Identifying and measuring the factors that drive peace

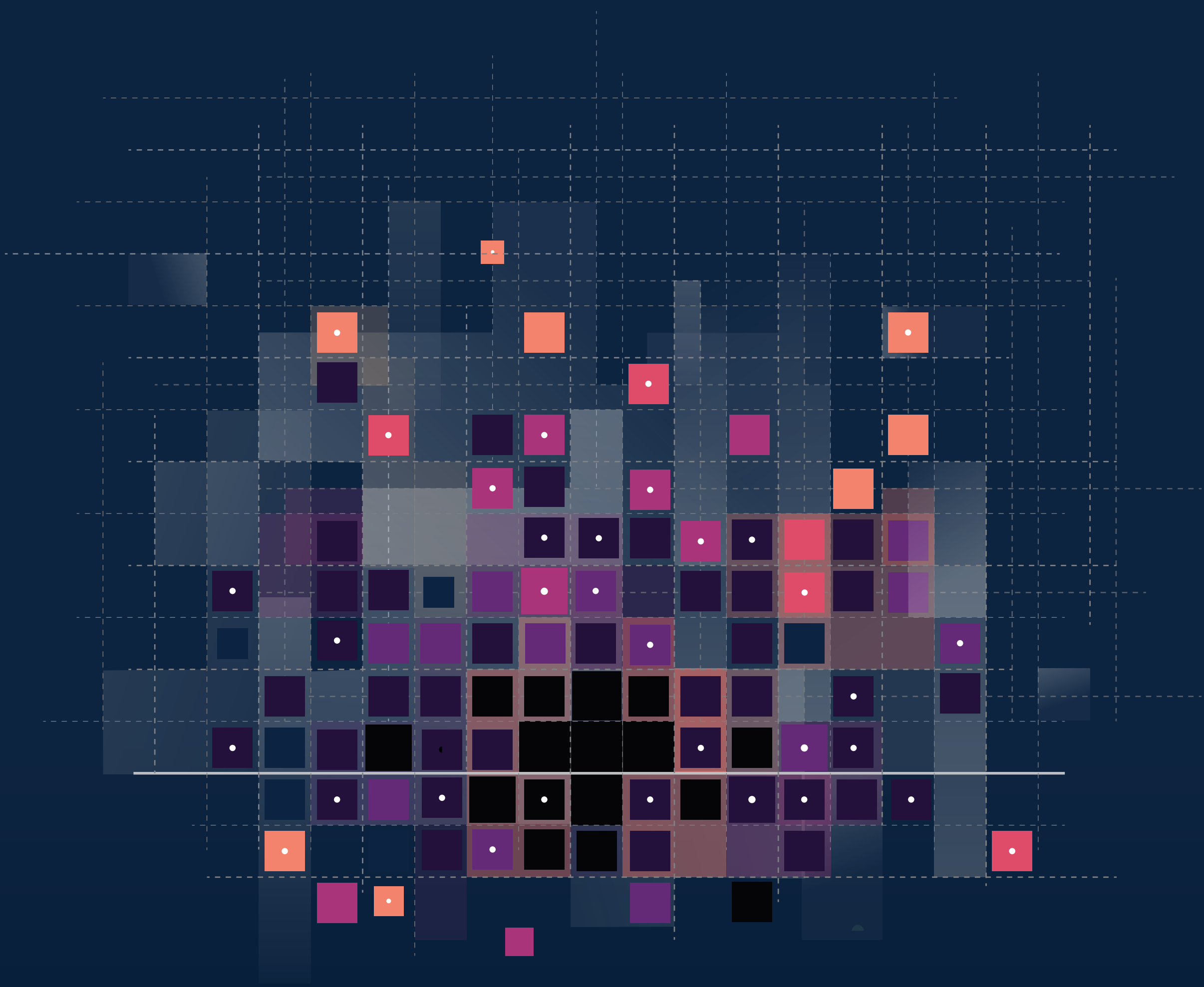
Global Peace Index 2025

Results & Trends

Conflict Escalation

Economic Impact

Conflict and Information Flows



IEP Institute for Economics & Peace

Quantifying Peace and its Benefits

The Institute for Economics & Peace (IEP) is an independent, non-partisan, non-profit think tank dedicated to shifting the world's focus to peace as a positive, achievable, and tangible measure of human well-being and progress. IEP achieves its goals by developing new conceptual frameworks to define peacefulness; providing metrics for measuring peace; and uncovering the relationships between business, peace and prosperity as well as promoting a better understanding of the cultural, economic and political factors that create peace.

IEP is headquartered in Sydney, with offices in New York, Brussels, The Hague, Mexico City and Nairobi. It works with a wide range of partners internationally and collaborates with intergovernmental organisations on measuring and communicating the economic value of peace.

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Contents

Executive Summary

This is the 19th edition of the Global Peace Index (GPI), which ranks 163 independent states and territories according to their level of peacefulness, covering 99.7 per cent of the world's population. Produced by the Institute for Economics & Peace (IEP), the GPI is the world's leading measure of global peacefulness.

This report presents the most comprehensive data-driven analysis to date on trends in peace, its economic value, and how to develop peaceful societies. It uses 23 qualitative and quantitative indicators to measure the state of peace across three domains: the level of *Societal Safety and Security*; the extent of *Ongoing Domestic and International Conflict*; and the degree of *Militarisation*.

The 2025 GPI finds that global peacefulness continues to decline and that many of the leading factors that precede major conflicts are higher than they have been since the end of WWII. More countries are increasing their levels of militarisation against the backdrop of rising geopolitical tensions, increasing conflict, the breakup of traditional alliances and rising economic uncertainty.

There are currently 59 active state-based conflicts, the most since the end of WWII and three more than the prior year. Last year, 17 countries recorded over 1,000 conflict deaths. Additionally, the successful resolution of conflicts is lower than at any point in the last 50 years. Conflicts that ended in a decisive victory fell from 49 per cent in the 1970s to nine per cent in the 2010s, while conflicts that ended through peace agreements fell from 23 per cent to four per cent over the same period.

Conflicts are also becoming more internationalised, making solutions more difficult; 78 countries are engaged in a conflict beyond their borders. This increased involvement is driven by geopolitical fragmentation, increasing major power competition, and the rise in influence of middle level powers, who are becoming more active within their regions. The almost two-decade long trend of falling militarisation has also reversed, with 106 countries having deteriorated on the *Militarisation* domain in the past two years.

This year's results found that the average level of global peacefulness deteriorated by 0.36 per cent. This is the 13th deterioration in peacefulness in the last 17 years, with 74 countries improving and 87 deteriorating in peacefulness. Iceland remains the most peaceful country in the world, a position it has held since 2008. It is joined at the top of the index by Ireland, Austria, New Zealand and Switzerland. All of these countries, other than Switzerland, were also ranked among the ten most peaceful countries in the first year of the index. These countries have high Positive Peace ratings, underscoring the resilience created by high levels of Positive Peace.

Russia, for the first time, is the least peaceful country in the world on the 2025 GPI, followed by Ukraine, Sudan, Democratic Republic of the Congo and Yemen.
Western and Central Europe is the most peaceful region in the world, home to eight of the ten most peaceful countries, although its peacefulness has been falling over the last four years. The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region remains the world's least peaceful region.

South Asia, the second least peaceful region globally, experienced the largest regional decline in peacefulness. This deterioration was driven primarily by repressive measures in Bangladesh under the Hasina government, and by heightened civil unrest and escalating internal and cross-border tensions in Pakistan.

South America was the only region in the world to record an improvement in peacefulness last year. Seven of the 11 countries in the region improved, with the largest improvements occurring in Peru and Argentina. Both countries recorded changes in government in 2022 and 2023, respectively.

Of the 23 indicators in the GPI, eight recorded improvements, 13 deteriorated, and two recorded no change. The *Militarisation* and *Ongoing Conflict* domains both deteriorated, while the *Safety and Security* domain recorded a slight improvement.

The largest year-on-year deteriorations occurred on the *external conflicts fought, deaths from internal conflict*, and *military expenditure (% of GDP)* indicators. The deterioration on the *military expenditure (% of GDP)* indicator reflects the deterioration on the *Militarisation* domain more broadly.

Despite the overall deterioration in peacefulness globally, some indicators recorded noticeable improvement. The *perceptions of criminality* and *homicide rate* indicators both continued their long running trend of improvement. The *violent demonstrations* indicator also improved, although it has deteriorated for 12 of the past 17 years. There were substantial improvements for many *Safety and Security* indicators, including *violent demonstrations*, *terrorism impact* and the *homicide rate*. Several countries in the Central and North America region recorded significant reductions in the number of homicides, although the region still has the highest average homicide rate of any region.

The world has become less peaceful over the past 17 years, with the average country score deteriorating by 5.4 per cent since the index's inception in 2008. Of the 163 countries in the GPI, 94 recorded deteriorations, while 66 recorded improvements and one recorded no change. Seventeen of the 23 GPI indicators deteriorated between 2008 and 2023, while seven improved.

Two of the three GPI domains deteriorated since 2008, with *Ongoing Conflict* deteriorating by 17.5 per cent and *Safety and Security* deteriorating by 2.5 per cent. *Militarisation* was the only domain to improve, although this trend has reversed over the past four years. Some of the largest indicator deteriorations were for *external conflicts fought*, *internal conflicts fought*, and the number of *refugees and IDPs*.

The past year has seen some major shifts in international affairs. The 2025 GPI report looks at these structural trends to provide a better insight into contemporary factors that affect conflict:

- Geopolitical fragmentation has substantially increased. This is most noticeable on the *relations between neighbouring states* indicator, which has substantially deteriorated since 2008, with 59 countries recording poorer ties with neighbours while only 19 improved.
- There have been notable reductions in global integration for economics, trade, diplomacy and military cooperation. They have been steadily falling since the 2008 Global Financial Crisis.
- The rising wealth of many countries means that they have the economic power for expanded international influence, especially within their local regions.
- Global trade as a share of global GDP has flatlined for the last decade at roughly 60 per cent, while restrictive trade practices rose to more than 3,000 in 2023, nearly triple the 2019 figure.
- Developing countries spend an average of 42 per cent of government revenue on servicing debt. The largest creditor is China.
- Expenditure on peacebuilding and peacekeeping was just 0.52 per cent of total military spending in 2024, compared to 0.83 per cent ten years ago. The number of deployed peacekeeping troops has also fallen by 42 per cent over the past decade, while the number of conflicts has risen steadily.
- Every nuclear-armed state has held or expanded its arsenal since 2022, and great-power rivalry is fuelling an arms race in advanced technologies, from AI-enabled drones to counter-space systems.
- Internationalised intrastate conflicts, in which foreign troops fight inside another state, have increased 175 per cent since 2010, drawing 78 countries into wars beyond their borders.

There are now 34 countries who are considered to have substantial influence in another country, up from six in the 1970s. Combined with the US and China having reached or being near the limits of their influence, the world is moving into the age of 'global power fragmentation'. China's gross debt, estimated at approximately 300 per cent of GDP, alongside signs of a significant asset bubble, draws parallels with Japan's economic conditions in the late1980s. More power will shift to rising middle economies, while most western powers struggle economically. How this power dynamic unfolds, and its effect on conflict, remains to be seen.

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To better understand why violent conflicts can intensify rapidly, IEP identified nine conflict escalation factors, ranging from external military support and logistics, to ethnic exclusion and conflict instrumentalisation. These drivers were decisive in historic escalations. Based on the presence of these factors, current conflicts that have the potential to substantially escalate are South Sudan, Ethiopia/Eritrea, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Syria.

The economic impact of violence on the global economy in 2024 was $19.97 trillion in purchasing power parity (PPP) terms. This figure is equivalent to 11.6 per cent of the world's economic activity (gross world product), or $2,446 per person. Military and internal security expenditure accounts for over 74 per cent of the figure, with the impact of military spending alone accounting for $9 trillion in PPP terms the past year.

In Europe, adequate military expenditure is essential to meet emerging threats. However, Europe's major challenge is not increasing military expenditure. It must also increase the efficiency, integration and cohesiveness of its military efforts. European NATO states outspend Moscow by a wide margin, yet their combined military capability only modestly exceeds Russia's. More raw military expenditure will not solve this. Additionally, many European countries are experiencing increasing polarisation, and military expenditure crowds out investment in other productive areas including education, health and business development. Items that underpin social cohesion. Given the size of the budget outlays the societal trade-offs need to be carefully considered.

In summary, the international order is approaching a tipping point where rising economic fragmentation, accelerating re-armament and multiple competing spheres of influence are creating the conditions for the onset of large-scale conflict, and the associated economic destruction. Underscoring this is the sheer volume and geographic spread of currently active conflicts, alongside reductions in proactive conflict prevention initiatives, including reductions in funding for peacebuilding and development aid.

The key to building peacefulness in times of conflict and uncertainty is Positive Peace: the attitudes, institutions and structures that create and sustain peaceful societies. Positive Peace is strongly correlated with higher GDP growth, lower interest rates, societal wellbeing and more resilience to shocks. Although levels of Positive Peace improved for over a decade up to 2019, they have since been in decline, including in both North America and Europe. Without adequate investment, further deterioration in peacefulness appears likely.

Key Findings

Section 1 – Results

- The average level of country peacefulness deteriorated by 0.36 per cent in the 2025 Global Peace Index. This is the sixth consecutive year that global peacefulness has deteriorated.
- The average country score on the GPI has also deteriorated for 13 of the past 17 years, and has not improved on average in any year since the 2013 GPI.
- In the past year, 74 countries recorded an improvement, while 87 countries recorded a deterioration in peacefulness. There are now 97 countries in the world that are less peaceful now than they were at the inception of the index in 2008.
- In the past year, peacefulness improved slightly on average on the *Safety and Security* domain but deteriorated on both the *Ongoing Conflict* and *Militarisation* domains.
- This is the second consecutive year that the Militarisation domain deteriorated on average, a reversal of the decade long trend that had seen levels of Militarisation improving across much of the world.
- Of the 23 GPI indicators, eight recorded an improvement, 13 recorded a deterioration, and two recorded no change over the past year. The largest deterioration was on *external conflicts fought*, while the biggest improvement was on the *perceptions of criminality* indicator.
- There were four indicators with average deteriorations of over two per cent in the past year: *external conflicts fought, deaths from internal conflict, military expenditure*, and *weapons imports.*
- There were 98 countries that were at least partially involved in some form of external conflict over the past five years, up from 59 in 2008. In most cases countries were offering support to an existing government against armed rebels or terrorist groups.
- *Military expenditure (% of GDP)* recorded the second largest yearly deterioration since the inception of the GPI. Eighty-four countries increased their relative military expenditure, compared to just 50 where it decreased.
- There were 17 countries with over 1,000 internal conflict deaths in 2024, the highest since 1999, and a further 18 countries that recorded over one hundred deaths in the last year.
- Many European countries are increasing their military expenditure as a result of the war in Ukraine. However, raw military expenditure is not the most pressing issue.
- Europe is experiencing increasing social tensions and declining public trust in its institutions. The reallocation of public funds from employment, healthcare and education towards defence heightens the risk of further exacerbating these tensions.
- Europe's real defence challenge lies in the absence of integration. Despite collectively outmatching Russia, European forces are hindered by fragmentation.
- Europe's current military expenditure is almost four times that of Russia, but its combined military capacity is only one third higher.
- Without unified strategic vision and command systems to direct integrated military capabilities, Europe's defence potential will remain unrealised. The efficiency and integration of its fighting forces are currently more important than increasing its absolute level of military expenditure.

Section 2 – Trends

- Global stability has deteriorated over the past 17 years, marked by substantial increases in political instability, the number and intensity of conflicts, deaths from conflict, and increasing geopolitical fragmentation.
- Peace has deteriorated every year since 2014. Over this period, 100 countries deteriorated and only 62 improved.
- The gap between the most and least peaceful countries continues to grow, with 'peace inequality' widening by 11.7 per cent in the past two decades. The 25 most peaceful countries deteriorated by 0.5 per cent, while the least peaceful deteriorated by 12.2 per cent.
- Two of the three GPI domains have deteriorated since 2008, with *Ongoing Conflict* and *Safety and Security* deteriorating by 17.5 per cent and 2.5 per cent, respectively. Only the *Militarisation* domain improved, with peacefulness increasing on that domain by 2.7 per cent.
- Though the *Militarisation* domain improved since 2008, that trend has begun to reverse over the last five years as many countries respond to an increasing number of threats and rising geopolitical uncertainty.
- Conversely, although the *Safety and Security* domain deteriorated, several indicators have shown sustained improvement, most notably the *homicide rate* and *perceptions of criminality* indicators.
- Across the 23 GPI indicators, *external conflicts fought* and *internal conflicts fought* had the largest deteriorations. This reflects not only the spread of conflict around the world, but the increasing involvement of external actors in civil conflicts.
- *Deaths from internal conflict* increased by over 438 per cent in the past 17 years, with 75 countries recording at least one conflict death in the past year.
- Around the world, there are now over 122 million people that have been forcibly displaced. There are now 17 countries where more than five per cent of the population are either refugees or have been internally displaced. The number of people forcibly displaced has increased by over 185 per cent since the inception of the GPI.
- Eight of the ten largest weapons exporters on a per capita basis are Western democracies, including France, Sweden, Italy, the Netherlands, Germany and Norway.
- In the past 17 years, more countries deteriorated on *violent demonstrations* than any other indicator, with 109 deteriorating and only 23 improving. The rise of technology was a critical enabler of global protests and mass mobilisation.
- Global economic stagnation, increasing debt, and the weaponisation of economic interdependence via trade wars, are key factors shaping the economic landscape of geopolitics in the 21st century.
- Geopolitical fragmentation is rising, with levels now exceeding those seen during the Cold War. The rise in fragmentation has been especially noticeable since 2008, after it had been steadily decreasing since the end of the Cold War.
- Global trade has plateaued at around 60 per cent of global GDP over the past decade, following rapid growth after 1990.
- Global military spending hit a record $2.7 trillion in 2024, a nine per cent increase from the previous year, driven largely by conflicts such as the war in Ukraine.

- Competition for influence is intensifying in regions like Africa, South Asia and South America. In the Sahel, instability and scarce resources are drawing in rival powers and fuelling a complex struggle for control.
- The number of globally influential countries has nearly tripled since the Cold War, rising from 13 to 34 by 2023, with nations like Türkiye, the UAE, Vietnam, South Africa, Brazil and Indonesia expanding their influence.

