battle-related deaths during the course of the conflict.
- *Intermediate Armed Conflict*: at least 25 battle-related deaths per year and an accumulated total of at least 1,000 deaths, but fewer than 1,000 in any given year.

⁷ We have included Hyderabad as an independent state in 1947–48. Since few if any of the standard datasets include data for Hyderabad for any predictor or control variables, this conflict will drop out of any analysis beyond the simple counting exercises performed here.

- *War*: at least 1,000 battle-related deaths per year.

A more detailed explication of the coding rules can be found in Wallensteen & Sollenberg (2001: Appendix 2) and in Gleditsch et al. (2001: Appendix 1).

The database distinguishes conflicts by type, following the definitions used in the COW project (Small & Singer, 1982: 51–52, 210, 234):

- *Interstate armed conflict* occurs between two or more states.
- *Extrastate armed conflict* occurs between a state and a non-state group outside its own territory. (In the COW project, extrastate war is subdivided between colonial war and imperial war, but this division is not used here.)
- *Internationalized internal armed conflict* occurs between the government of a state and internal opposition groups with intervention from other states.
- *Internal armed conflict* occurs between the government of a state and internal opposition groups without intervention from other states.

The term *Internal armed conflict* may also be used to denote the two last categories, and *International conflict* as used by the COW project includes the first two. The dividing lines between the four categories, and even between international and internal conflict, are not sharp. Recently, the COW project has modified its typology, and this has led to a reclassification of a number of formerly extrastate wars as internal wars (Sarkees & Singer, 2001: 10–11).

The database also contains data on the *location* of the conflict. For the internal conflicts, it includes the name of the opposition organizations in the local language, if available, and in English. We have no other information about these actors and

do not comment further on them in this article.

The List of Armed Conflicts

The new list of armed conflicts contains a total of 225 conflicts for the period 1946–2001. A complete listing with locations, actors, levels, and years of activity is given in Appendix 3, which is made available on our websites (see www.prio.no/jpr/datasets.asp and www.pcr.uu.se). A list of all unclear cases is also found on these websites.

Distinguishing between different conflicts within the same location is not a trivial problem. The actors may change over time, and old conflicts may be revived after years of inactivity. Some countries are involved in several conflicts, but the actors may partly overlap. Our database distinguishes between *general* and *specific* conflicts: General conflicts are defined simply by location (country) and incompatibility. There may be several territorial incompatibilities in one location, but only one incompatibility over government. To separate the specific conflicts, we subdivide the general conflicts: A new specific conflict starts if the conflict changes from internal to internationalized internal, the main actor on the opposition changes, or ten years of inactivity have passed. This gives a total of 286 specific conflicts. In the rest of this article, 'conflict' refers to 'general conflict'.

Going back to the 225 general conflicts, we find 163 internal conflicts (32 of which had external participation by other states and 131 that did not), 21 extrastate conflicts, and 42 interstate conflicts. Of the conflicts, 110 had a peak level of war, 12 reached the level of intermediate conflict, and 103 remained minor throughout. We examine the data over time, first by level and then by type.

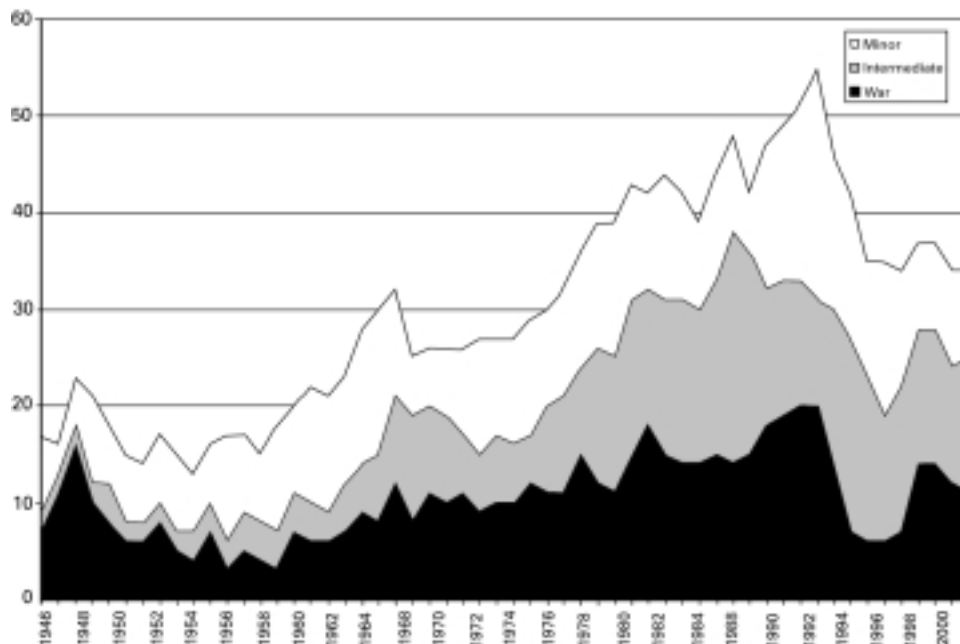
Conflicts by Level of Violence

In Figure 1, we plot the number of conflicts by level of violence for every year from 1946 to 2001. The post-World War II period begins with 17 ongoing armed conflicts and a local peak at the start of the Cold War (in 1949), which is not exceeded until the early 1960s. The number of armed conflicts rises through the Cold War and a little beyond (with a high of 55 ongoing conflicts in 1992). It then drops precipitously. In 1998, there was a slight increase, but on the whole this curve has been flat since 1995. Throughout most of the period, the minor, intermediate, and war categories have been about equally numerous. Initially, of course, there were very few intermediate conflicts, because it takes several years for smaller conflicts to accumulate 1,000 battle casualties.⁸

Most quantitative studies of armed conflict use the country-year or the dyad-year as the basic unit of analysis. The dependent variable may be the *onset of a new conflict*, the *onset of new dyadic conflict* (a new country joining an ongoing conflict), or the *incidence of conflict* in a given year. Scholars disagree as to whether or not the onset of war is likely to have a different causation from the continuation of war. Incidence is the more reasonable measure if one is interested in questions of the type 'How much conflict occurred in this period?' or in estimates of human suffering or material destruction. For analyses of factors associated with patterns of violence, the onset of conflict may be at least as important. Our database can just as easily be used to generate a dataset for onset of

⁸ We start almost from scratch in 1946 and have no data on the previous history of these conflicts. But we have assessed two of the internal conflicts in the Soviet Union – in Estonia and Latvia – as starting at the intermediate level. Both of these conflicts were direct continuations of conflicts initiated during World War II, and the level of activity was higher in earlier years. The other conflicts that were classified as minor in 1946 are judged not to have sufficient activity in earlier years to yield a total of more than 1,000 deaths up to and including 1946.

Figure 1. Number of Armed Conflicts by Level, All Types, 1946–2001



conflict as for incidence. In the present article, however, we look only at incidence.

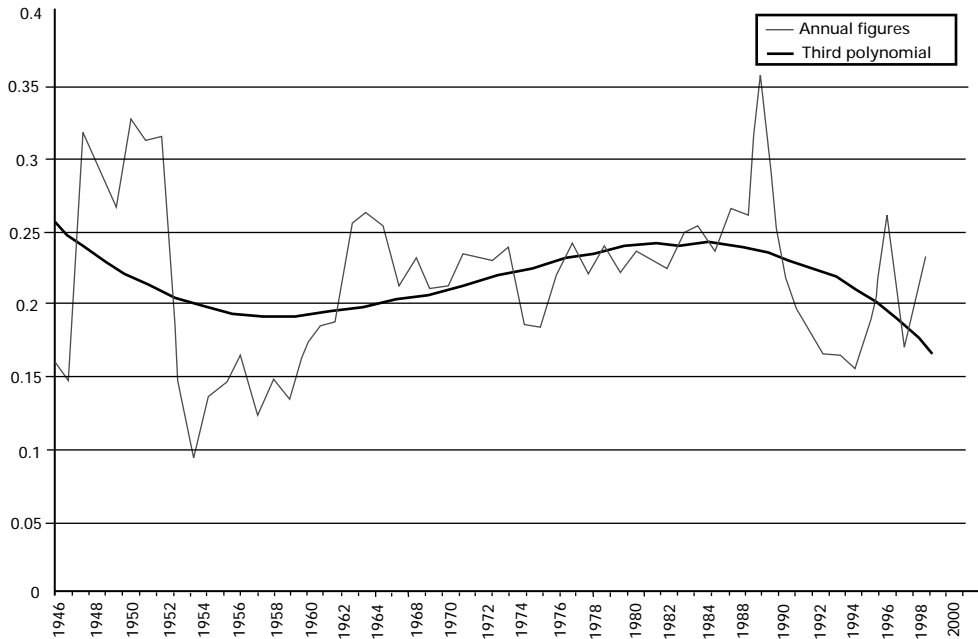
We correct for the rapidly increasing number of independent countries. In the COW project, whose definition of the international system we use, there are 66 countries in 1946, 122 in 1964, 164 in 1982, and 187 in 1994–2001.⁹ If we assume an equal *a priori* probability for all nations to get into conflict, a higher number of nations should produce a higher overall frequency of conflict or at least more country-years of conflict. Figure 2 shows the probability that any particular country is involved in a conflict that year. If a country is involved in several conflicts at the same time, only one country-year is counted. One result of this is that wars make up a higher share of the armed conflicts, since we count only the largest conflict that the country is involved in that year.

⁹ The last year in the COW dataset that we have used is 1994, and the same number of countries has been assumed to exist for the subsequent years.