Section 3 – Economic Impact of Violence

- The global economic impact of violence was $19.97 trillion in constant PPP terms in 2024, equivalent to 11.6 per cent of global GDP, or $2,455 per person.
- The 2024 result represents an increase of 3.8 per cent from the previous year, largely driven by a six per cent increase in military expenditure and a 44 per cent increase in GDP losses from conflict.
- Afghanistan and Ukraine incurred the highest economic cost of violence as a percentage of GDP in 2024. The economic cost of violence in these countries was over 40 per cent of GDP.
- In the ten countries most affected by violence, the economic cost of violence averaged 27.8 per cent of GDP in 2024, compared to just 2.5 per cent for the ten least affected countries.
- Expenditure on peacebuilding and peacekeeping was $47.2 billion in 2024, just 0.52 per cent of total military spending in PPP terms. This represents a decline in real terms of 26 per cent from $64 billion in 2008.
- Military and internal security expenditure accounts for 73 per cent of the total economic impact of violence. Military expenditure accounts for 45 per cent of the model, or $9 trillion.
- Since 2008, the component of the economic model to experience the greatest increase was conflict deaths, whose cost rose by 421 per cent. The economic impact of conflict deaths, GDP losses, and refugees and IDPs, have each more than tripled in the last 16 years.
- Between 2023 and 2024, the economic impact of refugees and IDPs rose in 112 countries, with an average increase of 30 per cent, while military expenditure rose in 101 countries, with an average increase of 15 per cent.
- Many of the macro-economic adjustments happening globally are likely to increase the risk of conflict in the near future.
- In 2024, global GDP growth remained modest at 3.3 per cent, while inflation stayed elevated at 5.8 per cent, despite easing from its 2022 peak.
- Sub-Saharan Africa has been the largest recipient of Official Development Assistance over the past decade, but recent aid cuts will affect essential services and development.
- Youth unemployment in the Middle East and North Africa remained high, at 24.5 per cent in 2023, which was more than ten percentage points above the global average.
- While total global debt as proportion of GDP has declined slightly since 2020, public debt continues to rise, reaching $97 trillion in 2023. Debt in developing countries has been growing twice as fast as in advanced economies since 2010.
- Debt service is placing increasing pressure on public finances, with economically developing countries spending an average of 42 per cent of government revenue on servicing debt.

Section 4 – Why Conflicts Escalate

- The world is facing a violent conflict crisis. There were 59 state-based conflicts in 2023, the highest number since the end of World War II.
- Deaths from state-based violent conflict reached a 32-year high in 2022. Although the number of deaths is below levels seen during the Cold War, the sheer number of active conflicts increases the risk of at least one conflict rapidly escalating.
- Fewer violent conflicts now end with a peace deal or clear victory. Since the 1970s, the percentage of conflicts that end with a clear victory has dropped from 49 per cent to nine per cent, while the proportion of conflicts ending in peace agreements has fallen from 23 per cent to four per cent.
- The number of internationalised intrastate conflicts have increased 175 per cent since 2010. Seventy-eight countries were directly involved in a war beyond their borders in 2023.
- IEP has identified nine major factors which increase the likelihood that conflict will increase in intensity or severity.
- These factors have played a key role historically in increasing the severity of conflict, including in the Spanish, Greek, and Sri Lankan civil wars, the ongoing conflict in Sudan, and Ethiopia's recent Tigray war.
- IEP was able to assess the strength of these nine factors for 62 state-based conflict dyads. Of these 62 conflicts, 22 per cent had at least one escalation factor with the maximum possible score of five, and all 62 dyads had at least one escalation factor with a score of at least three out of five, indicating that it had a significant escalation risk.
- The risk of conflict escalation can clearly be seen when looking at the conflict in Kashmir. An April 2025 terror attack in the region sparked reprisals and halted dialogue, bringing nuclear-armed India and Pakistan closer to open war.
- Countries facing the highest conflict risk factors are the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan, Syria, and the ongoing conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea. All have current conflicts that could become substantially worse.

Section 5 – Positive Peace and the Media

- The *Free Flow of Information* is foundational to peace. Societies with open, better information systems consistently rank higher on the Global Peace Index.
- Reliable information flows support both domestic stability and global action. Everything from business efficiency to prompt humanitarian responses rely on up to date and accurate information.
- Trends in the *Free Flow of Information* Pillar are mixed. While access to telecommunications has improved more than any other indicator in the Positive Peace Index, press freedom and information quality have seen the steepest declines.
- Media coverage of conflict remains highly unbalanced. In 2023, civilian deaths in high-income countries received 100 times more media articles than a similar number of deaths in low-income countries.
- Civil conflicts are under-reported. They receive less attention on average than conflicts between states, even when they have substantially higher numbers of fatalities.
- Major power rivalries dominate headlines. Media reporting on international affairs focuses heavily on competitive interactions between global powers.
- While the expansion of telecommunications and social media offers unparalleled access to information, it is often accompanied by low-quality, inflammatory or partisan content, deepening social divides.

0.36

The average level of country peacefulness deteriorated by 0.36 per cent in the 2025 Global Peace Index. This is the sixth consecutive year that global peacefulness has deteriorated.

Improvements	Deteriorations
74	87

In the past year 74 countries recorded an improvement, while 87 countries recorded a deterioration in peacefulness. There are now 97 countries in the world that are less peaceful now than they were at the inception of the index in 2008.

In the past year peacefulness improved slightly on average on the *Safety and Security* domain but deteriorated on both the *Ongoing Conflict* and *Militarisation* domains.

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This is the second consecutive year that the *Militarisation* domain deteriorated on average, a reversal of the decade long trend that had seen levels of *Militarisation* improving across much of the world.

Improvements	Deteriorations	No Change
8	13	2

Of the 23 GPI indicators, eight recorded an improvement, 13 recorded a deterioration, and two recorded no change over the past year. The largest deterioration was on *external conflicts fought*, while the biggest improvement was on the *perceptions of criminality* indicator.

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84	50
Increased	Decreased

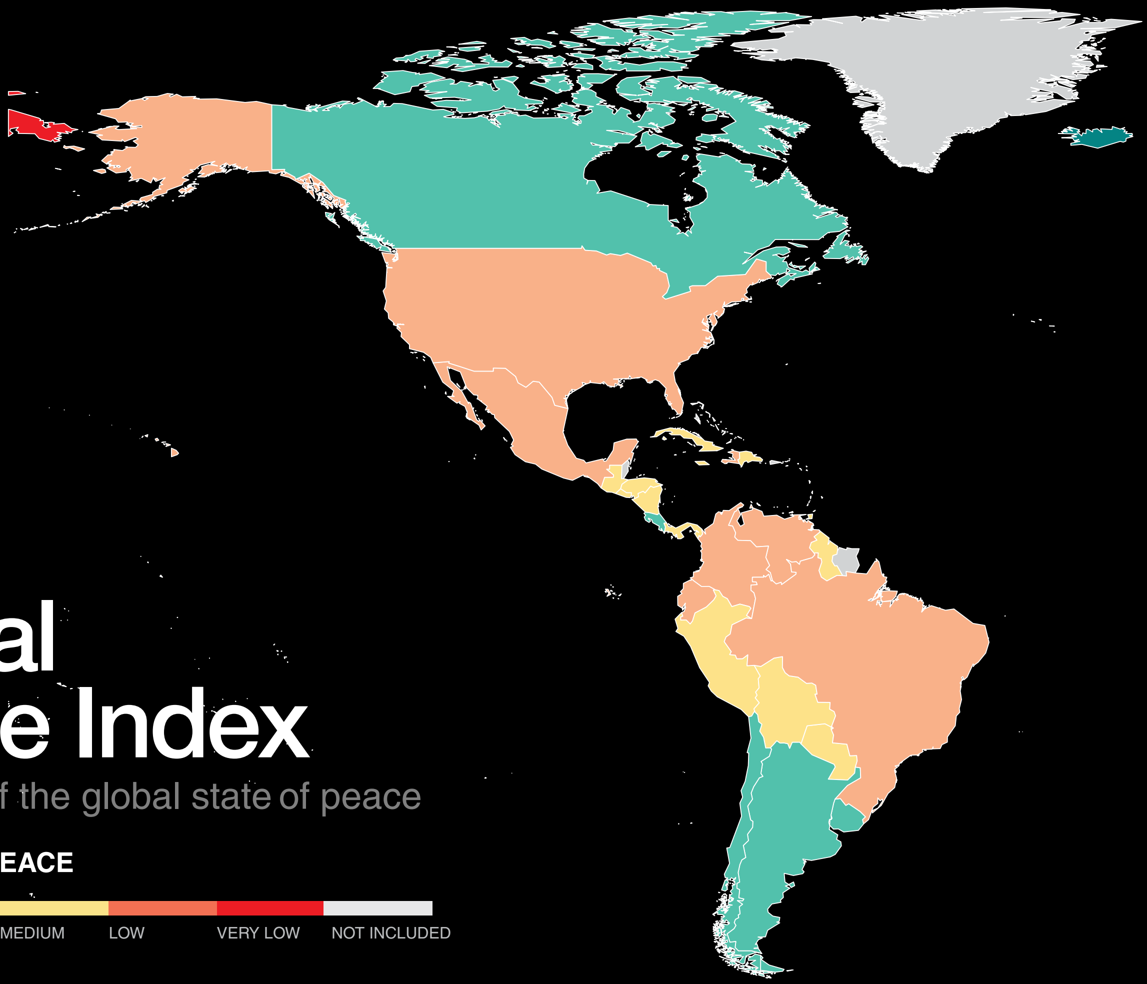
Military expenditure (% of GDP) recorded the second largest yearly deterioration since the inception of the GPI.

84 countries increased their relative military expenditure, compared to just 50 where it decreased.

17
Countries

There were 17 countries with over 1,000 internal conflict deaths in 2024, the highest since 1999 and a further 18 countries that recorded over one hundred deaths in the last year.

1 Results



2025 Global Peace Index

A snapshot of the global state of peace

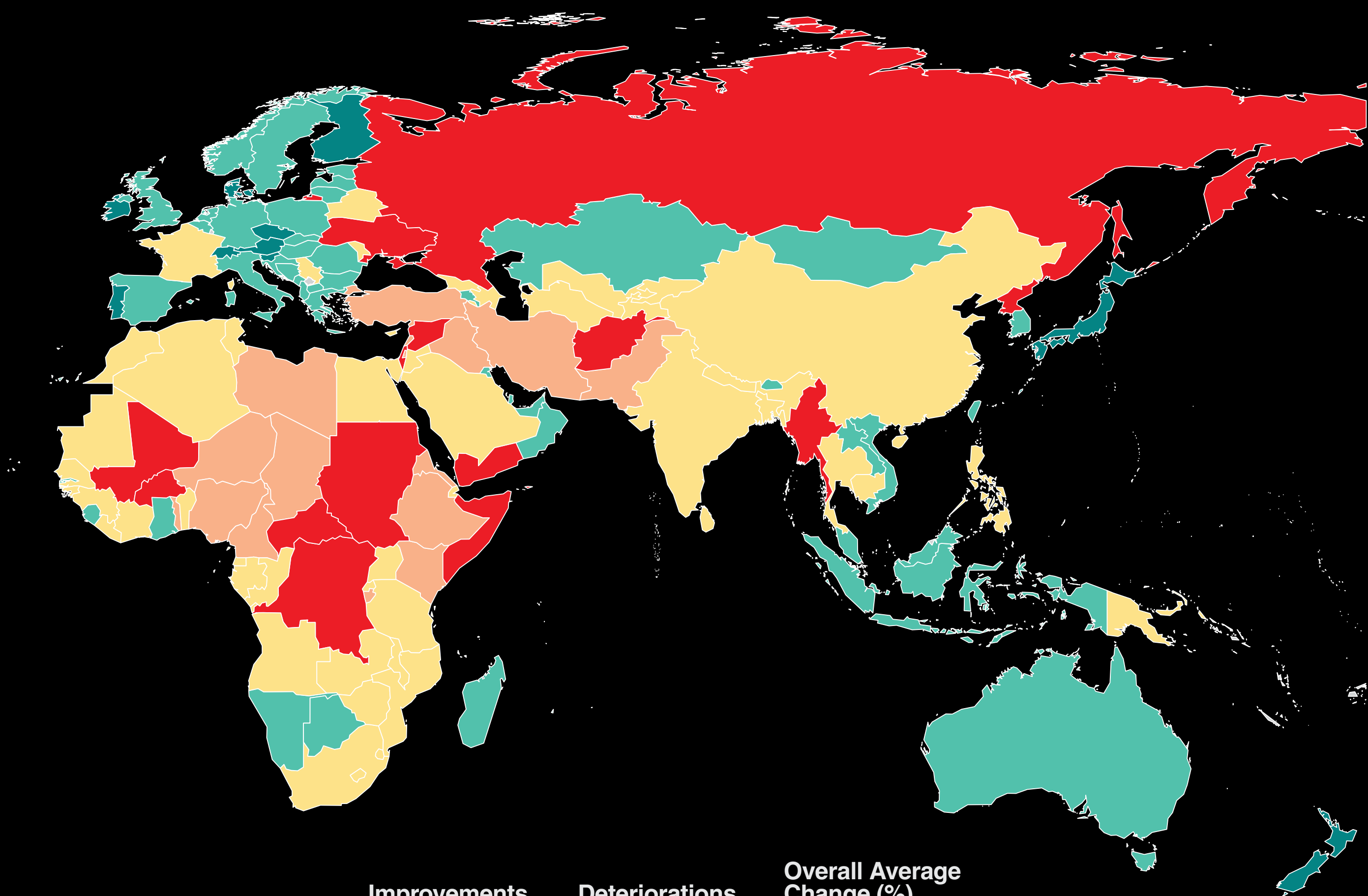
THE STATE OF PEACE

VERY HIGH · HIGH · MEDIUM · LOW · VERY LOW · NOT INCLUDED

RANK	COUNTRY	SCORE	CHANGE
1	Iceland	1.095	↔
2	Ireland	1.260	↔
3	New Zealand	1.282	↑ 2
4	Austria	1.294	↓ 1
5	Switzerland	1.294	↓ 1
6	Singapore	1.357	↔
7	Portugal	1.371	↑ 1
8	Denmark	1.393	↓ 1
9	Slovenia	1.409	↔
10	Finland	1.420	↑ 1
11	Czechia	1.435	↑ 2
12	Japan	1.440	↑ 3
13	Malaysia	1.469	↓ 1
=14	Netherlands	1.491	↔
=14	Canada	1.491	↓ 5
16	Belgium	1.492	↑ 4
17	Hungary	1.500	↓ 1
18	Australia	1.505	↑ 1
19	Croatia	1.519	↓ 1
20	Germany	1.533	↓ 3
21	Bhutan	1.536	↔
=22	Latvia	1.558	↑ 5
=22	Lithuania	1.558	↑ 5
24	Estonia	1.559	↓ 2
25	Spain	1.578	↔
26	Mauritius	1.586	↓ 3
27	Qatar	1.593	↓ 1
28	Slovakia	1.609	↑ 1

RANK	COUNTRY	SCORE	CHANGE
29	Bulgaria	1.610	↑ 1
30	United Kingdom	1.634	↑ 2
31	Kuwait	1.642	↔
32	Norway	1.644	↓ 8
33	Italy	1.662	↑ 1
34	Montenegro	1.685	↑ 5
35	Sweden	1.709	↓ 2
36	Poland	1.713	↓ 1
37	Mongolia	1.719	↑ 8
=38	Romania	1.721	↓ 2
=38	Vietnam	1.721	↑ 1
40	Taiwan	1.730	↓ 2
41	South Korea	1.736	↑ 2
42	Oman	1.738	↓ 5
43	Botswana	1.743	↓ 2
44	Timor-Leste	1.758	↑ 5
45	Greece	1.764	↓ 3
46	Argentina	1.768	↑ 5
47	Laos	1.783	↓ 3
48	Uruguay	1.784	↔
49	Indonesia	1.786	↑ 3
50	Namibia	1.789	↑ 4
51	North Macedonia	1.799	↓ 4
=52	Albania	1.812	↓ 6
=52	United Arab Emirates	1.812	↑ 2
54	Costa Rica	1.843	↓ 4
55	The Gambia	1.855	↑ 16
56	Kazakhstan	1.875	↑ 5

RANK	COUNTRY	SCORE	CHANGE
57	Sierra Leone	1.887	↑ 2
58	Armenia	1.893	↑ 10
=59	Madagascar	1.895	↓ 6
=59	Bosnia and Herzegovina	1.895	↓ 3
61	Ghana	1.898	↓ 3
62	Chile	1.899	↔
63	Kosovo	1.908	↓ 3
=64	Serbia	1.914	↓ 1
=64	Zambia	1.914	↓ 9
66	Moldova	1.918	↓ 2
67	Uzbekistan	1.926	↑ 2
68	Cyprus	1.933	↓ 1
69	Senegal	1.936	↑ 5
70	Liberia	1.939	↑ 6
71	Malawi	1.955	↑ 14
72	Jordan	1.957	↓ 2
73	Tanzania	1.965	↓ 8
74	France	1.967	↑ 5
75	Paraguay	1.981	↑ 2
=76	Nepal	1.987	↑ 8
=76	Angola	1.987	↓ 11
78	Kyrgyz Republic	1.988	↑ 5
=79	Tajikistan	1.996	↑ 10
=79	Dominican Republic	1.996	↑ 6
81	Tunisia	1.998	↓ 3
82	Equatorial Guinea	2.004	↑ 15
83	Bolivia	2.005	↓ 10



Improvements

74

countries recorded improvements in peacefulness

Deteriorations

87

countries recorded a deterioration in peacefulness

Overall Average Change (%)

0.36 ↓

The average level of country peacefulness deteriorated by 0.36 per cent in the 2025 Global Peace Index.