Broadly speaking, the pattern over time for the total amount of conflict is similar to that of the previous figure. But we now see that the overall probability of conflict rose only slowly for the last two decades of the Cold War. Moreover, the recent decline in armed conflict after the end of the Cold War has now brought the probability of a country being in conflict to a level corresponding to the end of the 1950s and lower than at any later time during the Cold War.

There are several peaks in Figure 2. The Korean War, which mobilized many participants, stands out as a local peak in the early 1950s. We find a smaller peak during the Vietnam War at the end of the 1960s. More recently, the Gulf War (1991), the international part of the Kosovo conflict (1999), and the Afghanistan War produce visible but short-lived peaks. Thus, individual conflicts can have a very visible impact on the overall pattern of conflict. Not coincidentally, all these conflicts involved coalitions led by the

Figure 2. Probability that a Country Is Involved in Armed Conflict, All Levels, All Types, 1946–2001; Annual Figures and Long-Term Trend Line



world's leading military power. Most of the countries involved in these coalitions did not participate very actively in the combat operations, if at all. When we look at the probability that a particular country will be in conflict in a given year rather than the number of conflicts, we see a clear long-term decline through the Cold War period, although the decline is interrupted by the single-year peaks for Kosovo and Afghanistan.

As already noted, the country-year figures are inflated by peripheral participants in the large-coalition wars. For instance, in the Gulf War the two Nordic NATO countries are counted as full participants. Denmark sent a frigate, which was kept well out of action, and Norway sent a supply ship to the Danish warship. In all the coalition wars that produce local peaks in Figure 2, a number of Western countries participated in a way that signaled political solidarity even if it did not

make a notable difference in military strength. In a number of civil wars, other states have also participated at much lower levels than the main participants. We have experimented with a reduced dataset where such war participants were eliminated. In this way, we succeeded in eliminating the local peaks, but otherwise the results were not markedly different. Since we were unable to find satisfactory criteria for the elimination of actors (or lacked the necessary data, such as casualty figures by participant), we have put this exercise on hold.

In Figure 2, we have also imposed a third polynomial as a long-term trend line. An S-shaped curve is apparent: first a fairly steep decline through the first years of the Cold War and the de-Stalinization period, then a long, slow increase during the greater part of the Cold War, and finally another steep decline after the turbulence in certain parts of Eastern Europe at the end of the Cold

War. The trend line ignores the sharp increase in armed conflict immediately after the end of World War II, the decline of armed conflict in the late 1970s, and the recent local peaks. In order to pick up these, we would have to fit a much higher-order polynomial; a sixth polynomial, for instance, has basically the same S-shape.¹⁰

Figure 2 reinforces the picture of a slight upward trend in armed conflict during most of the Cold War, and strengthens the conclusion that the hazard of armed conflict was reduced when it ended. This is more consistent with the optimistic assessments of world politics that emphasize the spread of liberal factors (Gurr, 2000; Russett & Oneal, 2001; Weede, 1996) than with realist, structural, or cultural interpretations that emphasize rising anarchy (Mearsheimer, 1990; Kaplan, 1994; Huntington, 1996). But the world total number of separate conflicts is still high, twice as high as when the Cold War began.

Conflicts by Type

In Figure 3, we present the armed conflicts by different *types* of international involvement, following the distinctions made in the COW project.¹¹ We confirm the common observation that internal conflict has been the dominant form of conflict throughout most of the post-World War II period, and certainly since the late 1950s. There is a hump of civil conflict in the late 1960s, probably related to the decolonization process. A limited proportion of the internal conflicts are internationalized, although this phenomenon is rarely recorded before the mid-1950s. Extrastate conflicts were com-

mon during the decolonization period, but are now on their way out, which is not surprising since the number of dependent territories has declined markedly. The number of interstate conflicts is somewhat erratic but remains low during the entire period. Of course, this category of war cannot be disregarded. Some of the interstate conflicts, such as the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and the Iran–Iraq War, have claimed more than a million battle casualties each. Interstate conflicts have been a little less frequent in the post-Cold War period, and for two years (1994–95) did not occur at all.¹²

Moreover, there have not been any very large interstate wars after 1988. John Mueller (1989, 2001) has argued that the institution of war is in decline and that only ‘the remnants of war’, fought by thugs, now remain. Indeed, the World Bank’s major project on internal armed violence in the Third World is titled ‘The Economics of Civil War, Crime, and Violence’ (World Bank, 1999), and the public debate after the 11 September 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon has further stimulated the portrayal of international violence as crime.

Where Are the Conflicts?