RANK	COUNTRY	SCORE	CHANGE
84	Panama	2.006	↑ 4
85	Morocco	2.012	↓ 3
86	Thailand	2.017	↓ 5
=87	Cambodia	2.019	↓ 12
=87	Turkmenistan	2.019	↑ 7
89	Trinidad and Tobago	2.020	↓ 17
90	Saudi Arabia	2.035	↑ 14
91	Rwanda	2.036	↑ 12
92	Algeria	2.042	↓ 1
93	Jamaica	2.047	↓ 13
94	Côte d'Ivoire	2.066	↓ 2
95	Azerbaijan	2.067	↑ 17
96	Peru	2.073	↑ 14
97	Sri Lanka	2.075	↑ 2
98	China	2.093	↓ 11
99	Eswatini	2.094	↓ 5
100	Bahrain	2.099	↓ 7
101	Guinea-Bissau	2.112	↓ 5
102	Cuba	2.123	↓ 2
103	Republic of the Congo	2.132	↓ 5
104	El Salvador	2.136	↑ 1
105	Philippines	2.148	↑ 6
106	Guyana	2.149	↔
107	Egypt	2.157	↑ 2
108	Guatemala	2.174	↔
109	Georgia	2.185	↓ 8
110	Mauritania	2.204	↓ 8

RANK	COUNTRY	SCORE	CHANGE
111	Nicaragua	2.207	↑ 2
112	Benin	2.211	↑ 5
113	Uganda	2.217	↑ 12
114	Zimbabwe	2.223	↑ 8
115	India	2.229	↔
116	Papua New Guinea	2.230	↓ 9
117	Gabon	2.238	↓ 1
118	Guinea	2.253	↑ 6
=119	Lesotho	2.267	↑ 4
=119	Belarus	2.267	↓ 2
121	Mozambique	2.273	↓ 7
122	Djibouti	2.276	↓ 2
123	Bangladesh	2.318	↓ 33
=124	South Africa	2.347	↑ 3
=124	Honduras	2.347	↓ 4
126	Togo	2.381	↓ 7
127	Kenya	2.392	↓ 1
128	United States of America	2.443	↔
129	Ecuador	2.459	↔
130	Brazil	2.472	↑ 1
131	Libya	2.478	↑ 1
132	Eritrea	2.542	↑ 1
133	Burundi	2.574	↓ 3
134	Chad	2.593	↔
135	Mexico	2.636	↑ 2
136	Lebanon	2.674	↓ 1
137	Cameroon	2.683	↑ 5

RANK	COUNTRY	SCORE	CHANGE
138	Ethiopia	2.688	↑ 5
139	Venezuela	2.692	↓ 3
140	Colombia	2.695	↑ 1
141	Haiti	2.731	↑ 3
142	Iran	2.750	↓ 4
143	Niger	2.759	↓ 4
144	Pakistan	2.797	↓ 4
145	Palestine	2.811	↑ 1
146	Turkiye	2.852	↑ 1
147	Iraq	2.862	↑ 3
148	Nigeria	2.869	↓ 3
149	North Korea	2.911	↔
150	Central African Republic	2.912	↓ 2
151	Somalia	2.983	↑ 3
152	Burkina Faso	3.016	↔
153	Myanmar	3.045	↓ 2
154	Mali	3.061	↓ 1
155	Israel	3.108	↔
156	South Sudan	3.117	↑ 2
157	Syria	3.184	↓ 1
158	Afghanistan	3.229	↑ 2
159	Yemen	3.262	↑ 3
160	Democratic Republic of the Congo	3.292	↓ 3
161	Sudan	3.323	↑ 2
162	Ukraine	3.434	↓ 3
163	Russia	3.441	↓ 2

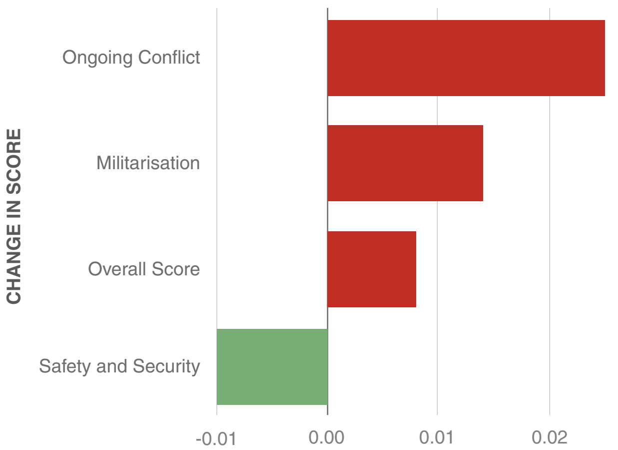
Results

The 2025 GPI finds that the world became less peaceful for the 13th time in the last 17 years, with the average level of country peacefulness deteriorating by 0.36 per cent over the prior year. This is the sixth consecutive year that global peacefulness has deteriorated. Figure 1.1 shows the change in the average levels of peacefulness for each of the GPI domains, as well as the percentage of countries that improved or deteriorated. In total, peacefulness improved in 74 countries and deteriorated in 87.

FIGURE 1.1

Year-on-year change in GPI score by domain, 2025

Safety and Security was the only domain to record an improvement.



Source: IEP

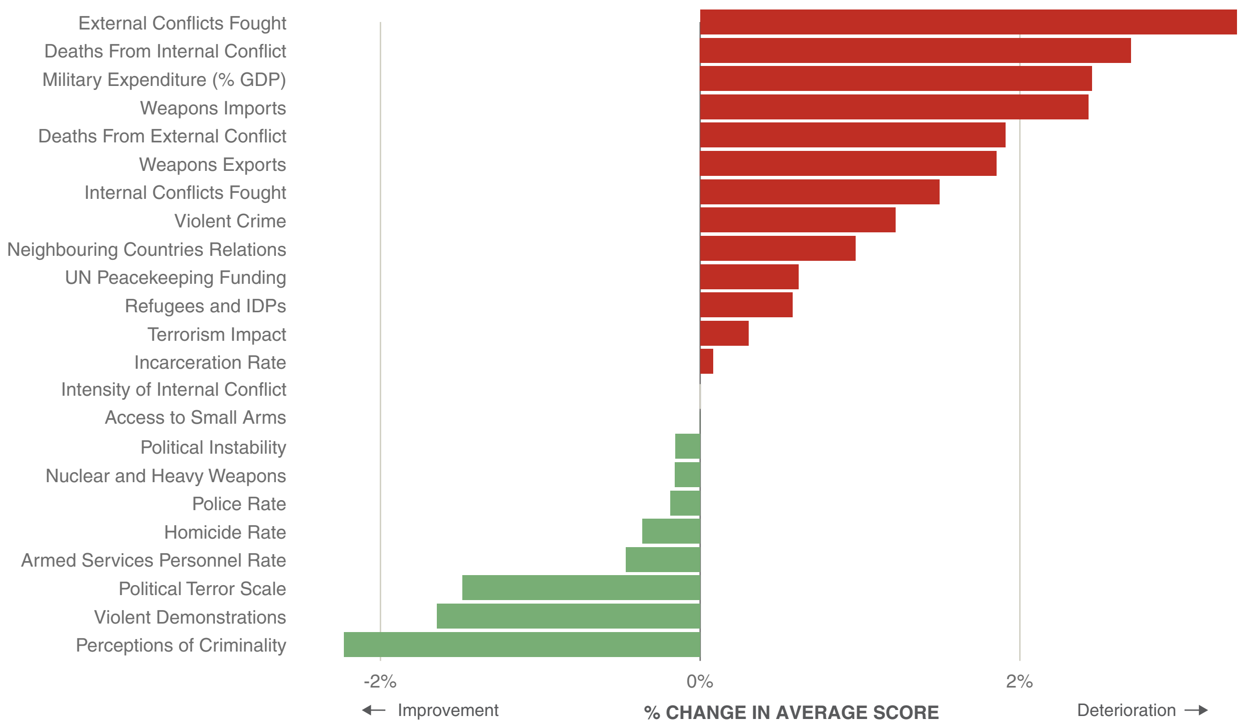
The *Ongoing Conflict* domain recorded the largest deterioration, with the average score on the domain deteriorating by 1.3 per cent. While most attention has been focused on the wars in Gaza and Ukraine, conflict remains widespread across the globe, with 78 countries recording a deterioration from the 2024 to the 2025 GPI. The main driver of rising *Ongoing Conflict* was an increase in the number of *external conflicts fought*, with 46 countries experiencing more external conflict this year than last year. The biggest deteriorations on this domain occurred in Russia, Bangladesh and Ukraine. Every indicator on the *Ongoing Conflict* domain deteriorated on average, apart from *intensity of internal conflict*, which recorded no change.

The *Militarisation* domain continued to deteriorate over the past year, with 86 countries recording deteriorations. Average *military expenditure* as a percentage of GDP reached its highest level since 2010, increasing by 2.5 per cent over the past year. Norway, Denmark and Bangladesh recorded the largest deteriorations on the *Militarisation* domain in 2025. The deterioration on this domain is a reversal of the trend seen for much of the past 15 years, as many countries have begun to move towards higher levels of military spending given the increase in conflict and geopolitical unrest across the globe.

FIGURE 1.2

Percentage change in score by indicator, 2024–2025

Thirteen of the 23 GPI indicators recorded an improvement over the past year.



Source: IEP

The *Safety and Security* domain was the only one of the three GPI domains to record an improvement over the past year, despite the increase in armed conflict worldwide. There were 95 countries that recorded improvements on the domain, compared to 67 that recorded deteriorations. *Perceptions of criminality* had the biggest improvement, followed by *political terror scale* and *violent demonstrations*. The average global *homicide rate* is at its lowest level since the inception of the index.

Figure 1.2 shows the average percentage change for each indicator from the 2024 to the 2025 GPI. Thirteen of the 23 GPI indicators deteriorated on average, with eight improving and two remaining unchanged. The largest average deterioration was on the *external conflicts fought* indicator, while the *perceptions of criminality* indicator had the largest improvement.

The increase in conflict across the globe led to a deterioration on the *deaths from internal conflict* indicator. Although the total number of deaths fell due to large decreases in Mexico and Ukraine, 49 countries recorded an increase in conflict deaths in 2024. While the impact of conflict in Ukraine and Palestine received the most global media coverage, intense conflict has become increasingly widespread. There were 17 countries with over 1,000 internal conflict deaths in 2024, the highest since 1999, and a further 18 countries that recorded over one hundred deaths in the last year.

The largest deterioration year on year was for *external conflicts fought*. The deterioration on the indicator reflects the increase in external actors becoming involved in internal conflicts. The United States, Russia, Iran and France are among the countries with the highest scores. There were 44 countries with scores that deteriorated on this indicator, with four of the ten largest deteriorations occurring in countries in sub-Saharan Africa. There are now 98 countries that were at least partially involved in some form of external conflict in the past five years, up from 59 in 2008. In most cases, such countries were offering support to an existing government in its conflict with an internal armed rebel or terrorist group. A list of all the countries involved in five or more external conflicts is shown in Table 1.1.

Perceptions of criminality had the largest average improvement of any indicator. There were 75 countries that recorded an improvement on the indicator, compared to 41 which recorded a deterioration. Five of the ten best scoring countries on the indicator are in the MENA region, while eight of the ten worst scoring countries are in sub-Saharan Africa.

After a period of improvement at the beginning of the decade, the *terrorism impact* indicator recorded its largest deterioration since 2020. This reflects the continued intensification of terrorism in a small number of hotspots around the globe, most notably in the Sahel region of sub-Saharan Africa. The number of countries affected by terrorism increased from 58 in 2023 to 66 in 2024, much of it related to lone actor attacks in Western democracies. Forty-five countries deteriorated, compared to only 34 that improved.

Average *military expenditure* as percentage of GDP deteriorated across the world, as more countries began to act on promises to increase military spending. This year was the third largest deterioration since the inception of the GPI. There were 84 countries where relative military expenditure increased over the past year, compared to just 50 where it decreased. Much of this increase is driven by the conflicts in Ukraine and Israel-Palestine, with Israel recording the largest deterioration on the indicator. In 2024, twenty-four Western and Central European countries increased military spending, with several others pledging future increases. In other regions of the world, increasing militarisation was largely concentrated in sub-Saharan Africa, where scores on the *Militarisation* domain deteriorated in 23 of the 44 countries in the region.

TABLE 1.1

Countries involved in five or more external conflicts in 2024

Country	UN Involvement	African Union Involvement	Other	Total
Cameroon	4		2	6
Bangladesh	4		2	6
Nepal	4		2	6
Burundi	3		3	6
Indonesia	4		2	6
Türkiye	3		2	5
Burkina Faso	3		2	5
Nigeria	2		3	5
Tanzania	4	1		5
Rwanda	4	1		5
United States	1		4	5
Ghana	2		3	5
Niger	3		2	5
Iran	3		2	5

Five Most & Least Peaceful Countries by Domain

TABLE 1.2

Safety and Security domain

Rank	Country	Score	Score change	Rank change
1	Iceland	1.212	-0.049	↑1
2	Norway	1.261	-0.001	↑1
3	Finland	1.269	-0.006	↑1
4	Japan	1.292	-0.09	↑4
5	Singapore	1.294	0.053	↓4

Rank	Country	Score	Score change	Rank change
163	Afghanistan	3.929	-0.038	↔
162	Yemen	3.861	-0.021	↔
161	South Sudan	3.833	-0.028	↔
160	Democratic Republic of the Congo	3.713	0.034	↔
159	Sudan	3.647	0.052	↔

TABLE 1.3

Ongoing Conflict domain

Rank	Country	Score	Score change	Rank change
1	Iceland	1.000	0.000	↔
2	Mauritius	1.000	0.000	↔
3	New Zealand	1.000	-0.009	↑5
4	Singapore	1.000	0.000	↔
5	Uruguay	1.000	0.000	↔

Rank	Country	Score	Score change	Rank change
163	Russia	4.195	0.495	↓1
162	Ukraine	4.005	0.417	↓1
161	Sudan	3.691	-0.012	↑2
160	Democratic Republic of the Congo	3.647	0.211	↓1
159	Syria	3.536	0.051	↑1

TABLE 1.4

Militarisation domain

Rank	Country	Score	Score change	Rank change
1	Iceland	1.019	-0.004	↔
2	Portugal	1.194	-0.025	↔
3	Malaysia	1.202	-0.027	↔
4	Bhutan	1.285	-0.005	↑3
5	Ireland	1.301	-0.019	↑4

Rank	Country	Score	Score change	Rank change
163	Israel	3.917	0.145	↔
162	United States	3.145	0.005	↓1
161	North Korea	3.132	-0.014	↑1
160	Ukraine	3.110	0.097	↓1
159	Russia	3.061	-0.012	↑1

Regional Overview

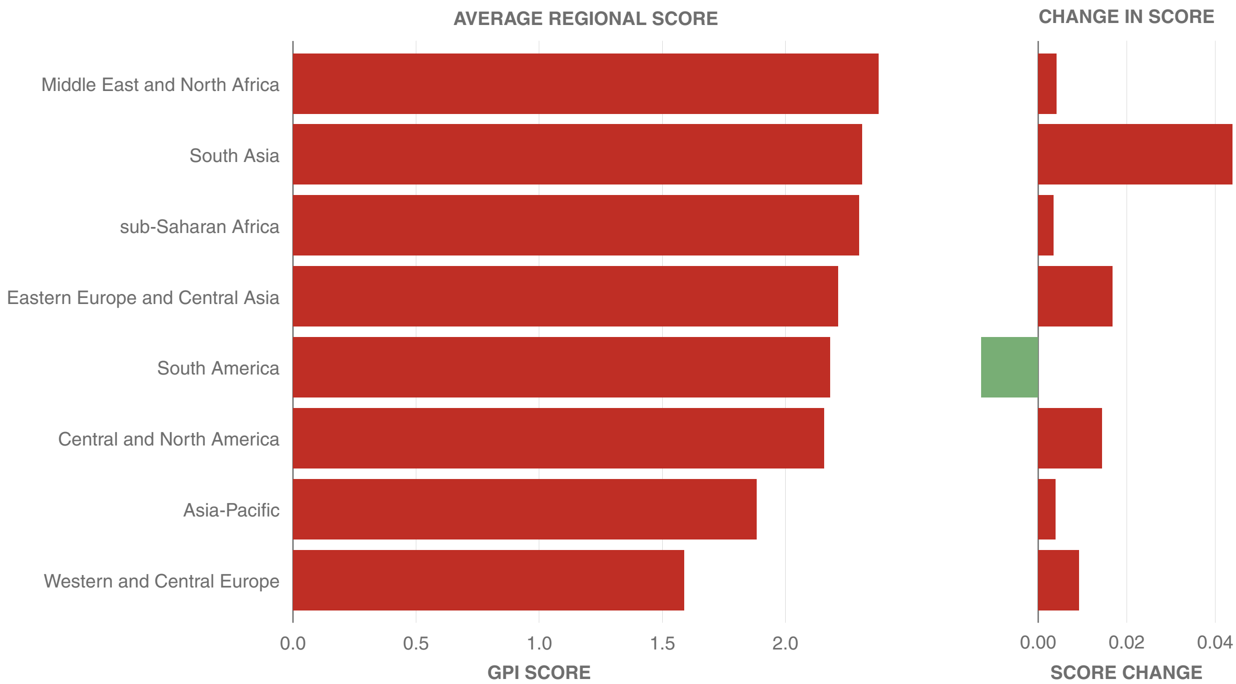
Seven of the eight GPI regions deteriorated in peacefulness in 2025. South America was the only region to improve on average over the past year, although it remains considerably less peaceful than it was at the inception of the index in 2008.

South Asia recorded the largest average deterioration of all the regions, with significant falls in peacefulness in both Bangladesh and Pakistan. Figure 1.3 shows the overall score for each region on the 2025 GPI, as well as the change in score since the 2024 GPI.

FIGURE 1.3

Regional GPI results, 2025

Seven regions deteriorated and only one improved.



Source: IEP

ASIA-PACIFIC

TABLE 1.5

Asia-Pacific

REGIONAL RANK	COUNTRY	OVERALL SCORE	CHANGE IN SCORE	OVERALL RANK
1	New Zealand	1.282	-0.041	3
2	Singapore	1.357	0.022	6
3	Japan	1.44	-0.039	12
4	Malaysia	1.469	0.03	13
5	Australia	1.505	0.013	18
6	Mongolia	1.719	-0.051	37
7	Vietnam	1.721	-0.015	38
8	Taiwan	1.73	0.014	40
9	South Korea	1.736	-0.025	41
10	Timor-Leste	1.758	-0.054	44
11	Laos	1.783	0.015	47
12	Indonesia	1.786	-0.054	49
13	Thailand	2.017	0.012	86
14	Cambodia	2.019	0.043	87
15	China	2.093	0.056	98
16	Philippines	2.148	-0.036	105
17	Papua New Guinea	2.23	0.075	116
18	North Korea	2.911	-0.006	149
19	Myanmar	3.045	0.116	153
	REGIONAL AVERAGE	**1.882**	**0.004**	

The Asia-Pacific region recorded a slight deterioration in peacefulness on the 2025 GPI, with the overall score deteriorating 0.21 per cent. However, it remains the second most peaceful region in the world, a position it has held since 2017. The decline in peacefulness was driven by a 1.1 per cent deterioration on the *Ongoing Conflict* domain and a 0.4 per cent increase on the *Militarisation* domain. The *Safety and Security* domain was the only domain to improve, due to substantial improvements on the *perceptions of criminality* and *political terror scale* indicators. Overall, ten out of 19 countries recorded deteriorations, with only nine countries improving.

New Zealand is the most peaceful country in the region and is ranked third globally on the 2025 GPI. It recorded an improvement in peacefulness over the past year of 3.1 per cent, with just two indicators deteriorating: *weapons imports* and *military expenditure (% GDP)*. In recent years, New Zealand's Defence Force (NZDF) has faced problems relating to the retention of personnel and the state of its partially outdated navy and air force.[1] In order to remedy these issues, the budget for the NZDF has been increased, leading to a deterioration in the *Militarisation* domain.[2] New Zealand's score on the *Ongoing Conflict* domain improved by 0.89 per cent and the *Safety and Security* domain improved by 7.6 per cent, mainly due to improvements on *violent demonstrations* and *terrorism impact*.