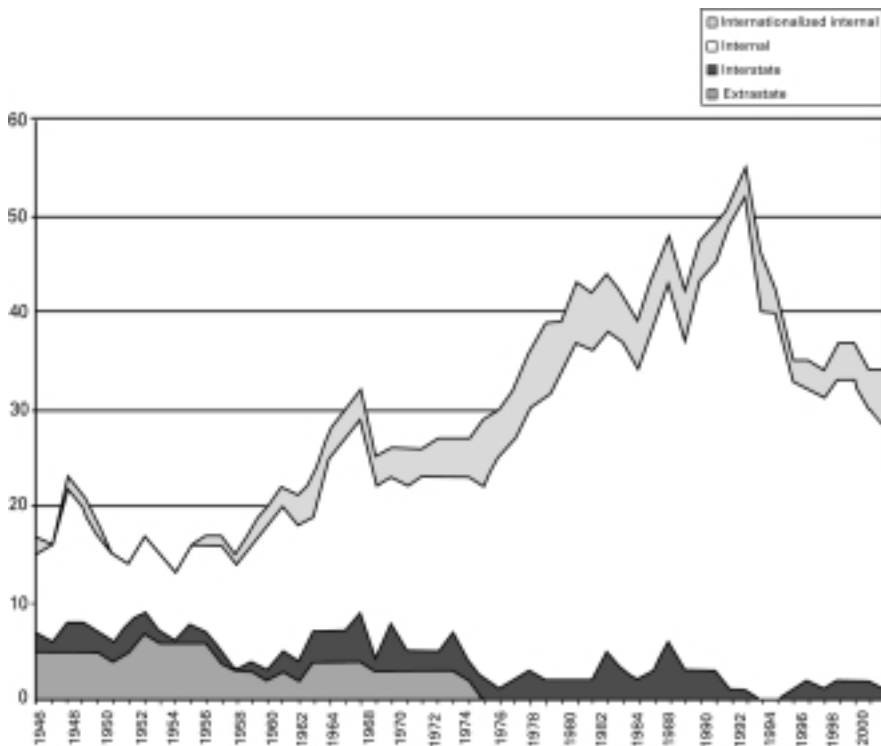
It is common to classify conflicts by region (e.g. Wallensteen & Sollenberg, 2001: 632, Table III). Such tables, or world maps with distinctive coloring for countries in conflict, may be useful for understanding regional concerns and policies. But they may give a misleading impression of the size and location of the zones of peace and zones of turmoil. For instance, the entire landmass of Russia can be depicted as being in conflict because of the Chechnya War. A more realistic picture of the zones of conflict emerges when we plot the conflicts by their actual

¹⁰ However, the sixth polynomial picks up the increase in armed conflict at the start of the period.

¹¹ There is a very similar figure in Gurr, Marshall & Khosla (2000: 7). Their Figure 3 (2000: 9) looks at the fraction of states affected by any armed conflict and by serious armed conflict and shows a trend reversal (from a steady rise to a steady decline) at the end of the Cold War.

¹² But neither were there any interstate armed conflicts in 1955 or 1960 – in the middle of the Cold War.

Figure 3. Number of Armed Conflicts by Type, All Levels, 1946–2001



In this figure, a conflict is coded by type for each year. Thus, a conflict can move from one type to another over time. For instance, the Kosovo conflict is coded as internal in 1998 and internationalized internal in 1999. In the aggregate figures for conflict for the entire period, such conflicts are coded at the 'highest' (i.e. most internationalized) level.

geographical location. A figure in the previous issue of this journal (Buhaug & Gates, 2002: 423, Figure 2) represents a first attempt at such a classification for the post-World War II period. A very different picture emerges, with considerable clustering of the incidence of conflict. One zone of conflict is found from Central America and the Caribbean and into South America, another from East Central Europe through the Balkans and the Middle East and India to Indonesia. The third conflict zone is Africa, and spans almost the entire continent. The clustering is even more evident in a similar map for just internal conflicts in the post-Cold War period, 1989–2000 (de Soysa &

Gleditsch, 2002: 50, Figure 11). In this second map, the conflicts are plotted on a background of high, medium, or low GDP per capita, and provide a simple visualization of the strong bivariate relationship between poverty and internal armed conflict.

Studies of the diffusion of conflict would benefit from using such data, which clearly demonstrate the proximity of many conflict arenas. The figures just cited also exploit another useful feature of our database, namely, that it allows several ongoing conflicts in a single country. Work is in progress to build a flexible GIS application that will allow individual users to plot conflicts by location.

Future Improvements

We appear to have a useful dataset for the post-1945 period with clear definitions, with considerable face validity and a reasonable fit to (and explainable differences from) other datasets for this period. There are several ways to improve our data. We discuss them here in an order mostly designed to go from the fairly easy to the very difficult.

First, we have collected start dates for all the conflicts and hope to add end dates later. This is important for analyses using a hazard model, such as Raknerud & Hegre (1997) and Hegre et al. (2001). For studies of the democratic peace, for instance, the results can be quite misleading if the outbreaks of conflicts and the regime changes are not dated precisely (McLaughlin et al., 1998). Studies of the duration of conflicts can be nearly meaningless in the absence of precise dating: A two-week conflict around New Year becomes a two-year conflict. Precise dates are available for the war data in the COW project, as well as some other datasets. We include tentative start dates in the database associated with this article. Establishing end dates is more difficult because internal conflicts often peter out rather than end with an agreement. Also, even if there is an agreement, occasional violence may continue for some time.

Second, we are interested in focusing on conflict resolution as well as the initiation and escalation of conflict, and therefore wish to add to the database information on how the conflicts ended, whether by victory, by peace agreement, or in other ways (see Wallensteen & Sollenberg, 1997: 342–344).

Third, we would like to find better ways of distinguishing between central and peripheral participants in a conflict. The COW criteria of requiring a certain number of casualties (or a certain level of military commitment) would probably work reasonably well for interstate conflicts and for

internationalized internal conflicts. The information problems are, however, likely to be formidable.

Fourth, it would be useful to have better data to study conflict escalation. At the interstate level, several scholars (e.g. Partell & Palmer, 1999) have used the Militarized Interstate Dispute data for this purpose. The disputes are divided into four main categories, ranked according to the degree of intensity. However, the entire dispute is coded for all years by the highest level of intensity reached. Therefore, the MID data cannot properly be used to study escalatory behavior within a dispute, although it may be possible to study escalation from one dispute to the next (Gleditsch, 1999).

Fifth, in order to study the severity of war, and in particular its human cost, there is a need for more accurate casualty statistics. In terms of countries participating, the Kosovo conflict in 1999 stands out as a larger event than any year of the Vietnam War. The average annual loss of life was probably on the order of 1: 100, illustrating that the problematic aspects of country-years as a measure of conflict. For the higher levels of conflict, battle-related casualty statistics by conflict and by participant are available in the *Correlates of War* project.¹³ The Uppsala group also publishes casualty figures for the major armed conflicts (i.e. wars and intermediate conflicts). Unlike the COW figures, these are disaggregated by year, not by actor, but are frequently given as ranges, or in the form of a lower threshold. For instance, the number of casualties in the Chechen War is given as 30,000–60,000, and the Sri Lankan conflict is reported as having at least 3,500 casualties in 1999 and at least 45,000 from the start (Sollenberg et al., 2000: 56). For smaller conflicts, there is no single reliable source. In our project, we have concentrated on trying

¹³ For extrastate wars, the COW project has compiled battle-death data only for the members of the international system, i.e. for the colonial powers.

to establish the thresholds with some degree of certainty.

For internal conflict, the study of escalation is even more problematic. Except for the Uppsala conflict data with its limited temporal coverage, none of the datasets that we have used to create the candidate dataset distinguish between intensity levels by year. Here, we follow the Uppsala criteria and code each conflict-year by level. The intermediate level (1,000 battle-deaths or more over the whole conflict) is not very useful in this context, since it is an aggregate measure which by definition cannot occur in the first year of the conflict. Also, by definition, a conflict cannot go to the lowest level once it has reached the intermediate level. However, the present dataset makes it possible to distinguish between high and low conflict intensity for each year, which is an improvement over earlier datasets.¹⁴ Unfortunately, since the two thresholds that we use (25 deaths for low, 1,000 for high) are themselves annual aggregates, we cannot provide more precise timing for the shifts in intensity level. It might be possible to provide separate estimates of the conflict intensity for each party. The Gulf War in 1991 was certainly in the highest category, but only one of the participants (Iraq) suffered more than 1,000 casualties (in fact, most of them did not suffer 25).

Sixth, an enduring controversy surrounding this type of data concerns the requirement that all parties to the conflict, in order to be counted, must be organized – a government or an organization. At least one of the parties must be a government. Furthermore, the casualties must be battle-related. Similar criteria govern the COW data collection. A footnote to the Rwanda listing in the

¹⁴ This would reduce the four levels (war, intermediate, minor, no activity) to three, with intermediate conflicts classified as minor. The information about the intermediate level could be used to create a separate variable for the cumulative severity of the conflict.

Uppsala conflict list illustrates the problem: 'The massacres carried out by Hutu militias and Hutu civilians in 1994 are often estimated as having resulted in 500,000–800,000 deaths. The deaths are not classified as battle-related and are not included in this study' (Wallensteen & Soltenberg, 1997: 352, note 22). Thus, Rwanda in 1994 is listed as having only an intermediate conflict (and in the three subsequent years, no conflict at all). Smith (1997) is among those who classify Rwanda as having been at war throughout the period 1990–94. The PIOOM data (Jongman, 2000) have their main emphasis on serious human rights violations and publish them jointly with their list of conflicts. Rather than expanding the conflict list, there is a need for a separate accounting of genocides and extremely serious human rights violations.

A seventh point is that one might relax the requirement that at least one party to the conflict is a government, as long as both of them are organized parties. A case in point is where two communal groups fight while the government is turning a blind eye, is too weak to do anything about it, or has gone out of business altogether. Sarkees & Singer (1997: 10–11) announce a new category, Inter-communal war, as part of the COW expanded typology of war, and report that such a dataset is currently in development. With our low threshold for annual casualties, a similar expansion would be very labor-intensive.