Myanmar is the least peaceful country in the Asia-Pacific region and recorded the region's worst deterioration in 2025, driven by deteriorations on all three domains. The *violent crime* score remains elevated due to civil unrest, armed conflict and intensified military attacks. Myanmar's political stability deteriorated as armed conflicts eroded the control of the country's military junta government, pushing it to reinstate conscription. An extension of the junta's mandate and planned 2025 elections further fuelled political uncertainty. It has been reported that there have been over 5,350 civilian deaths since a coup that took place in the country in 2021, including 2,414 between April 2023 and June 2024. Additionally, Myanmar became the world's largest producer of synthetic drugs, bolstering organised crime networks within the country.

North Korea is the second least peaceful country in the region, although it recorded a slight improvement in peacefulness on the 2025 GPI, and is now ranked ahead of Myanmar. Prior to this year, North Korea had been the least peaceful country in the region each year since the inception of the GPI. North Korea is the world's third most militarised country, with the highest possible score on the *nuclear and heavy weapons, military expenditure (% GDP)* and *armed services personnel rate* indicators.

Indonesia recorded the largest improvement in overall peacefulness in the region, with peacefulness improving by 2.9 per cent over the past year. Eleven of the indicators improved, four deteriorated, and eight went unchanged. The *Safety and Security* and the *Militarisation* domains each improved to a similar degree, while the *Ongoing Conflict* domain had a smaller deterioration. The indicators that drove the overall improvement in peacefulness were improvements in *UN peacekeeping funding, weapons exports* and *political terror scale*. The country has also had significant success in combatting jihadist terrorism in the past five years and has not experienced a terrorist attack outside of the West Papua region for the past three years.

EASTERN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA

TABLE 1.6

Eastern Europe and Central Asia

REGIONAL RANK	COUNTRY	OVERALL SCORE	CHANGE IN SCORE	OVERALL RANK
1	Bulgaria	1.61	0	29
2	Romania	1.721	0.016	38
3	Kazakhstan	1.875	-0.042	56
4	Armenia	1.893	-0.049	58
5	Moldova	1.918	-0.001	66
6	Uzbekistan	1.926	-0.018	67
7	Kyrgyz Republic	1.988	-0.023	78
8	Tajikistan	1.996	-0.044	79
9	Turkmenistan	2.019	-0.05	87
10	Azerbaijan	2.067	-0.123	95
11	Georgia	2.185	0.064	109
12	Belarus	2.267	0.002	119
13	Türkiye	2.852	0.051	146
14	Ukraine	3.434	0.26	162
15	Russia	3.441	0.209	163
	REGIONAL AVERAGE	**2.213**	**0.017**	

The Eastern Europe and Central Asia region experienced the second largest deterioration of any region on the 2025 GPI, with the average level of peacefulness in the region deteriorating by 0.77 per cent. Overall levels of peacefulness in the region remain low, mainly driven by the conflict between Ukraine and Russia. Eight countries registered improvements, six registered deteriorations, and one remained unchanged. All three domains recorded deteriorations in the past year, the most significant being in the *Ongoing Conflict* domain.

The dominant issue in the region remains the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, which led to significant deteriorations in peacefulness in both countries. Russia and Ukraine are ranked as the least and second least peaceful countries in the world on the 2025 GPI. With no immediate end to the conflict in sight, it is likely that Russia and Ukraine will remain two of the least peaceful countries in the world for the foreseeable future.

Russia is now the least peaceful country in the world on the 2025 GPI and recorded the second largest deterioration in the region, behind Ukraine. Russia ranked as the 163rd country on the *Ongoing Conflict* domain. Its overall level of peacefulness deteriorated by 6.5 per cent in the past year. The *Safety and Security* domain and the *Ongoing Conflict* domain deteriorated, while the *Militarisation* domain improved solely due to a decrease on the *weapons exports* indicator. The *deaths from internal conflict* indicator increased as a result of the Kursk offensive by Ukrainian troops in August 2024. This marked the first significant combat operation within Russia's borders since the onset of the conflict.

Ukraine recorded the largest deterioration in overall peacefulness in the region in the past year. It ranks as the second least peaceful country in the region and in the world on the 2025 GPI. In addition to its ongoing conflict with Russia, Ukraine experienced a significant rise in other forms of internal violence, driven in part by stresses and deprivations associated with the war. Domestic violence cases surged in 2024, with over 291,000 incidents reported, a 20 per cent increase from the previous year. Additionally, organised crime activities intensified, including increased arms trafficking and gang-related violence. The proliferation of firearms from the conflict zone contributed to these trends, exacerbating public safety concerns.

Bulgaria is the most peaceful country in the region. Although the overall peacefulness score remained unchanged, several indicators had significant changes, with the *violent demonstrations* and *military expenditure* indicators deteriorating, while *perceptions of criminality* and *nuclear and heavy weapons* improved. The October 2024 national election was followed by reports of vote-count irregularities, disputed results and protests. In March 2025, the results were declared illegitimate.[3] The increase in *violent demonstrations* was also driven by protests in early 2025 against the country's plan to adopt the euro as its national currency.[4]

Azerbaijan recorded the largest improvement in peacefulness in the region. Its overall score improved by 5.4 per cent, leading to a rise in the GPI rankings from 113th to 95th place. The *Ongoing Conflict* and *Safety and Security* domains recorded improvements, while the *Militarisation* domain deteriorated. The *Ongoing Conflict* domain recorded the largest improvement, driven by the *deaths from internal conflict* and the *deaths from external conflict* indicators both improving by 100 per cent. These drops in conflict deaths were likely caused by the cessation of active hostilities in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in 2023-2024.[5]

MIDDLE EAST & NORTH AFRICA

TABLE 1.7

Middle East & North Africa

REGIONAL RANK	COUNTRY	OVERALL SCORE	CHANGE IN SCORE	OVERALL RANK
1	Qatar	1.593	0.016	27
2	Kuwait	1.642	0.014	31
3	Oman	1.738	0.031	42
4	United Arab Emirates	1.812	-0.045	52
5	Jordan	1.957	0.006	72
6	Tunisia	1.998	0.003	81
7	Morocco	2.012	0.001	85
8	Saudi Arabia	2.035	-0.113	90
9	Algeria	2.042	-0.009	92
10	Bahrain	2.099	0.031	100
11	Egypt	2.157	-0.011	107
12	Libya	2.478	-0.023	131
13	Lebanon	2.674	0.035	136
14	Iran	2.75	0.052	142
15	Palestine	2.811	0.02	145
16	Iraq	2.862	-0.059	147
17	Israel	3.108	0.044	155
18	Syria	3.184	0.068	157
19	Yemen	3.262	0.002	159
20	Sudan	3.323	0.02	161
	REGIONAL AVERAGE	**2.377**	**0.004**	

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) remains the least peaceful region in the world for the tenth consecutive year. It recorded a small deterioration in peacefulness over the past year, as its average GPI score deteriorated by 0.17 per cent. Four of the ten least peaceful countries on the 2025 GPI are in the MENA region.

The largest fall in peacefulness occurred on the *Ongoing Conflict* domain, which deteriorated by 0.8 per cent. There were deteriorations on the *deaths from internal conflict, deaths from external conflict,* and *internal conflicts fought* indicators, driven by the ongoing conflicts in Palestine, Sudan, and Syria and the associated increase in regional unrest. Tensions in the region remain extremely high as of early 2025. The *Militarisation* domain recorded a small improvement, although there was a significant deterioration on the *military expenditure* indicator, with the MENA region having the highest average level of relative military expenditure in the world.

The most notable falls in peacefulness in the region occurred because of the war in Gaza that erupted after the Hamas attack in Israel on 7 October 2023. Latest estimates suggest that over 63,750 people have been killed in this conflict, although some estimates suggest that the death toll is likely to be far higher.[6] The conflict has also thrown the entire region into crisis, with Syria, Iran, Lebanon and Yemen all becoming involved to varying degrees. In early March 2025, all humanitarian aid was blocked from entering Gaza, exacerbating the already dire humanitarian crisis.[7]

Qatar is the most peaceful country in the MENA region, and the 27th most peaceful country overall. It is one of the three countries in the region that is ranked among the 50 most peaceful countries in the world. However, it recorded a 0.99 per cent deterioration in overall peacefulness in the past year. This was driven by a deterioration on the *Safety and Security* domain, because of deteriorating *political instability*. Political uncertainty increased after a constitutional referendum abolished legislative elections.

Sudan is the least peaceful country in the region and ranks as the third least peaceful country overall on the 2025 GPI. Peacefulness in Sudan fell by 0.54 per cent over the past year, owing to substantial deteriorations on the *nuclear and heavy weapons, refugees and IDP* and *internal conflicts fought* indicators. Additionally, *violent crime* deteriorated largely due to the ongoing civil war between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF). Conflict broke out in April 2023 between the SAF and RSF after a plan was proposed to dissolve the RSF and integrate it with the army. The armed conflict has led to the displacement of millions of people, with an estimated 6,800 *deaths from internal conflict* recorded in 2024. The increasing civil unrest and lawlessness has meant that humanitarian agencies and multilateral organisations are unable to safely operate in most locations, including in the capital city of Khartoum.

Saudi Arabia recorded the largest improvement in peacefulness in the region, with improvements recorded across all three GPI domains. The primary driver of the improvement in peacefulness was a decrease on *deaths from internal conflict*, which recorded an improvement of 100 per cent. Political stability improved as the government's Vision 2030 reforms and diplomatic outreach strengthened governance and regional cooperation. The country has restored ties with Lebanon and Iran, and it has served as a mediating party in some international conflicts amid the substantial geopolitical tensions in the region.

Syria recorded the largest deterioration in peacefulness in the region and ranks in the ten least peaceful countries in the world on the 2025 GPI. The decline in peacefulness over the past year was driven by deteriorations on the *Ongoing Conflict* domain and the *Safety and Security* domain. *Violent demonstrations* significantly increased, as did *deaths from internal conflict*. Recent figures estimate that since 2011, more than 14 million Syrians have fled the country and 70 per cent of the population needs humanitarian aid. In December 2024, the government of Bashar al-Assad was overthrown after 24 years of rule. Since then, more than one million Syrians have returned to Syria.[8] A new transitional government was sworn into power at the end of March 2025.[9] During the change of government, tensions rose and fighting broke out over control of the Syria-Lebanese border, but a ceasefire agreement between the two parties was reached on 17 March 2025.[10]

CENTRAL AND NORTH AMERICA

TABLE 1.8

Central and North America

REGIONAL RANK	COUNTRY	OVERALL SCORE	CHANGE IN SCORE	OVERALL RANK
1	Canada	1.491	0.085	14
2	Costa Rica	1.843	0.017	54
3	Dominican Republic	1.996	-0.036	79
4	Panama	2.006	-0.032	84
5	Trinidad and Tobago	2.02	0.058	89
6	Jamaica	2.047	0.046	93
7	Cuba	2.123	0.016	102
8	El Salvador	2.136	-0.015	104
9	Guatemala	2.174	0.006	108
10	Nicaragua	2.207	0.017	111
11	Honduras	2.347	0.067	124
12	United States of America	2.443	0.044	128
13	Mexico	2.636	-0.031	135
14	Haiti	2.731	-0.041	141
	REGIONAL AVERAGE	**2.157**	**0.014**	

Central and North America is the third most peaceful region in the 2025 GPI, behind Western and Central Europe and Asia-Pacific. However, although the *Safety and Security* and the *Militarisation* domains improved, the *Ongoing Conflict* domain deteriorated, driving an overall 0.7 per cent reduction in peacefulness in this region. Overall, five countries improved and nine deteriorated. There is a large disparity between the most and least peaceful country in the region, as Canada is ranked as the 14th most peaceful country and Haiti is ranked 141st.

While Canada is the most peaceful country in the region, it also recorded the region's largest deterioration in overall peacefulness over the past year, deteriorating by 5.8 per cent. Three indicators recorded significant deteriorations: *violent crime, neighbouring countries relations* and *military expenditure (% GDP).* Political tensions have intensified between Canada and the United States under the second Trump administration. The US applied a 25 per cent blanket import tariff on Canadian goods and a lower 10 per cent rate to Canadian energy products. In response, Canada has applied limited tariffs of 10 to 15 per cent on a range of US goods. *Violent crime* deteriorated over the past year, with notable increases in extortion, robbery and assaults involving weapons or bodily harm. Since 2014, *violent crime* rates have risen by 43.8 per cent. However, despite these deteriorations, Canada remains one of the more peaceful countries in the world, with some of the highest levels of peacefulness on both the *Militarisation* and *Ongoing Conflict* domains.

Haiti is the least peaceful country in Central and North America. However, it recorded the largest improvement in overall peacefulness in the region in the past year, with its overall score improving 1.5 per cent. The country recorded improvements in the *Militarisation* and *Safety and Security* domains, while the *Ongoing Conflict* domain deteriorated. Four indicators improved, five deteriorated and 14 saw no change in the past year. Haiti has been in a state of crisis since 2021, when president Jovenel Moïse was assassinated. Rates of *violent crime* have soared amid rampant gang activity. However, Haiti's political instability improved in the past year due to the establishment of a Transitional Presidential Council in April 2024, to oversee governance until elections in 2026. Additionally, the UN, led by Kenyan peacekeeping forces, helped curb escalating gang violence that had previously paralysed economic activities and displaced over 700,000 people. These combined efforts have contributed to a modest stabilisation in Haiti's political landscape.

SOUTH AMERICA

TABLE 1.9

South America

REGIONAL RANK	COUNTRY	OVERALL SCORE	CHANGE IN SCORE	OVERALL RANK
1	Argentina	1.768	-0.067	46
2	Uruguay	1.784	-0.019	48
3	Chile	1.899	-0.02	62
4	Paraguay	1.981	-0.011	75
5	Bolivia	2.005	0.038	83
6	Peru	2.073	-0.099	96
7	Guyana	2.149	-0.004	106
8	Ecuador	2.459	0.025	129
9	Brazil	2.472	-0.024	130
10	Venezuela	2.692	0.053	139
11	Colombia	2.695	-0.013	140
	REGIONAL AVERAGE	**2.18**	**-0.013**	

South America was the only region to experience an improvement in peacefulness on the 2025 GPI, with the average level of peacefulness improving by 0.59 per cent. South America is now the fourth most peaceful region globally. Eight out of the 11 countries in the region improved, while three recorded deteriorations. The rise in peacefulness in the region was driven by improvements on the *Safety and Security* and *Militarisation* domains, with the largest changes occurring on the *violent demonstrations, political instability* and *intensity of internal conflict* indicators.

Argentina is the most peaceful country in the region and recorded an improvement in peacefulness of 3.8 per cent over the past year. The only indicator that recorded a deterioration was *UN peacekeeping funding*. Risks to political instability remained contained as austerity measures under President Javier Milei did not trigger mass protests or unrest to the level that was previously feared. Improving economic indicators, including rapidly falling inflation and unemployment, also helped limit risks to political stability. The economic recovery that began in the second half of 2024 helped reduce fallout from fiscal consolidation efforts.

Colombia remains the least peaceful country in South America for the fifth consecutive year. Although the *Ongoing Conflict* domain deteriorated, there were improvements on the *Militarisation* and the *Safety and Security* domains, which led to an overall rise in peacefulness of 0.55 per cent. Colombia's improved political stability was driven by the government's reforms aimed at reducing inequality and enhancing social inclusion. Key reforms included a comprehensive pension overhaul in June 2024, which expanded coverage and improved benefits for the elderly, and progressive tax reforms. New land laws introduced late in 2024 aim to provide greater land security and access to small and marginalised farmers, which is expected to support rural development and reduce land-related conflicts. These efforts reduced social unrest and stabilised the political climate by addressing long-standing economic disparities. Despite these improvements, Colombia still has a very high *homicide rate* and a high number of refugees and internally displaced people. Additionally, *deaths from internal conflict* rose sharply over the past year, from 434 in 2023 to 933 in 2024.

Peru recorded the largest improvement in peacefulness in the region. In 2025, Peru's GPI score improved by 4.4 per cent, mainly driven by a 15.6 per cent improvement on the *Ongoing Conflict* domain. The *Militarisation* domain saw a deterioration as four out of the six indicators increased, one decreased and one remained unchanged. Although political unrest remains high, in contrast to 2022 and 2023, there were no large-scale public protests demanding the resignation of the president. This led to significant reductions in social unrest compared to years prior. Although there were some sporadic, small-scale demonstrations against the government, these were not severely repressed by security forces as in previous years. Political stability in Peru improved as economic recovery and institutional reforms strengthened governance. Additionally, security crackdowns on organised crime further reinforced stability.

Venezuela recorded the largest deterioration in the region in the past year. All three domains deteriorated, resulting in a two per cent reduction in overall peacefulness. *Deaths from internal conflict* rose from 15 in 2023 to 37 in 2024, with *political instability* also deteriorating, owing to the contentious presidential election held in July last year. Allegations of electoral fraud and government repression fuelled nationwide protests and opposition candidate Edmundo González rejected the official results declaring Nicolás Maduro the winner, deepening political uncertainty.

SOUTH ASIA

TABLE 1.10

South Asia

REGIONAL RANK	COUNTRY	OVERALL SCORE	CHANGE IN SCORE	OVERALL RANK
1	Bhutan	1.536	0.011	21
2	Nepal	1.987	-0.034	76
3	Sri Lanka	2.075	-0.029	97
4	India	2.229	-0.013	115
5	Bangladesh	2.318	0.271	123
6	Pakistan	2.797	0.092	144
7	Afghanistan	3.229	0.009	158
	REGIONAL AVERAGE	**2.31**	**0.044**	

South Asia is the second least peaceful region on the 2025 GPI. It experienced a fall in peacefulness over the past year, with four of the seven countries in the region recording deteriorations in overall score. All three domains deteriorated, with the largest change on the *Ongoing Conflict* domain, with a 4.9 per cent increase due to none of the indicators in this domain improving in the past year.

Afghanistan is the least peaceful country in the region, a position it has held since the inception of the GPI. Afghanistan ranks as the fifth least peaceful country in the world and has the lowest ranking globally on the *Safety and Security* domain. In the past year, peacefulness in Afghanistan deteriorated by 0.28 per cent. Afghanistan is the only country in the South Asia region to have the worst possible scores on the *access to small arms, violent crimes, political instability, political terror scale, refugees and IDPs* and *military expenditure (% GDP)* indicators. Although the level of conflict in Afghanistan has fallen since the Taliban came to power, poor governance and humanitarian crises are fuelling political unrest. In March 2025, the World Health Organization in Afghanistan warned that funding shortages may cause 80 per cent of the agency's health services there to close by June, exacerbating the health crisis already present in the country.[11]

Nepal recorded the largest improvement in overall peacefulness in South Asia, reversing the deterioration in peacefulness that was seen in the prior year. The improvement over the past year was mainly driven by an improvement on the *Militarisation* domain, particularly due to a decline on *weapons imports* and improved *UN peacekeeping funding*. Additionally, the *terrorism impact* indicator recorded a substantial improvement over the past year. Nepal has been increasing its focus on counterterrorism in recent years, conducting joint military exercises with India from late December 2024 to early January 2025 that focused on counterterrorism, jungle warfare and operational skills.[12]

Bangladesh recorded the largest deterioration in peacefulness of any country in the region and of any country on the 2025 GPI, registering a 13 per cent reduction in overall peacefulness. It recorded deteriorations on all domains, with the largest occurring on the *Ongoing Conflict* domain. There were 436 *deaths from internal conflicts*, as compared to just 12 in the previous year. Internal conflict in Bangladesh escalated as student-led protests over government job quotas continued, despite a Supreme Court ruling reducing them. Bangladesh experienced a significant escalation in *violent crime* and *political instability*. Attacks on minority communities also escalated, with over 2,010 incidents recorded in August 2024. Political violence surged, with an estimated 1,400 deaths linked to clashes involving security forces and political groups. Allegations of systematic extrajudicial killings further undermined public trust in law enforcement. Bangladesh's political stability deteriorated in 2024 due to rising risks of social unrest, opposition fragmentation, and security crackdowns. Weeks of street protests, an opposition walk-out, and a ruling-coalition split forced Bangladesh's president to oust the prime minister and draft Nobel laureate Dr Muhammad Yunus as caretaker of an interim government. Yunus must now pacify feuding parties and student groups, steady an economy strained by forex shortages and food inflation, and rebuild trust in a partisan election commission. High living costs and the interim government's inaction have fuelled mass protest risks, while uncertainty over the election timeline has deepened instability.

India is the largest and most populous country in the South Asia region and the world. Its overall level of peacefulness improved by 0.58 per cent over the past year, with nine indicators improving, nine remaining the same and three deteriorating. *Political instability* improved slightly following India's 2024 general elections, with the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) coalition forming a government headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, despite his Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) losing its majority. Modi's third term and coalition stability reduced social unrest risks, while troop disengagement with China eased geopolitical tensions. However, tensions between India and Pakistan escalated to concerning levels in April 2025, following a terrorist attack in the disputed Kashmir region that resulted in the deaths of 25 Indian tourists. This attack falls outside of the measurement period of the 2025 GPI and will be captured in next year's report. Although tensions in the region have been high in the region since an insurgency began in 1989, the violence rarely targeted civilians directly.

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

TABLE 1.11

Sub-Saharan Africa

REGIONAL RANK	COUNTRY	OVERALL SCORE	CHANGE IN SCORE	OVERALL RANK
1	Mauritius	1.586	0.023	26
2	Botswana	1.743	-0.011	43
3	Namibia	1.789	-0.066	50
4	The Gambia	1.855	-0.097	55
5	Sierra Leone	1.887	-0.02	57
6	Madagascar	1.895	0.048	59
7	Ghana	1.898	0.004	61
8	Zambia	1.914	0.04	64
9	Senegal	1.936	-0.033	69
10	Liberia	1.939	-0.04	70
11	Malawi	1.955	-0.075	71
12	Tanzania	1.965	0.04	73
13	Angola	1.987	0.061	76
14	Equatorial Guinea	2.004	-0.077	82
15	Rwanda	2.036	-0.089	91
16	Côte d'Ivoire	2.066	-0.001	94
17	Eswatini	2.094	0.025	99
18	Guinea-Bissau	2.112	0.034	101
19	Republic of the Congo	2.132	0.035	103
20	Mauritania	2.204	0.08	110
21	Benin	2.211	-0.046	112
22	Uganda	2.217	-0.105	113
23	Zimbabwe	2.223	-0.071	114
24	Gabon	2.238	-0.006	117
25	Guinea	2.253	-0.051	118
26	Lesotho	2.267	-0.031	119
27	Mozambique	2.273	0.059	121
28	Djibouti	2.276	-0.001	122
29	South Africa	2.347	-0.017	124
30	Togo	2.381	0.111	126
31	Kenya	2.392	0.047	127

32	Eritrea	2.542	0.005	132
33	Burundi	2.574	0.113	133
34	Chad	2.593	0.014	134
35	Cameroon	2.683	-0.028	137
36	Ethiopia	2.688	-0.05	138
37	Niger	2.759	0.058	143
38	Nigeria	2.869	0.095	148
39	Central African Republic	2.912	0.036	150
40	Somalia	2.983	-0.04	151
41	Burkina Faso	3.016	0.046	152
42	Mali	3.061	0.044	154
43	South Sudan	3.117	-0.047	156
44	Democratic Republic of the Congo	3.292	0.138	160
	REGIONAL AVERAGE	**2.299**	**0.003**	

Sub-Saharan Africa recorded a deterioration in peacefulness, with the average score in the region deteriorating by 0.17 per cent over the past year. Half of the countries in this region improved in overall peacefulness while the other half deteriorated. Three of the ten least peaceful countries in the world are found in this region. Sub-Saharan African faces several security crises, most notably the increase in political unrest and terrorism in the Central Sahel region. Burkina Faso has the highest *terrorism impact* in the world, and six of the ten countries with the highest *terrorism impact* are in sub-Saharan Africa.

The *Militarisation* and *Ongoing Conflict* domains deteriorated while the *Safety and Security* domain saw an improvement over the past year. Conflicts in the region continued to spill across national borders, reflected by a deterioration on the *external conflicts fought* indicator. In the past five years, 36 of the 44 countries in the region have had some level of involvement in at least one external conflict.

Mauritius is the most peaceful country in sub-Saharan Africa for the 18th consecutive year. It recorded a small deterioration in overall peacefulness of 1.5 per cent, owing to deteriorations in the *Militarisation* and *Safety and Security* domains. Mauritius is also the only country in sub-Saharan Africa that has not been involved in any internal or external conflicts over the past six years. Mauritius's political stability improved in the past year following a smooth transition of power after the opposition's landslide victory. The peaceful handover reinforced democratic institutions, while steady economic growth and a strong tourism sector further supported stability.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is the least peaceful country in the region and also recorded the region's largest deterioration in overall peacefulness. The DRC ranks in the five least peaceful countries in the world in the 2025 GPI. Over the past year, the country recorded deteriorations in all three GPI domains and an overall reduction of peacefulness of 4.5 per cent. The country is currently engaged in a war with the March 23 Movement (M23), which is said to be supported by Rwandan forces. The UN estimates that there are between 3,000-4,000 Rwandan troops currently operating in the DRC, fighting alongside M23 rebels against government forces.

Uganda recorded the largest improvement in peacefulness in the region due to improvements in all three domains. The *Militarisation* domain recorded a substantial improvement of 11.7 per cent, the highest of the three domains. The *deaths from internal conflict* indicator saw a notable improvement; after having jumped to 74 deaths in 2023, it declined to four in the past year. A potential reason for this improvement is the intensified operations against the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) by Uganda's Ministry of Defence.[13]

WESTERN AND CENTRAL EUROPE

TABLE 1.12

Western and Central Europe

REGIONAL RANK	COUNTRY	OVERALL SCORE	CHANGE IN SCORE	OVERALL RANK
1	Iceland	1.095	-0.022	1
2	Ireland	1.26	-0.007	2
3	Austria	1.294	-0.003	4
4	Switzerland	1.294	-0.017	4
5	Portugal	1.371	0.022	7
6	Denmark	1.393	0.053	8
7	Slovenia	1.409	0.042	9
8	Finland	1.42	0	10
9	Czechia	1.435	-0.023	11
10	Netherlands	1.491	0.012	14
11	Belgium	1.492	-0.008	16
12	Hungary	1.5	0.019	17
13	Croatia	1.519	0.029	19
14	Germany	1.533	0.044	20
15	Lithuania	1.558	-0.024	22
16	Latvia	1.558	-0.023	22
17	Estonia	1.559	0.021	24
18	Spain	1.578	0.003	25
19	Slovakia	1.609	0.013	28
20	United Kingdom	1.634	-0.005	30
21	Norway	1.644	0.078	32
22	Italy	1.662	0.014	33
23	Montenegro	1.685	-0.042	34
24	Sweden	1.709	0.067	35
25	Poland	1.713	0.051	36
26	Greece	1.764	0.006	45
27	North Macedonia	1.799	0.005	51
28	Albania	1.812	0.031	52
29	Bosnia and Herzegovina	1.895	0.004	59
30	Kosovo	1.908	-0.003	63
31	Serbia	1.914	-0.005	64
32	Cyprus	1.933	0.002	68
33	France	1.967	-0.029	74
	REGIONAL AVERAGE	**1.588**	**0.009**	

Western and Central Europe remains the most peaceful region in the world on the 2025 GPI and is home to eight of the ten most peaceful countries in the world. However, it recorded a deterioration in peacefulness of 0.57 per cent over the past year. Of the 33 countries in the region, 13 improved in peacefulness, 19 deteriorated, and one remained unchanged. The driver of the fall in peacefulness in this region was a deterioration on the *Militarisation* domain. The conflict between Russia and Ukraine has led to many European countries reassessing their level of military spending and general combat readiness, with 24 of the 33 countries in this region recording a deterioration on this domain over the past year. The *Ongoing Conflict* and *Safety and Security* domains both improved slightly.

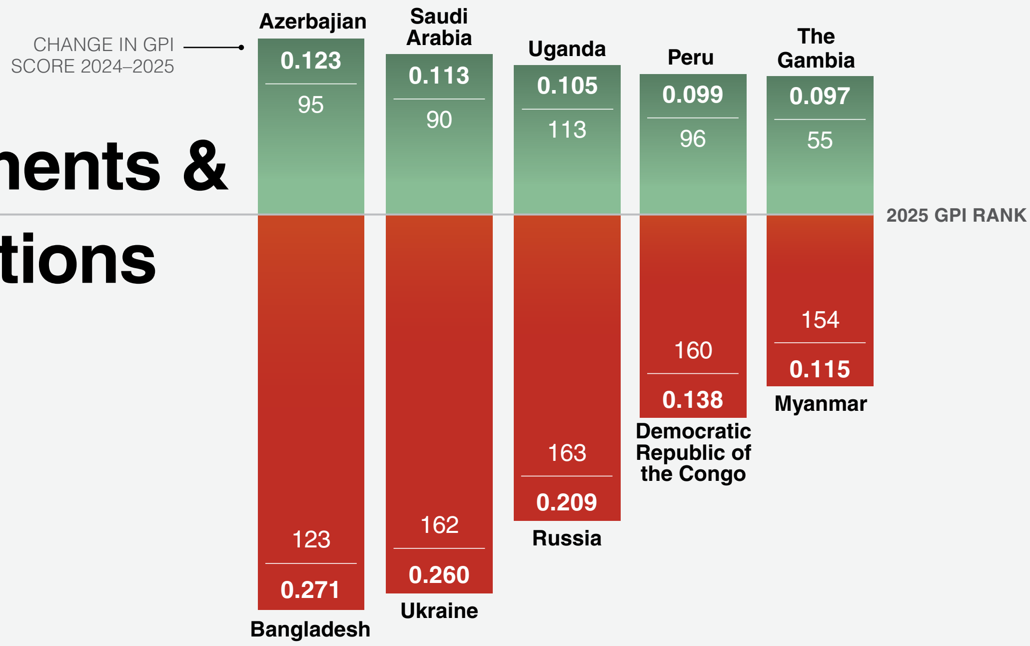
Iceland remains the most peaceful country in the region and the world on the 2025 GPI. It recorded a two per cent improvement in overall peacefulness over the past year as only one indicator deteriorated: *military expenditure (% GDP).* Iceland is the most peaceful country in the world by a considerable margin, with the gap in peacefulness between the first two countries on the 2025 GPI being the same size as the gap between the second and 10th ranked countries.

France is the least peaceful country in the region and has the highest levels of *Militarisation* of any country in Western and Central Europe. France's political stability declined in the past year due to a fragmented parliamentary election and government deadlock. President Emmanuel Macron's dissolution of the country's National Assembly led to a hung parliament, and Prime Minister Michel Barnier's government collapsed after a no-confidence vote. Rising public debt and economic uncertainty further weakened confidence, exacerbating political instability.

Montenegro recorded the largest improvement in the region, with its overall score improving by 2.3 per cent in the past year. This was primarily driven by an improvement in the *Safety and Security* domain, as the *homicide rate* indicator and the *political terror scale* indicator improved by 69.7 and 25 per cent, respectively. The homicide rate is 0.8 per 100,000 people, a record-low for Montenegro. In October 2024, a regional initiative to reduce illicit weapons possession – the Western Balkans Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) Control Roadmap – was endorsed for a second phase following the success of the original Western Balkans SALW Control Roadmap, which was adopted in 2018 and set goals to be achieved by 2024.[14]

Norway experienced the largest deterioration in peacefulness in the region, which was primarily caused by a substantial deterioration on the *Militarisation* domain. The *military expenditure (% GDP)* indicator deteriorated by 31.1 per cent and the *weapons exports* indicator deteriorated by 145 per cent. In 2024, the government unanimously adopted a new long-term defence strategy that will substantially increase the total defence budget over the next 12 years.[15] The *Safety and Security* domain saw a slight improvement of 0.08 per cent while all the indicators in the *Ongoing Conflict* domain had no change. Despite its fall in overall peacefulness, Norway has the second most peaceful ranking in the world on the *Safety and Security* domain.

Improvements & Deteriorations



Five Largest Improvements in Peace

Azerbaijan

↑ Rank: 95

Change in Score 2024-2025: **0.123**

Change in Rank 2024-2025: **17**

Azerbaijan experienced the largest improvement in peacefulness on the 2025 GPI, with its score improving by 5.6 per cent. Azerbaijan is now ranked 95th on the GPI and is at its most peaceful since 2008. This is the country's second consecutive year of improvement in peacefulness. Eleven indicators improved, two deteriorated and ten recorded no change.

Peacefulness reached a low point in Azerbaijan in 2020, after a major escalation in the territorial dispute between Azerbaijan and Armenia over the Nagorno-Karabakh region. More than seven thousand soldiers and civilians were killed over six weeks of fighting. A ceasefire deal was reached in November 2020, brokered by Russia and reinforced by Russian peacekeepers. However, violations by both countries prompted a short, yet deadly period of cross-border attacks in 2022. In September 2023, Azerbaijan launched a military offensive in Nagorno-Karabakh and regained full control of the region. Russian-mediated peace talks resumed and have continued into 2025, with a peace treaty reportedly drafted in March 2025.[16]

Although Azerbaijan's actions in Nagorno-Karabakh remain controversial, the halt in fighting has proved effective at reducing violence in the country. In particular, last year Azerbaijan recorded significant improvements on the *Ongoing Conflict* and *Safety and Security* domains. Both the number of *deaths from internal conflict* and number of *deaths from external conflict* fell to zero, with a similarly large improvement in the *violent demonstrations* indicator. On the *Militarisation* domain, the *armed services personnel rate*, *weapons imports* and *UN peacekeeping funding* indicators all improved, the latter two by 13.7 and 9.8 per cent, respectively.

Although violence has subsided following Azerbaijan's reclamation of Nagorno-Karabakh, renewed uncertainty over the state of peace talks may reignite conflict. In March 2025, an Azerbaijan news outlet accused Armenia of training its reserve forces in preparation for an offensive.[17] Similarly, Azerbaijan saw deteriorations on the *military expenditure* and *nuclear and heavy weapons* indicators on the *Militarisation* domain, with *military expenditure* rising to 4.9 per cent of GDP. This signals that the country may be positioning itself to respond to any threat to its current position.

Saudi Arabia

↑ Rank: 90

Change in Score 2024-2025: **0.113**

Change in Rank 2024-2025: **14**

Saudia Arabia recorded the second largest improvement in peacefulness on the 2025 GPI, moving up 14 places to rank 90th. Its overall score improved by 5.2 per cent, with improvements on nine indicators, deteriorations on three, and 11 recording no change. All three GPI domains recorded improvements over the past year.

The largest improvement was seen on the *Militarisation* domain, driven by improvements on the *armed services personnel rate*, *weapons imports*, and *UN peacekeeping funding* indicators. The *Ongoing Conflict* domain recorded a minor improvement, with *deaths from internal conflict*, *internal conflicts fought*, and *external conflicts fought* all improving

The *Safety and Security* domain also recorded an improvement, largely due to a 22.2 per cent decrease in *political instability*. The political landscape in Saudi Arabia has improved as a result of the government's Vision 2030 reforms, which aim to increase economic, social, and cultural diversification. Diplomatic outreach by Saudi Arabia has also strengthened governance and regional cooperation. Additionally, it has restored ties with Lebanon and Iran, and the country has served as a mediating party in some international conflicts amid the substantial geopolitical tensions in the region.

Although the *Militarisation* domain improved as a whole, two indicators on this domain deteriorated, with *military expenditure* and *nuclear and heavy weapons* indicators deteriorating by 5.3 and 1.9 per cent, respectively. *Military expenditure* as a percentage of GDP in Saudi Arabia is now over 6.5 per cent, the sixth highest level of any country globally.

Uganda

↑ Rank: 113

Change in Score 2024-2025: **0.105**

Change in Rank 2024-2025: **12**

Uganda recorded the third largest improvement in peacefulness on the 2025 GPI, with its overall score improving by 4.5 per cent. It moved up 12 places in the rankings and is now ranked 113th. All three GPI domains improved, with *Militarisation* and *Ongoing Conflict* recording the largest improvements, at 11.7 and 7.2 per cent, respectively.

Within the *Militarisation* domain, all indicators improved aside from *weapons exports*, which showed no change from the year prior. Notably, the *UN peacekeeping funding* indicator improved by 40.5 per cent, while *weapons imports* improved by 14.5 per cent.

The improvement on the *Ongoing Conflict* domain was driven by a 94.5 per cent decrease in the *deaths from internal conflict* indicator. Conflict deaths in Uganda are now at their lowest level since 2021. The fall in conflict deaths was mirrored by an improvement on the *terrorism impact* indicator, which was the most improved indicator on the *Safety and Security* domain in the past year. This improvement comes after an 80 per cent deterioration on the same indicator in 2023, when attacks by the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), a rebel group linked to Islamic State and based in the Democratic Republic of Congo, resulted in the deaths of 37 students in western Uganda.[18] The *homicide rate* and *violent demonstrations* indicators also recorded improvements over the past year.