Finally, we have collected information on the names of the organized opposition groups in internal conflicts, but we have no further information about them. Characteristics such as their ideological orientation, size, ethnic, religious, and linguistic background, geographical base, etc. are obviously of potential interest.

Other researchers may have different needs. We hope that they will contribute new variables to the present dataset, so that

it may become a flexible and versatile instrument, widely used in the study of war and peace.

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Appendix 1. Armed Conflicts Active in 2001

<i>Location</i>	<i>Incompatibility</i>	<i>Opposition organization</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Intensity level</i>
Europe				
Macedonia	Government	UCK (Ushtria Çlirimtare Kombëtare: National Liberation Army)	2001	Minor
Russia	Territory (Chechnya)	Republic of Chechnya (Ichkeria)	1994 1995–96 2001	Minor War War
Middle East				
Iran	Government	Mujahideen e Khalq	1979–80 1981–82 1986–88 1991–93 2000–01	Minor War Intermediate Intermediate Intermediate
Israel	Territory (Palestine)	Palestinian insurgents PLO (Munazamat Tahir Falastin: Palestine Liberation Organization) groups, Non-PLO groups²	1949–54 1955–64 1965–2001	Minor Intermediate ¹ Intermediate
Turkey	Territory (Kurdistan)	PKK (Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan: Kurdish Workers' Party)	1984–86 1987–91 1992–97 1998–2001	Minor Intermediate War Intermediate
Asia				
Afghanistan³	Government	Various organizations,⁴ Multinational Coalition⁵	1978–2001	War

Opposition organizations active in 2001 are marked in bold.

¹ It is unclear when the conflict changed from minor to intermediate.

² E.g. Hamas, Islamic Jihad, PFLP-GC (Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command) and Hizbollah.

³ Supported by the Soviet Union in 1979–88.

⁴ PDPA (People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan), Mujahideen (Afghanistan-based), Mujahideen (Pakistan-based), Mujahideen (Iran-based), Military faction, Taliban, Hezb-i-Islami, Hezb-i-Wahdat, Jumbish-i Milli-ye Islami, Jami'at-i-Islami; the latter three developing into UIFSA (**United Islamic Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan**).

⁵ The Multinational Coalition, active in 2001, comprising troops from Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Netherlands, Poland, Russia, Turkey, United Kingdom, and the USA.

<i>Location</i>	<i>Incompatibility</i>	<i>Opposition organization</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Intensity level</i>
Burma/ Myanmar ⁶	Territory (Shan)	SSA (Shan State Army), SSIA (Shan State Independence Army)	1960–63	Minor
			1964–70	War
		SSNPLO (Shan State Nationalities People's Liberation Organization), SSRA (Shan State Revolutionary Army), MTA (Mong Tai Army), PSLO (Palung State Liberation Organization)	1976–88	Intermediate
		MTA (Mong Tai Army)	1994	War
			1995	Intermediate
		SSA (Shan State Army), SURA (Shan United Revolutionary Army), SSNA (Shan State National Army)	1997–99	Intermediate
			2001	Intermediate
	Territory (Karen)	KNU (Karen National Union) , KNDO (Karen National Defence Organization)	1948–49	War
			1950–91	Intermediate ⁷
			1992	War
1993–95			Intermediate	
1997–2001			Intermediate	
India ⁸	Government	Naxalites/ CPI-M (Communist Party of India – Marxist) ⁹	1967–72	Minor
		Naxalites/ PWG (People's War Group), MCC (Maoist Communist Centre)	1989–94	Minor
			1996–2001	Minor
	Territory (Tripura)	TNV (Tripura National Liberation Front)	1978–88	Minor
		ATTF (All Tripura Tribal Force)	1993	Minor
		ATTF (All Tripura Tribal Force), NLFT (National Liberation Front of Tripura)	1995–2001	Minor

⁶ Due to the complex situation that has existed in Burma since independence, it is hard to find any reliable casualty figures that can be related to specific groups. Thus, the data on Burma 1948–88 are estimates. From 1989 onwards, the data are more exact.

⁷ Possibly war in 1991.

⁸ Due to the complex situation that has existed in India since independence, it is hard to find reliable casualty figures that can be related to specific groups. Thus, the data on India 1948–88 are estimates. From 1989 onwards, the data are more exact.

⁹ The CPI-M (Communist Party of India – Marxist) split in 1969 into CPI-ML (Communist Party of India – Marxist-Leninist) and MCC (Maoist Communist Centre). The CPI-ML has since then split into numerous factions, one of the most important being People's War Group (PWG).

<i>Location</i>	<i>Incompatibility</i>	<i>Opposition organization</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Intensity level</i>
India – Pakistan	Territory (Kashmir)	Kashmir insurgents ¹⁰	1989	Minor
			1990–93	War
			1994–98	Intermediate
			1999–2001	War
	Territory (Assam)	ABSU (All Bodo Students Union), BPAC (Bodo People’s Action Committee), ULFA (United Liberation Front of Assam) BDSF (Bodo Security Force), ULFA (United Liberation Front of Assam) , ULFA faction, BLTF (Bodo Liberation Tigers Force), NDFB (National Democratic Front for Bodoland)	1989–90	Minor
			1991	War
			1992–2001	Intermediate
	Territory (Kashmir)		1947–48	War
			1964	Intermediate
			1965	War
			1971	War
			1984	Intermediate
			1987	Intermediate
1989–90			Intermediate	
Indonesia	Territory (Aceh)	GAM (Gerakan Aceh Merdeka: Free Aceh Movement)	1992	Intermediate
			1996–98	Intermediate
			1999	War
			2000–01	Intermediate
			1989	Minor
			1990	War
1991	Intermediate			
			1999–2001	Intermediate

¹⁰ A large number of groups have been active. Sixty groups were reported active in 1990, 140 in 1991, and 180 in 1992. Some of the larger groups have been JKLF (Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front), the Hizb-e-Mujahideen and, in recent years, also the Harkat-ul-Mujahideen, Lashkar-e-Toiba, and Jesh-e-Mohammadi.

<i>Location</i>	<i>Incompatibility</i>	<i>Opposition organization</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Intensity level</i>
Nepal	Government	CPN-M (Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist)/UPF (United People's Front)	1997–2000 2001	Minor Intermediate ¹¹
Philippines	Government	NPA (New People's Army), RAM-SFP (Reform Movement of the Armed Forces – Soldiers of the Filipino People),¹² Military faction	1972–80 1981 1982–86 1987–88 1989–92 1993–94 1999–2001	Minor Intermediate War Intermediate War Intermediate Intermediate
	Territory (Mindanao)	MNLF (Moro National Liberation Front)	1970–71 1972–77 1978 1979–80 1981 1982–88 1994–99 2000 2001	Minor Intermediate War Intermediate War Intermediate Intermediate War Intermediate
		MILF (Moro Islamic Liberation Front), Abu Sayyaf, MNLF (Moro National Liberation Front) faction	2000 2001	War Intermediate
Sri Lanka	Territory (Eelam)	LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam), TELO (Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization), PLOTE (People's Liberation Organization of Tamil Eelam)	1983–84 1985–88 1989–93 1994 1995–2001	Minor Intermediate ¹³ War Intermediate War

¹¹ Possibly war in 2001.

¹² In 1991, renamed RAM (Revolutionary Alliances of the Masses).

¹³ Possibly war in 1985–88.

<i>Location</i>	<i>Incompatibility</i>	<i>Opposition organization</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Intensity level</i>
Africa				
Algeria	Government	FIS (Al-Jibhat al-Islamiyya li-l-Inqadh; Front islamique du salut: Islamic Salvation Front), Expiation and Sin, Exile and Redemption, The Faithful of the Sermon, The Brigades of God, GIA (Groupe islamique armé: Armed Islamic group) , Al-Da'wa wa-l-Jihad (Appeal and Struggle)	1992 1993–2001	Minor War
Angola¹⁴	Government ¹⁵	UNITA (União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola: National Union for the Total Independence of Angola) , South Africa, FNLA (Frente Nacional da Libertação de Angola: National Front for the Liberation of Angola), MPLA faction, ¹⁶ Zaire	1975–94 1995 1998–2001	War Intermediate ¹⁷ War
Burundi	Government	Ubumwé, Palipehutu (Parti pour la libération du peuple Hutu: Party for the Liberation of the Hutu People) , CNDD (Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie: National Council for the Defense of Democracy), Frolina (Front pour la libération nationale: National Liberation Front), CNDD-FDD (Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie-Forces pour la défense de la démocratie: National Council for the Defense of Democracy-Forces for the Defense of Democracy)	1990–92 1995–96 1997 1998 1999 2000–01	Minor Minor ¹⁸ Intermediate ¹⁹ War Intermediate ²⁰ War
Central African Republic²¹	Government	Military faction	2001	Minor

¹⁴ Supported by troops from Cuba until 1989. Supported by troops from Namibia in 2000–01.

¹⁵ From 1990, only activity involving the government of Angola and UNITA.

¹⁶ MPLA faction only active in 1977.

¹⁷ Possibly war in 1995.

¹⁸ Possibly intermediate in 1995–96.

¹⁹ Possibly war in 1997.

²⁰ Possibly war in 1999.

²¹ Supported by troops from Libya.