Despite improvements on several indicators, Uganda still faces many challenges in the security and conflict spheres. There were slight deteriorations on the *refugees and IDPs* and *perceptions of criminality* indicators over the past year, with over half the population reporting that they do not feel safe walking alone at night. Furthermore, Uganda's ongoing military operations within the Democratic Republic of Congo against the ADF led to a deterioration on the *external conflicts fought* indicator. In March 2025, Uganda also deployed special forces to South Sudan as the country faces the threat of civil war.[19]

Peru

↑ Rank: 96

Change in Score 2024-2025:	Change in Rank 2024-2025:
0.099	14

Peru recorded the fourth largest improvement in peacefulness on the 2025 GPI, with its overall score improving by 4.5 per cent. It moved up 14 places in the rankings and is now ranked 96th. Both the *Ongoing Conflict* and *Safety and Security* domains improved, while the *Militarisation* domain deteriorated. In all, eight indicators improved, eight deteriorated and seven experienced no change.

Many of Peru's improvements were linked to a decline in civil unrest and a reduction in public demonstrations opposing the government of President Dina Boluarte, which came to power in 2022 following the removal of President Pedro Castillo, who had attempted to dissolve the national congress. In the past year, the *violent demonstrations* indicator improved by 22 per cent.

The *political instability* indicator also improved by 13.6 per cent as a lack of major unrest allowed President Boluarte to consolidate her presidency. Additionally, economic recovery and institutional reforms strengthened governance, while security crackdowns on organised crime further reinforced stability. Other indicators on the *Safety and Security* domain that improved were *terrorism impact*, which decreased by 24.8 per cent, and the *homicide rate*, and *police rate,* which registered smaller improvements.

The fall in political unrest also led to an improvement on the *Ongoing Conflict* domain. *Deaths from internal conflict* fell from 12 in 2023 to zero in 2024, marking the first year since 2019 that no conflict deaths were recorded.

However, increasing *Militarisation* remains a concern, as the domain registered an overall deterioration of 1.4 per cent. Four out of six indicators deteriorated in 2024, with *UN peacekeeping funding* recording the largest deterioration. Other indicators to deteriorate were *nuclear and heavy weapons*, *military expenditure* and *weapons imports.*

The Gambia

↑ Rank: 55

Change in Score 2024-2025:	Change in Rank 2024-2025:
0.097	16

The Gambia recorded the fifth largest improvement in peacefulness on the 2025 GPI, rising 16 places to rank 55th. Its overall score improved by 4.9 per cent, with improvements in six indicators, deteriorations on two, and 15 recording no change. The *Militarisation* and *Safety and Security* domains both improved by over seven per cent, and The Gambia is now the fourth most peaceful country in sub-Saharan Africa, behind only Mauritius, Botswana, and Namibia.

The improvement on the *Safety and Security* domain was driven by an improvement on The Gambia's score on the *political terror scale.* The Gambia is now the only country in sub-Saharan Africa with a perfect score of 1 on the *Political Terror Scale,* which indicates a secure rule of law, with political violence being exceptional or rare. The level of *violent demonstrations* also fell, despite a deterioration on the *political instability* indicator.

The deterioration on the *Ongoing Conflict* domain was driven solely by the external *conflicts fought indicator*, which deteriorated by 12.7 per cent. The deterioration in this indicator is driven by The Gambia's proximity to the Casamance region of Senegal, which has been contested by separatist rebels since the 1980s. In recent years, violence near The Gambia's border has displaced thousands of people internally and prompted heightened border security operations by The Gambian Armed Forces.[20]

However, despite strong economic growth, averaging over five per cent for the last three years, The Gambia still faces significant challenges. *Political instability* deteriorated over the past year, largely a result of civil unrest fuelled by discontent over poverty, mismanagement and rising living costs. Delays in more political reforms, lingering insecurity from a failed 2022 coup and regional instability further heightened tensions, while increasing utility prices and inflation exacerbated economic hardship.

Five Largest Deteriorations in Peace

Bangladesh

↓ Rank: 123

Change in Score 2024-2025:	Change in Rank 2024-2025:
0.271	33

Bangladesh experienced the largest deterioration in peacefulness on the 2025 GPI, falling 33 places to 123rd, its lowest ranking since the inception of the index. After experiencing an improvement in 2023, Bangladesh's overall score deteriorated by 13.2 per cent in 2024. The primary driver of the fall in peacefulness was wide-scale civil unrest, followed by a subsequent government crackdown that resulted in deadly violence. In August 2024, amid demonstrations calling for the end of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's rule, she resigned and fled the country. An interim government was established; however, the power transition remains fragile in the face of competing interests between opposition groups, student protesters and the military.

Bangladesh recorded significant deteriorations in the *Safety and Security* domain, driven by the *violent demonstrations* and *political instability* indicators because of large-scale student protests over dissatisfaction with the Hasina government. The government's response was marked by severe crackdowns involving security forces and affiliated groups, leading to widespread violence and allegations of extrajudicial killings and forced disappearances. Estimates of the death toll vary, with the Ministry of Health reporting over 1,000 fatalities, while the UN's Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights estimates around 1,400 deaths.

The unrest over the last year also led Bangladesh's score on the *Ongoing Conflict* domain to deteriorate by nearly 22 per cent, with significant deteriorations recorded in the *deaths from internal conflict*, *internal conflicts fought* and *intensity of internal conflict* indicators. The *deaths from internal conflict* indicator deteriorated by over 3,500 per cent in 2024, with 436 conflict deaths recorded over the past year.

The *Militarisation* domain recorded a 14.3 per cent deterioration over the past year. This was driven by deteriorations on the *UN peacekeeping funding*, *nuclear and heavy weapons*, and *armed services personnel rate* indicators. However, two indicators in this domain registered improvements, with *weapons imports* falling by 52 per cent and *military expenditure* falling slightly, from 0.81 to 0.76 per cent of Bangladesh's GDP.

Ukraine

↓ Rank: 162

Change in Score 2024-2025:	Change in Rank 2024-2025:
0.260	3

Ukraine recorded the second largest deterioration in peacefulness on the 2025 GPI. Its overall score deteriorated by 8.2 per cent, resulting in a drop of three places to a rank of 162nd. This is the country's worst rank in the history of the GPI. The *Ongoing Conflict* domain recorded the largest deterioration of the three domains, with *internal conflicts fought* and *deaths from external conflicts* both deteriorating significantly. There was also a significant deterioration on the *Safety and Security* domain, largely driven by notable increases on the *political terror scale* and *terrorism impact* indicators.

The primary driver of the deterioration in peacefulness in Ukraine is the ongoing war with Russia. Unsurprisingly, the impact of the war has led to a large increase in *Militarisation*. Over the past year, Ukraine's score on the *weapons imports* indicator deteriorated by 70 per cent, while *military expenditure* as a percentage of GDP has increased from 2.1 per cent at the start of the war, to an estimated 15.4 per cent in 2024.

Ukraine's score on the *Ongoing Conflict* domain deteriorated for the fourth consecutive year. The past year marked the first major offensive of Ukrainian troops into Russian territory, with the onset of the Kursk offensive in August 2024. As a result of this offensive, Ukraine's score on the *external conflict deaths* indicator deteriorated significantly.

Outside of its immediate impact on the *Ongoing Conflict* and *Militarisation* domains, the war in Ukraine has also had a significant impact on measures of *Safety and Security*. Violent crime and organised crime have increased significantly, with arms trafficking, gang-related violence and reports of domestic violence all surging over the past year. The proliferation of firearms from the conflict zone contributed to these trends, exacerbating public safety concerns.

Russia

↓ Rank: 163

Change in Score 2024-2025:	Change in Rank 2024-2025:
0.209	2

Russia recorded the third largest deterioration of any country on the 2025 GPI, with its overall score deteriorating by 6.5 per cent. Russia fell two places in the rankings and is now the least peaceful country on the GPI. The primary driver of the deterioration in peacefulness in Russia was the ongoing war with Ukraine, whose impact was reflected in significant deteriorations on the *Ongoing Conflict* and *Safety and Security* domains, which deteriorated by 13.4 per cent and 4.6 per cent, respectively.

On the *Ongoing Conflict* domain, both the *internal conflicts fought* and *deaths from internal conflict* indicators deteriorated significantly, with the latter worsening by over 3,600 per cent. These deteriorations were the result of the initiation of the Kursk offensive by Ukrainian forces in August 2024, marking the first significant offensive taking place within Russia's borders. Estimates vary as to the total number of Russian fatalities from the war in Ukraine, with latest estimates suggesting that over 170,000 soldiers have been killed over the past three years, with an additional 600,000 injured.[21]

Russia also recorded significant deteriorations on several *Safety and Security* indicators. There was a strong deterioration on the *violent demonstrations* indicator. In January 2024, a demonstration was held in the region of Bashkortostan in response to the arrest and imprisonment of a local indigenous activist. Police responded aggressively, using tear gas and batons to break up the crowd. This protest was reported as the largest since anti-war demonstrations following the invasion of Ukraine in 2022.[22]

The *terrorism impact* indicator also deteriorated over the past year, with Russia experiencing the world's fourth most deadly terrorist attack of 2024. In March 2024, members of the terrorist group Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISK) attacked Crocus City Hall near Moscow, opening fire on civilians and detonating explosives. The attack caused a roof collapse and a fire, killing 133 and injuring 140.[23]

Democratic Republic of the Congo

↓ Rank: 160

Change in Score 2024-2025:	Change in Rank 2024-2025:
0.138	3

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) experienced the fourth largest deterioration in peacefulness on the 2025 GPI dropping three places to rank 160th. Its overall score deteriorated by 4.4 per cent, with all three domains deteriorating over the past year. The *Militarisation* domain experienced the largest deterioration, owing to increases on four out of the six indicators in this domain, with *weapons imports* recording the most significant deterioration.

The decline in peacefulness in the DRC was driven by the current war between government forces and March 23 Movement (M23), a Rwandan-backed rebel group led by ethnic Tutsis. The conflict escalated significantly in 2022, following renewed clashes between M23 and Congolese armed forces, prompting accusations by the DRC and international observers of active support for M23 from neighbouring Rwanda. M23 now controls significant territory in North and South Kivu. The situation has led to severe humanitarian crises, with millions displaced internally, and regional tensions have intensified amid international efforts aimed at negotiating peace and stabilising the region.

The UN estimates that there are between 3,000-4,000 Rwandan soldiers currently operating in the DRC, fighting alongside M23 rebels. The presence of foreign troops has led to a 25 per cent deterioration on the *neighbouring countries relations* indicator, while *deaths from internal conflict* also deteriorated in 2024.

Just under 4,000 people were killed in violent armed conflict in the country over the past year.

The high level and number of armed conflicts in the DRC has had a significant impact on several indicators on the *Safety and Security* domain, with *refugees and IDPs*, *violent demonstrations*, and *terrorism impact* all deteriorating over the past year. A report from November 2024 estimates that since 2022 nearly seven million people in the DRC have been internally displaced due to the conflict, one of the highest numbers of IDPs globally.[24]

Myanmar

↓ Rank: 154

Change in Score 2024-2025:	Change in Rank 2024-2025:
0.115	3

Myanmar recorded the fifth largest deteriorations in peacefulness on the 2025 GPI, with its overall score deteriorating by four per cent. This deterioration marks a strong reversal from the previous year when Myanmar recorded one of the largest improvements in peacefulness in the world. Myanmar is now ranked 154th on the index and registered deteriorations in all three GPI domains. It has the lowest levels of peacefulness of any country in the Asia-Pacific region.

The decline in peacefulness was largely a result of the ongoing civil war between the ruling military junta and a coalition of pro-democracy fighters and allied ethnic minority groups. The impact of this conflict is reflected in the 5.9 per cent deterioration on the *Safety and Security* domain, with the *violent crime*, *refugees and IDPs*, and *political instability* indicators all deteriorating significantly.

Political stability deteriorated in the past year with the erosion of junta control and unrest over the reinstatement of forced conscription. Moreover, a series of natural disasters fuelled mass internal displacements, while political turmoil complicated relief efforts. An earthquake that struck in March 2025 has led to over 3,700 confirmed deaths and thousands more injured or missing. The disaster's impact has been exacerbated by the ongoing civil conflict, particularly in hard-hit areas like Sagaing and Mandalay. Access to affected regions has been severely restricted due to damaged infrastructure, military checkpoints, and the junta's control over aid distribution, with assistance often withheld from opposition-held territories.[25]

Over 5,000 civilian deaths have been reported since the 2021 coup, including 2,414 between April 2023 and June 2024 alone. In 2024, violent crime in Myanmar remained elevated due to civil unrest and armed conflict. There have been reports of government troops carrying out beheadings, gang rapes and torture against civilians.

2025 Peace and Conflict Spotlight: The Integration and Trade-offs for European Defence Spending

- Many European countries are increasing military expenditure as a result of the war in Ukraine. However, raw military expenditure is not the most pressing issue.
- Europe is undergoing rising social tensions and rising distrust in its institutions. As more public funds are diverted from employment, healthcare and education toward defence expenditure, the risk of further exacerbating these tensions rises.
- Europe's real defence challenge lies in the absence of integration. Despite collectively outmatching Russia, European forces are hindered by fragmentation.
- Europe's current military expenditure is almost four times that of Russia, but its combined military capacity is only one third higher.
- Without unified strategic vision and command systems to direct integrated military capabilities, Europe's defence potential will remain unrealised. The efficiency and integration of its fighting forces are currently more important than increasing its absolute level of military expenditure.

Europe's security environment is undergoing a profound transformation. In response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine and diminishing US strategic focus on the continent, European nations are increasingly diverting funds from productive sectors of the economy such as education, healthcare, business development and infrastructure, towards military expenditure and defence buildup. This is not necessarily unjustified. However, IEP analysis finds that the primary issue for Europe is less about expenditure and more about coordination. That is to say, the continent should be less concerned about increasing spending and more focused on effectively overcoming its structural fragmentation in its defence forces to build cohesive and efficient defence capabilities.

Focusing disproportionately on military expenditure could undermine the very stability that defence aims to protect. Security encompasses both military capability and broader societal cohesion, economic opportunity and public trust in institutions. A militarised Europe that fails to address these internal pressures may risk undermining its own security if internal pressures are not addressed alongside external issues, which would in turn sap political resolve to meet common external threats. A greater focus on a country's international security can come at the expense of its domestic stability and security.

At face value, Europe appears more militarily capable than Russia. NATO members in Europe outspend Russia on defence by a large margin. But this comparison, often illustrated using market exchange rates, obscures important realities. First, such figures do not consider purchasing power parity (PPP). In countries like Russia, where personnel and administrative costs are lower, a dollar can buy significantly more than it can in advanced economies. Western defence budgets, particularly in Europe, often allocate a substantial portion to salaries, pensions and other non-combat costs. As a result, the nominal advantage in spending by Europe may not reflect the real disparity in effective military spending and investment. It is worth noting that the values reported here reflect realised military spending and exclude long-term increases announced by European countries since the start of the Russia–Ukraine war in 2022 – many of which have yet to materialise.

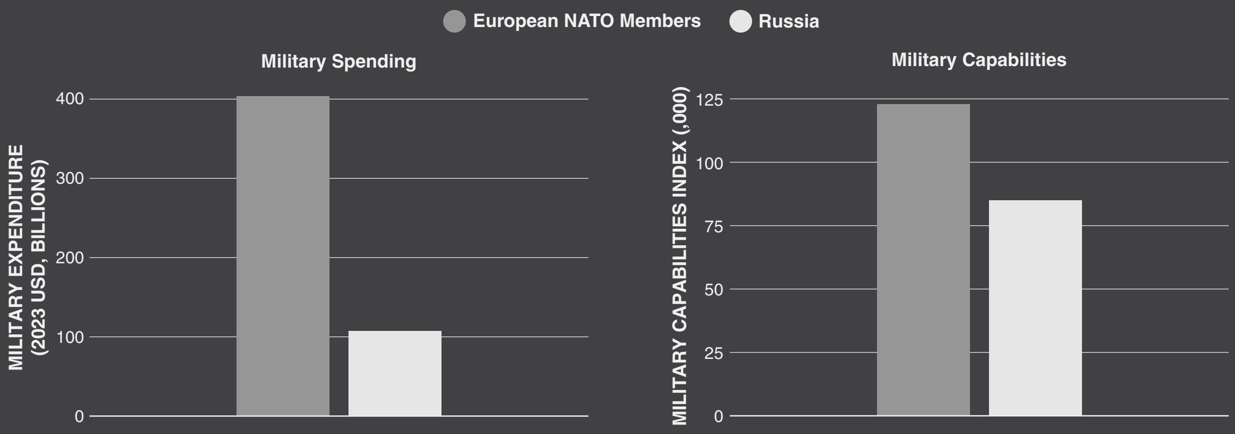
Spending, however, is only part of the equation. What truly matters is how efficiently resources are translated into usable military power. IEP's 2024 report, *Contemporary Trends in Militarisation*, estimated real military capability through a framework that evaluates both the quantity and quality of a country's military assets, along with battlefield experience and combat readiness of its armed forces. When seen through this lens, the gap between Russia and the combined European NATO members is far narrower than spending figures suggest. Given its involvement in the largest conflict in Europe since World War II, Russia's battlefield experience and combat readiness surpass those of any European NATO member.

The Russian threat is real and no individual European country comes close to Russia's military capability. Even France and the United Kingdom, Europe's two most capable militaries, each have less than a third of Russia's overall capacity. Russia has also slightly increased its overall military capability since the beginning of the Ukraine war in 2022. Over the past three years, it has lost a considerable portion of its armoured vehicles, a large number of fixed-wing and rotary-wing aircraft, and more than half of its Black Sea naval fleet. Its ability to recover from these losses highlights a massive diversion of funds toward military expenditure and a sustained commitment to maintaining an outsized military force.

FIGURE 1.4

Military expenditure vs military capability

While European NATO members significantly outspend Russia on military expenditure, the gap is much narrower in terms of real military capabilities.



Source: IEP

The major question for Russia is the sustainability of these expenses. Russia's GDP declined by 12 per cent to $2 trillion nominally as the economy pivoted to a war economy. When measured in PPP, the economy is estimated to remain flat at $6 trillion between 2022 and 2024. The combined economies of France, the United Kingdom, Italy and Germany are $17.5 trillion in PPP, nearly three times as large. Over the longer term it may become an economic war of attrition as Russia consumes more of its internal economy to prop up its war economy.

Europe's real challenge lies in the absence of integration. Despite collectively outmatching Russia, European forces are hindered by fragmentation. Defence policies, procurement systems and command structures remain predominantly national, leading to large-scale inefficiencies. NATO has long depended on American leadership, intelligence sharing and logistical infrastructure. With uncertainty around continued US commitment, European nations face mounting pressure to coordinate their defence capabilities. Yet without unified strategic vision and an integrated command, Europe's defence potential will remain unrealised. The efficiency and integration of its fighting forces are currently more important than increasing its absolute level of military expenditure.

Finally, nuclear deterrence remains a critical gap. Currently Russia has around 1,700 active nuclear warheads, while France and the United Kingdom have about 400. As both arsenals are enough to devastate the planet many times over, expanding nuclear arsenals is not a viable solution. The most pressing question is not one of capability, but of intent – whether either side would be willing to deploy such weapons tactically.

Complicating matters further are the socioeconomic trade-offs of increased defence spending. Allocating more funds to the military often means diverting resources from essential areas like business support, health, education and welfare, or increasing public debt and taxation. Europe is already grappling with low productivity growth, rising costs of living and the surge of populist movements that thrive on economic discontent. Escalating military budgets in this context risks fuelling societal divides.

Europe's current push toward greater militarisation is not unwarranted, but it must be strategic. Simply increasing budgets will not address the most pressing issues: lack of integration and the political-economic risks of neglecting domestic priorities. For Europe to truly strengthen its internal and external security, it must focus on building an integrated defence force while carefully balancing military needs with the wellbeing of its citizens.

TABLE 1.13

Military capability index: Russia vs European NATO members

Europe's two largest military powers, France and the United Kingdom, lag well behind Russia in terms of military capability.

Country	Military Capability Index
Russia	84,503
France	25,468
United Kingdom	25,457
Türkiye	13,291
Italy	11,315
Germany	9,120
Rest of European NATO Members	37,996

The world has become less stable in the past 17 years with substantial increases in political instability, number of conflicts, deaths from conflict, and geopolitical fragmentation.

Improved	Deteriorated
62 ↑	100 ↓

Peace has deteriorated every year since 2014. Over this period 100 countries deteriorated while 62 improved.

The gap between the most and least peaceful countries keeps growing with 'peace inequality' widening by 11.7 per cent in the past two decades. The 25 most peaceful countries deteriorated by 0.5 per cent, while the least peaceful deteriorated by 12.2 per cent.

Two of the three GPI domains have deteriorated since 2008, with *Ongoing Conflict* and *Safety and Security* deteriorating by 17.5 per cent and 2.5 per cent, respectively. Only the *Militarisation* domain improved, with peacefulness increasing on that domain by 2.7 per cent.

Ongoing Conflict	17.5 ↓
Safety & Security	2.5 ↓
Militarisation	2.7 ↑

Even though the *Militarisation* domain improved, that trend has begun to reverse over the last five years as many countries respond to increasing threats and rising geopolitical uncertainty.

Conversely, although the *Safety and Security* domain deteriorated, several indicators have shown sustained improvement, most notably the *homicide rate* and *perceptions of criminality*.

External conflicts fought and *internal conflicts fought* had the largest deteriorations. This reflects not only the spread of conflict around the world, but the increasing involvement of external actors in civil conflicts.

Deaths from internal conflict increased by over 438 per cent in the past 17 years, with 75 countries in the GPI recording at least one conflict death in the past year.

Over 122 million people are now forcibly displaced. There are now 17 countries where more than five per cent of the population are either refugees or have been internally displaced. The number of people forcibly displaced has increased by over 185 per cent since the inception of the GPI.

122 million

Eight of the ten largest weapons exporters on a per capita basis are Western democracies including France, Sweden, Italy, the Netherlands, Germany, and Norway.

More countries deteriorated on *violent demonstrations* than any other indicator in the 17 years with 109 deteriorating and only 23 improving. The rise of technology was a critical enabler of global protests and mass mobilisation.

2 Trends

GPI Trends

The world is considerably less peaceful now than it was in 2008, with the average level of country peacefulness deteriorating by 5.4 per cent between 2008 and 2025. Over that same period, 94 countries have become less peaceful, compared to 66 that have improved.

Figure 2.1 highlights the overall trend in peacefulness from 2008 to 2025, as well as the year-on-year percentage changes in score. Peacefulness has declined year-on-year for 14 of the last 17 years. The deterioration in peacefulness since 2008 was largely concentrated in four regions: the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), Central and North America, sub-Saharan Africa, and South America.

As Figure 2.1 demonstrates, peace has deteriorated every year since 2014, with 2025 recording the worst result since the inception of the GPI. In the past 11 years, overall peacefulness improved in 62 countries while 100 countries experienced deteriorations. Across the three domains, *Safety and Security* improved in 77 countries, *Militarisation* in 74, and *Ongoing Conflict* in 44, meaning that for each of these domains, more countries deteriorated than improved overall. Of the three most improved countries since 2014, all saw an improvement of over 18 per cent on the *Safety and Security* domain. However, all three of these countries also all experienced deteriorations on the *Militarisation* domain.

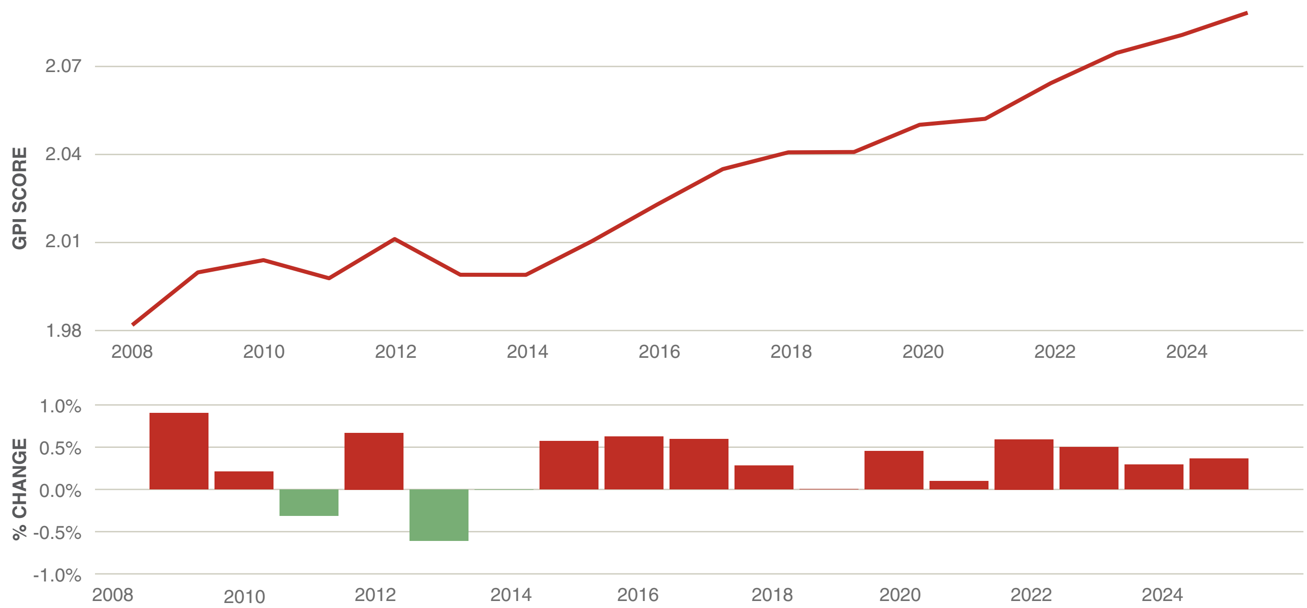
In the past decade, Egypt is the most improved country, with its peace score improving by 13.5 per cent since 2014. Egypt is now ranked 107th on the GPI after climbing 38 places from a rank of 146th ten years ago. The domain to experience the largest improvement in Egypt since 2014 was the *Safety and Security* domain, which improved by 21.5 per cent. This was driven by significant improvements on the *perceptions of criminality*, *violent demonstrations*, and *violent crime* indicators. The *Ongoing Conflict* domain also improved by nine per cent, with notable decreases on the *deaths from internal conflict* and *intensity of internal conflict* indicators. Despite Egypt's improvements on many GPI indicators, not all areas have improved. There have been continued reports of the suppression of peaceful dissent, often through arbitrary detention of critics of the government and of demonstrators.

The second most improved country since 2014 is Greece, with its overall score improving by 14.5 per cent. Over this period, the *Safety and Security* domain improved by 23.5 per cent, largely due to significant improvements on the *violent demonstrations, violent crime, political instability*, and *homicide rate* indicators. Greece was one of the countries most affected by the global financial crisis that began in 2007. The crisis exposed the country's pre-existing financial issues, leading to a deep recession, high unemployment, and a sovereign debt crisis. Improvements in peace coincided with improvements in the country's economic conditions. In recent years Greece has also made progress in reducing political tensions with Türkiye by promoting economic ties through trade, investment and tourism. The improved relations and cooperation efforts have contributed greatly to Greece's own political stability.

FIGURE 2.1

GPI overall trend and year-on-year percentage change, 2008–2025

Peacefulness has declined year-on-year for 14 of the last 17 years.

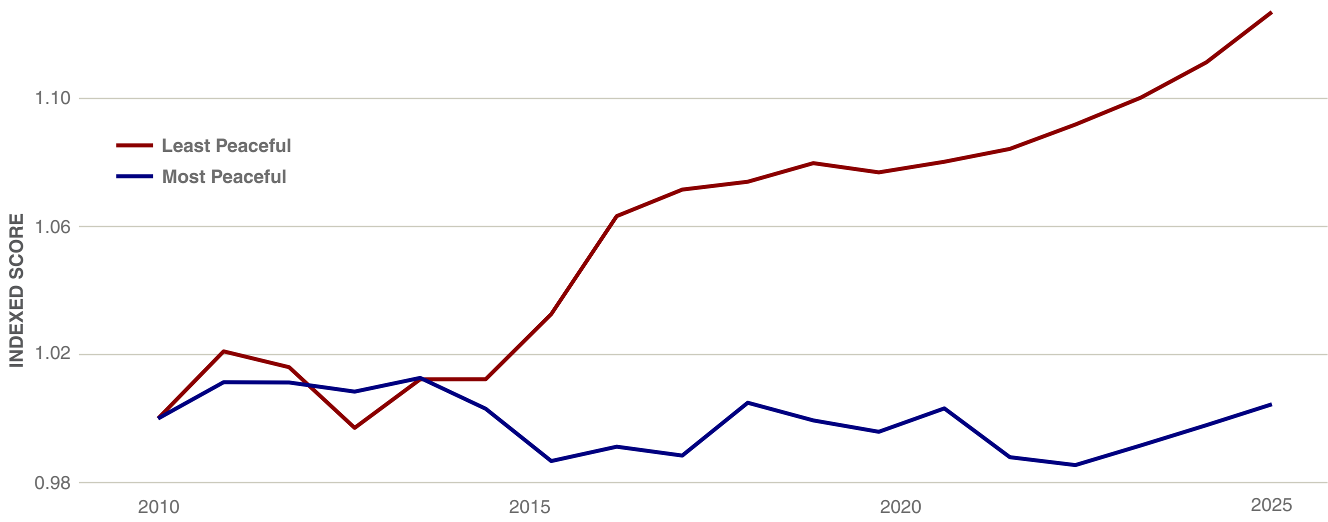


Source: IEP

FIGURE 2.2

Indexed trend in peace for the most and least peaceful countries, 2008–2025

The most peaceful countries are now less peaceful than they were in 2008.



Source: IEP Calculations

The gap in peace between the most and least peaceful countries in the world has widened considerably in the past decade, as shown in Figure 2.2. Between 2008 and 2025, the average score for the 25 least peaceful countries deteriorated by 12.2 per cent, while the average level of peacefulness for the 25 most peaceful countries deteriorated by just 0.5 per cent.

Although the gap between the most and least peaceful countries remains large, it has not increased over the past few years. Since 2022, the 25 most peaceful countries in the world have experienced deteriorations in their average level of peacefulness and are now less peaceful than at any time since 2012, reflecting the spread of conflict and political unrest across the world over the last decade.

Domain Trends

The GPI measures peacefulness across three domains: *Safety and Security, Ongoing Conflict,* and *Militarisation.* Figure 2.3 highlights the indexed trend across these three domains over the past 17 years.

While the world has become less peaceful since 2008, there have been some notable improvements. The average country score on the *Militarisation* domain has improved by 2.7 per cent, with the largest improvements recorded on the *armed services personnel rate* and *UN peacekeeping funding* indicators. However, the other two GPI domains recorded deteriorations over this same period. The *Safety and Security* domain deteriorated by 2.5 per cent, while the *Ongoing Conflict* domain deteriorated by nearly 18 per cent.

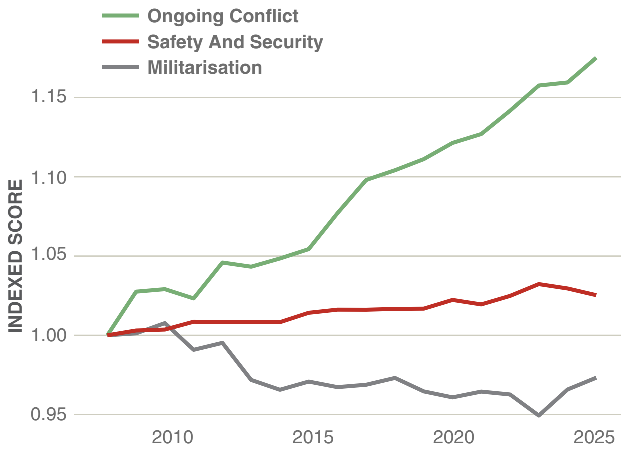
Over the last 17 years, the *Militarisation* domain improved even as *Ongoing Conflict* deteriorated. However, since 2022, *Militarisation* has been on the rise. After registering its best score on record in 2022, the *Militarisation* domain has since deteriorated by 2.5 per cent. In 2025, three indicators on the domain improved and three deteriorated.

The deterioration of the *Militarisation* domain can be attributed to an increase in military spending by multiple countries in the face of geopolitical tensions and their resulting threats to security. For instance, many NATO members are now seeking to achieve a defence spending target of five per cent of GDP. This comes after at least 21 of the 32 NATO member countries failed to commit two per cent of GDP to defence in 2023. Furthermore, as defence budgets expand, funds are increasingly dedicated to heavy weapons and advanced military capabilities. Between 2022 and 2025, 69 countries registered deteriorations on the *nuclear and heavy weapons* indicator, while 78 countries increased their *weapons imports* per capita.

FIGURE 2.3

Indexed trend in peace by GPI domain, 2008–2025

The *Ongoing Conflict* domain has deteriorated by 17.5 per cent since 2008.



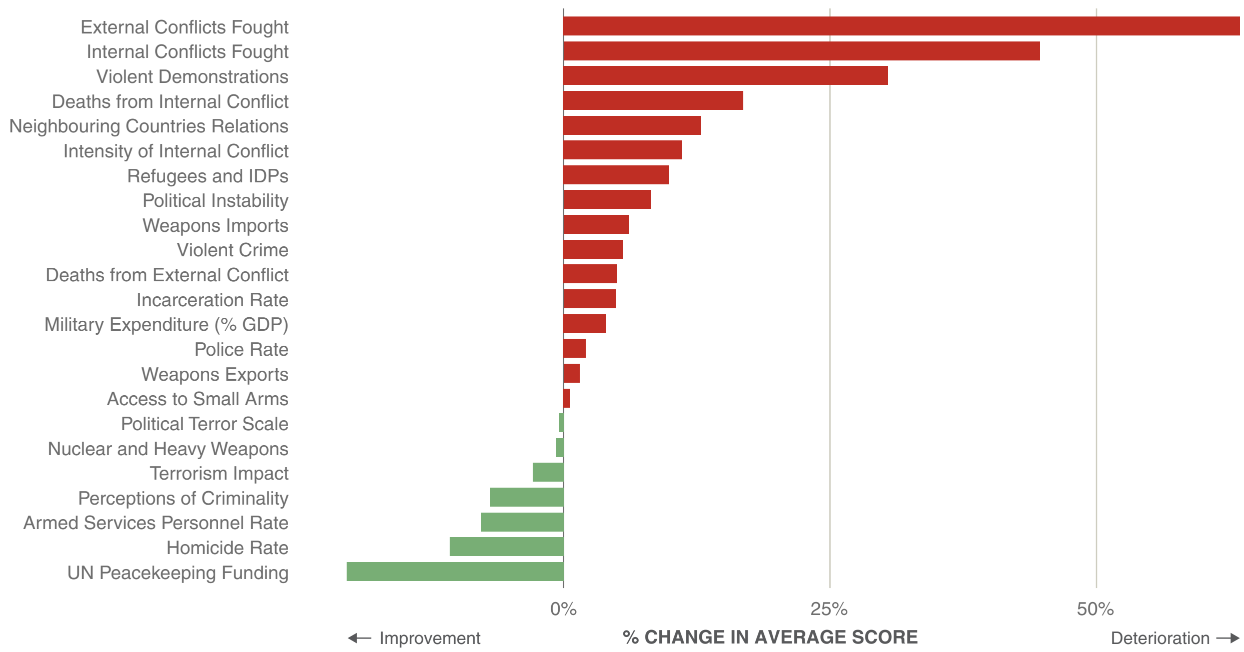
Source: IEP

Figure 2.4 shows the average percentage change in score for each indicator from the 2008 to the 2025 GPI. Of the 23 GPI indicators, 16 recorded deteriorations while the remaining seven recorded improvements.

FIGURE 2.4

Percentage change by GPI indicator, 2008–2025

Between 2008 and 2025, the number of GPI indicators that deteriorated was more than double the number that improved.



Source: IEP

The largest deteriorations were recorded on the *external conflicts fought* and *internal conflicts fought* indicators, which deteriorated by 63.5 and 45 per cent, respectively. This change reflects that the number of active conflicts around the world has surged, with a concurrent increase in involvement by external actors. This dynamic is explored in more detail in Section 4.

The *violent demonstrations* indicator deteriorated by just over 30 per cent, while *deaths from internal conflict* deteriorated by 17 per cent. There were six indicators in total that recorded a deterioration of over ten per cent from 2008 to 2025.

Since 2008, 109 countries deteriorated on the *violent demonstrations* indicator, while only 29 improved and 23 remained unchanged. This was the highest number of country deteriorations of any indicator on the index.