<i>Location</i>	<i>Incompatibility</i>	<i>Opposition organization</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Intensity level</i>
Chad	Government	FARF (Forces armées pour la République fédérale: Armed Forces of the Federal Republic), MDJT (Mouvement pour la démocratie et la justice au Tchad: Movement for Democracy and Justice in Chad)	1997–2001	Minor ²²
Democratic Republic of Congo²³	Government	RCD (Rassemblement congolaises pour la démocratie: Congolese Democratic Rally), RCD-ML (Rassemblement congolaises pour la démocratie-Mouvement de libération: Congolese Democratic Rally-Liberation Movement), MLC (Mouvement de libération congolais: Congolese Liberation Movement), Rwanda, Uganda	1998–2000 2001	War Intermediate ²⁴
Ethiopia	Territory (Ogaden)	ONLF (Ogaden National Liberation Front)	1996 1998–2001	Minor Minor
	Territory (Oromiya)	OLF (Oromo Liberation Front)	1999–2001	Minor
Guinea	Government	RFDG (Rassemblement des forces démocratiques de Guinée: Rally of Democratic Forces of Guinea)	2000–01	Minor ²⁵
Liberia	Government	LURD (Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy)	2000–01	Minor ²⁶
Rwanda	Government	Opposition alliance ²⁷	1998 1999–2000 2001	War Intermediate War

²² Possibly intermediate in 2001.

²³ Government of DRC supported by troops from Zimbabwe, Angola, Namibia and Chad in 1998–99, and by troops from Zimbabwe, Angola and Namibia in 2000–01.

²⁴ Possibly war in 2001.

²⁵ Possibly intermediate in 2001.

²⁶ Possible intermediate in 2001.

²⁷ Consisting of former government troops of the Forces armées rwandaises (Rwandan Armed Forces) and the Interahamwé militia.

<i>Location</i>	<i>Incompatibility</i>	<i>Opposition organization</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Intensity level</i>
Senegal	Territory (Casamance)	MFDC (Mouvement des forces démocratiques de Casamance: Movement of the Democratic Forces of the Casamance)	1990	Minor
			1992–93	Minor
			1995	Minor
			1997–2001	Intermediate
Sudan	Territory (Southern Sudan) ²⁸	SPLM (Sudanese People's Liberation Movement), Faction of SPLM, NDA (National Democratic Alliance) ²⁹	1983–92	War
			1993–94	Intermediate ³⁰
			1995–2001	War
Uganda	Government	LRA (Lord's Resistance Army) , WNBF (West Nile Bank Front) , ADF (Alliance of Democratic Forces)	1994–95	Minor
			1996–2001	Intermediate
Americas				
Colombia	Government	FARC (Fuerzas armadas revolucionarias colombianas: Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) , ELN (Ejército de liberación nacional: National Liberation Army) , EPL (Ejército popular de liberación: People's Liberation Army) , M-19 (Movimiento 19 de Abril: April 19 Movement) , Faction of FARC , Faction of ELN , MAO (Movimiento de autodefensa obrera: Workers' Self-Defence Movement) , Quintín lame ³¹	1965–79	Minor ³²
			1980–88	Intermediate ³³
			1989–90	War
			1991	Intermediate
			1992–93	War
			1994–97	Intermediate
			1998–2001	War
USA ³⁴	Government	Al-Qaeda (The Base)	2001	War

²⁸ By 1997 the incompatibility had widened to concern governmental power in addition to the territorial dispute.

²⁹ NDA includes SPLM as its largest member organization.

³⁰ Possibly war in 1993–94.

³¹ Only FARC and ELN active in 1992–99.

³² It is unclear when the conflict changed from minor to intermediate.

³³ Possibly war in several of the years.

³⁴ Supported by the Multinational Coalition, comprising troops from Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Netherlands, Poland, Russia, Turkey, and the United Kingdom.

Appendix 2. Unclear Cases in 2001

Cases which have been completely rejected on the grounds that they definitely do not meet the criteria of armed conflict are not included in the list below. For the conflicts listed here, the available information suggests the *possibility* of the cases meeting the criteria of armed conflicts, but there is insufficient information concerning at least one of the three components of the definition: (1) the number of deaths (e.g. there are reports on

the use of armed force, but the number of deaths cannot be verified); (2) the identity or level of organization of a party, or (3) the type of incompatibility. For a complete list of unclear cases 1946–2000, see the website for the data (www.prio.no/jpr/datasets.asp or www.pcr.uu.se). Unclear cases are also discussed in appendices to the earlier annual articles in *JPR* by Wallensteen & Axell and Wallensteen & Sollenberg.

<i>Location/government</i>	<i>Incompatibility</i>	<i>Opposition organization</i>
Angola	Territory (Cabinda)	FLEC (Frente da Libertação do Enclave de Cabinda: Front for the Liberation of the Enclave of Cabinda)
China	Territory (East Turkestan)	Uighur organizations
Ethiopia	Government	EPPF (Ethiopian People's Patriotic Front)
Ethiopia	Government/Territory	BPLM (Benishangul People's Liberation Movement)
India	Territory (Manipur)	UNLF (United National Liberation Front), PLA (People's Liberation Army)
India	Territory (Nagaland)	NSCN (National Socialist Council of Nagaland)-Khaplang faction
Indonesia	Government/Territory	Laskar Jihad
Iraq	Government	SAIRI (Supreme Assembly for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq)
Myanmar	Territory (Kaya)	KNPP (Karen National Progressive Party)
Peru	Government	Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path)
Tajikistan	Government/Territory	Forces of Rahmon Sanginov

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