All regions in the world except for MENA recorded deteriorations on the *violent demonstrations* indicator, with South Asia experiencing the largest deterioration at 107 per cent. Across all regions, the country that had the largest deterioration on the indicator was Bangladesh, due to a recent surge in violent protests triggered by the reinstatement of a controversial job quota favouring descendants of veterans of the 1971 war that led to independence. The reinstatement of this policy comes in the context of a deep youth unemployment crisis. Student demonstrations rapidly escalated into nationwide unrest after a severe government and security crackdown.[26]

The growing number of violent demonstrations worldwide between 2008 and 2025 can be attributed to several factors, including the rise of technology as a critical enabler of global protests and mass mobilisation. Social media and the internet facilitate the rapid sharing of information and the airing of grievances, fuelling collective action at unprecedented speed and scale. This digital interconnectedness not only amplifies calls for action but also lowers the barriers to organising protest, even in regions previously isolated from global protest movements. Large-scale demonstrations can quickly escalate into violence when tensions run high or state responses are repressive or disproportionate.[27]

Overall, seven GPI indicators have improved since 2008, while the remaining 16 deteriorated. Of those that improved, only *UN peacekeeping funding* recorded a very large change, improving by over 20 per cent. Three other indicators (*homicide rate, armed services personnel rate*, and *perceptions of criminality)* recorded moderately large improvements, each improving by more than five per cent.

SAFETY AND SECURITY

The *Safety and Security* domain deteriorated by 2.5 per cent between 2008 and 2025. Of the 11 indicators on this domain, seven deteriorated and four improved. The largest deterioration occurred on the *violent demonstrations* indicator, with 109 countries and seven regions recording overall deteriorations on this indicator. Average scores on this indicator have deteriorated by 30.4 per cent globally. Figure 2.5 highlights the trend from 2008 to 2025 for three key *Safety and Security* indicators.

The *refugees and IDPs* indicator has deteriorated every year since 2019. The total number of forcibly displaced people in the world has increased to over 122 million as of mid-2024, up from 42.7 million at the inception of the GPI.[28] Two-thirds of all displaced people originate from just ten countries. As of mid-2024, over half of all refugees under the UN Refugee Agency's mandate come from just four countries: Afghanistan, Syria, Ukraine, and Venezuela.[29] The extent of displacement is greatest in Syria, where the impact and aftermath of the Syrian civil war has led to an ongoing humanitarian crisis. [30]

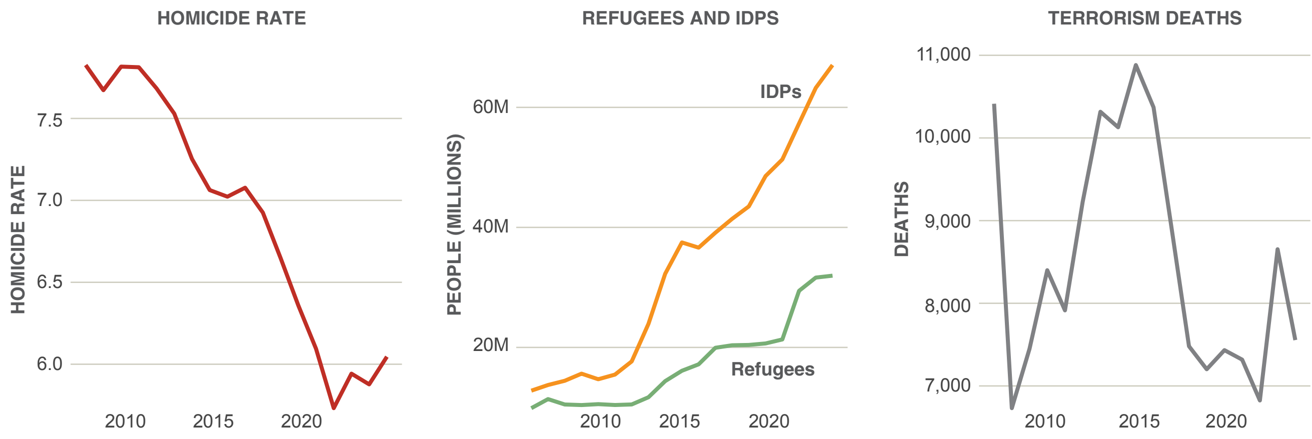
Of the over 122 million forcibly displaced people worldwide, 72 million are internally displaced people. In the Gaza Strip, the estimated number of internally displaced people reached 1.7 million by mid-2024. Most had been forced to flee multiple times since the conflict that began in October 2023.

The *homicide rate* indicator had the largest improvement on the *Safety and Security* domain, with 122 countries recording reductions in their homicide rates since 2008. The average homicide rate across all GPI countries fell from 7.7 to 6 deaths per 100,000 people over the past 17 years. There are now 40

FIGURE 2.5

Trends in key Safety and Security indicators, 2008–2025

The *homicide rate* was the only indicator of *Safety and Security* that recorded a consistent improvement.



Source: UNODC, UNHCR, Dragonfly TerrorismTracker countries globally that have a homicide rate of less than one per 100,000 people, and 64 with a rate of less than two per 100,000. Between 2008 and 2025, the homicide rate improved in all regions except for South America and Central and North America. However, in recent years several countries in Central America have recorded substantial improvement in their homicide rates, most notably El Salvador.

In the past two decades, El Salvador's homicide rate first rose from 65.4 deaths per 100,000 people to an all-time high rate of 108 in 2015, after which it began to fall precipitously, dropping to 17.3 as of 2021. This decline was substantially accelerated in 2022 by a sweeping crackdown on gang-related violence instigated by President Nayib Bukele, who declared a state of emergency and detained over 60,000 gang members and suspected gang members. Following this, the homicide rate was again more than cut in half, dropping to 7.8 deaths per 100,000 people in 2022, and then falling to a rate of under 2.5 in 2023 and 2024. This represents one of the largest ever recorded reductions on the *homicide rate* and was also associated with a notable improvement on the *perceptions of criminality* indicator, which in 2025 shows that only 11 per cent of citizens feel unsafe, down from 53 per cent in 2008. However, while the homicide rate has fallen, El Salvador's incarceration rate is now the highest in the world, with some reports estimating that over one per cent of the country's population is now incarcerated.

Despite these concerns, El Salvador's strategy has been positioned as a model for other Central and South America countries suffering from extreme homicide rates and gang-related violence. In Honduras, for instance, a state of emergency has been in place since November 2022. In June 2024, Honduran President Xiomara Castro unveiled plans to construct a mega prison with the capacity to hold 20,000 individuals.[31] Honduras' homicide rate has fallen 23 per cent since 2008 and is currently 31 per 100,000 people.

The overall improvement on the *homicide rate* indicator was strongly correlated with the improvement on the *perceptions of criminality* indicator, which measures whether people feel safe walking alone at night in their city or neighbourhood. Changes on the *homicide rate* and *perceptions of criminality* indicators were among the most strongly correlated movements between any pair of indicators on the GPI.

There were 100 countries that improved on the *perceptions of criminality* indicator between the 2008 and 2025 GPI, while 51 countries recorded a deterioration. The largest improvements occurred in El Salvador and Lithuania, which each recorded 42-percentage point improvements. In Lithuania, the percentage of people who felt unsafe fell from 59 per cent to just 17 per cent. The largest deterioration occurred in Myanmar, where the percentage of people who felt unsafe rose from 10 to 57 per cent.

The *terrorism impact* indicator has improved by an average of 2.9 per cent since 2008. The number of deaths from terrorism peaked in 2016 at almost 11,000 deaths, with most occurring in the MENA region. However, while the global number of deaths from terrorism has fallen since 2015, the epicentre of terrorism has shifted out of MENA and into sub-Saharan Africa, most notably in the central Sahel region. The Sahel region accounted for more terrorism deaths in the past year than both South Asia and MENA combined.

ONGOING CONFLICT

Ongoing Conflict recorded the largest fall in peacefulness of the three GPI domains, deteriorating 17.5 per cent between the 2008 GPI and the 2025 GPI. Every indicator on the domain deteriorated over this period, with the largest deterioration recorded on the *external conflicts fought* indicator, which rose by 63.5 per cent.

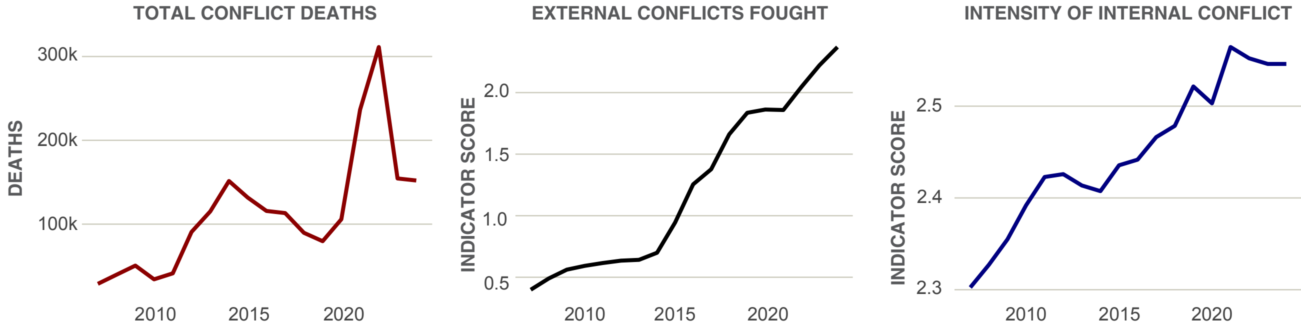
Figure 2.6 shows the trends for three key *Ongoing Conflict* indicators from the 2008 GPI to the 2025 GPI: the total number of conflict-related deaths, the average score for the *external conflicts fought* indicator, and the average score on the *intensity of internal conflict* indicator.

The total number of *deaths from internal conflict* increased by 438 per cent between 2008 and 2025. There were over 152,000 deaths last year, the fourth highest number recorded in the last 17 years. Ukraine had the largest number of deaths last year, followed by Palestine and Russia. These three countries represented over 63 per cent of *deaths from internal conflict* in 2024. The highest number of conflict deaths on record occurred in 2022 when almost 312,000 people were killed in conflict, with over 165,000 people killed in Ethiopia alone in that year. The increase in *deaths from internal conflict* has been widespread, with 61 countries having a higher number of *deaths from*

FIGURE 2.6

Trends in key Ongoing Conflict indicators, 2008–2025

There were over 300,000 deaths from conflict in 2022.



Source: UCDP, EIU, IEP Calculations

internal conflict in 2025 than in 2008. Nearly half the countries in the GPI recorded at least one death from internal conflict in the past year.

External conflicts fought had the largest deterioration of any indicator on the *Ongoing Conflict* domain. There were 86 countries that deteriorated, 31 that improved, and 44 with no change since 2008. Of the 163 countries in the GPI, 127 have been involved in at least one external conflict since the inception of the index. This trend reflects the growing number of internationalised intrastate conflicts, in which external actors are involved in civil conflicts between governments and rebel groups. The support generally goes to governments, often in the form of a coalition of countries conducting peacekeeping operations or providing operational support for the military campaigns.

Since 2008, all regions have recorded a deterioration in their scores on the *external conflicts fought* indicator. Sub-Saharan Africa experienced the most severe deterioration, at 148 per cent, followed by South Asia at 143 per cent, and MENA at 102 per cent. Sub-Saharan Africa remains the region with the most countries engaged in external conflicts, with 35 of 43 countries involved in conflict in 2025, a significant increase from just seven in 2008.

The deterioration on the *external conflicts fought* indicator reflects the increase in external actors becoming involved in internal conflicts. In the 2025 GPI there were 98 countries that were at least partially involved in some form of external conflict in the past five years, up from 59 in 2008. Of those 98, three were acting alone in an external conflict, 33 were involved in a small coalition, and 82 were involved in a large coalition of ten or more countries. In the majority of conflicts, countries were offering support to an existing government in its conflict with an internal armed rebel or terrorist group.

The *intensity of internal conflict* indicator is a measure of the severity of the latent or manifest forms of organised conflict within a country. This indicator has deteriorated by 11 per cent since 2008, with 51 countries recording deteriorations, and 25 countries recording improvements. There are now 76 countries with a score of three or higher, indicating an explicit threat of violence or more, compared to just 58 in 2008.

As more groups have become involved in armed conflicts, there has also been a significant shift in the way conflicts end. The percentage of conflicts that end due to being classified as low activity has risen from around 20 per cent in the 1970s to nearly 70 per cent in the 2010s. A conflict ends due to low activity when there are fewer than 25 deaths in a calendar year, but no peace agreement or ceasefire is reached, and no side has a clear victory. These conflicts may become 'frozen conflicts' which are likely to erupt in future years.

Similarly, the percentage of conflicts that end with either a government or rebel group victory has fallen from just under 50 per cent in the 1970s to less than nine per cent in the 2010s. Even in conflicts in which one side wins a decisive victory, the aftermath often brings little peace. Negotiated settlements or peace agreements have become less common, falling from 22 per cent to four per cent over the past four decades. Clear victories are often only obtained after the use of extremely destructive or brutal approaches to conflict. This is evident in contemporary conflicts such as Sri Lanka, where military victories have been achieved through severe tactics, leading to highly securitised post-war periods and substantial risks of recurrent conflict.

MILITARISATION

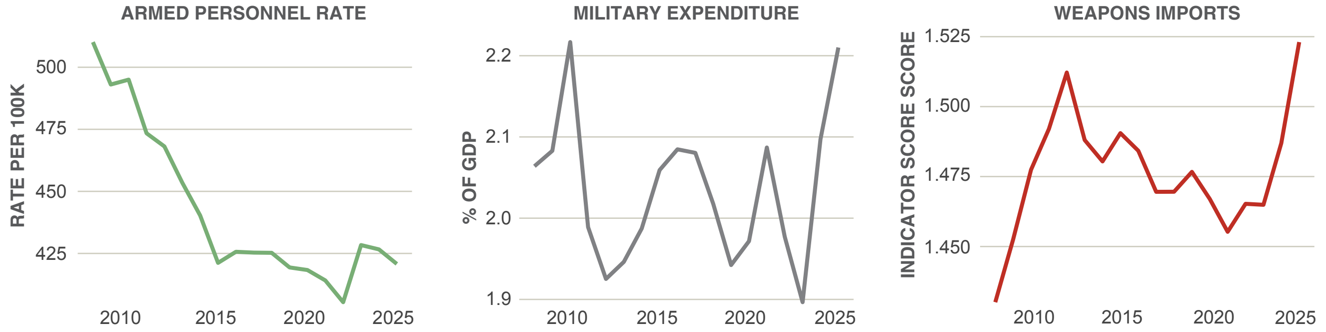
The average score on the *Militarisation* domain improved by 2.7 per cent between 2008 and 2025. It is the only GPI domain to record an improvement during this period, with 89 countries improving and 72 deteriorating. Figure 2.7 shows the trend for the average *armed services personnel rate, military expenditure (% GDP),* and the average *weapons imports* indicator score.

The GPI domain trends shown in Figure 2.3 reveals an interesting paradox. Although the world has become much less peaceful and the level of *Ongoing Conflict* has surged, the average level of *Militarisation* has improved, although this trend has begun to reverse since 2022. Even as the number of active conflicts around the world surged, and overall conflict deaths increased by over 560 per cent, the average *armed forces personnel rate* fell from almost 500 per 100,000 people, to less than 425 per 100,000 people.

FIGURE 2.7

Trends in key Militarisation indicators, 2008–2025

The average *armed personnel rate* has fallen from over 500 to less than 425 per 100,000 people.



Source: IISS Military Balance, SIPRI

Three of the six indicators on the *Militarisation* domain deteriorated - *weapons imports*, *military expenditure (% GDP),* and *weapons exports*. The largest proportional improvements between 2008 and 2025 occurred on the *armed services personnel rate*, where 113 countries improved, and the *UN peacekeeping funding* indicator, where 86 countries improved.

The global average *armed service personnel rate* declined from 510 per 100,000 population in 2008, to 420 per 100,000 population by 2024. The improvement on the *armed services personnel rate* and *military expenditure (% GDP)* since 2008 was particularly notable in the five countries with the largest total military spending: United States, China, India, Russia and the United Kingdom. Of those countries, all except Russia recorded improvements on both *military expenditure (% GDP)* and *armed services personnel rate*.

The *weapons imports* indicator continued to deteriorate in the past year, resulting in a deterioration of nearly 60 per cent over the last 17 years. The number of countries that recorded no weapons imports fell from 27 in 2008, to only 14 in 2025. Six of the ten countries with the largest per capita weapons imports from 2019 to 2024 are from the MENA region.

Weapons exports remain highly concentrated, with 100 countries registering no exports at all in 2025. Several highly peaceful countries performed poorly on this indicator, with France, Sweden, Italy, the Netherlands, Germany, and Norway all being ranked amongst the ten highest weapons exporters per capita in 2025. Eight of the ten largest exporters on a per capita basis are Western democracies. However, by total export value, just five countries account for over 75 per cent of total weapons exports: the US, France, Russia, China, and Germany, with the US alone accounting for over 40 per cent.

While Russia remains one of the top ten weapons exporters on the 2025 GPI, it has shown an overall improvement on the *weapons exports* indicator of 11.4 per cent over the past 17 years, falling from the third worst on this indicator in 2008 to ninth worst last year. The primary cause for this improvement is the war in Ukraine, a conflict whose prolonged length and intensity have led to significant loss and damage to Russian military equipment. This has forced the country to prioritise producing weaponry for its own uses and has in turn reduced its capacity to export weapons abroad. Additionally, countries that were once major buyers of Russian-made weaponry have shifted to alternative suppliers as a result of the sanctions imposed on Russia. For instance, in 2019 it was reported that Russia sold weapons to 31 countries, whereas in 2023 that number fell to just 12 countries.[32]

Global levels on the *Militarisation* domain are likely to keep rising as countries seek to improve their military readiness amidst growing international tensions, instability, and security threats. NATO allies commit to target an investment of at least 2 per cent of GDP in defence expenditure and have recently agreed that at least 20 per cent of such investment should be devoted to major new equipment.[33] The United States continues to push for these guidelines to be raised, specifically advocating for a commitment among NATO allies to allocate five per cent of GDP towards defence spending..[34] In March 2025, the European Commission published the *ReArm Europe Plan/Readiness 2030* and the White Paper for European Defence. The plan aims to bolster defence capabilities through a surge in investments and combined spending of over 800 billion euros.[35]

Trends in Geopolitical Relations

KEY FINDINGS

- Global economic stagnation, increasing debt, and the weaponisation of economic interdependence via trade wars are key factors shaping the economic landscape of geopolitics in the 21st century.
- Geopolitical fragmentation is rising, with levels now exceeding those seen during the Cold War. The rise in fragmentation has been especially noticeable since 2008, after it had been steadily decreasing since the end of the Cold War.
- Global trade has plateaued at around 60 per cent of global GDP over the past decade, following rapid growth after 1990.
- Global military spending hit a record $2.7 trillion in 2024, a nine per cent increase from the previous year, driven largely by conflicts like the war in Ukraine.
- Competition for influence is intensifying in regions like Africa, South Asia, and South America. In the Sahel, instability and scarce resources are drawing in rival powers and fuelling a complex struggle for control.
- The number of globally influential countries has nearly tripled since the Cold War, rising from 13 to 34 by 2023, with nations like Türkiye, the UAE, Vietnam, South Africa, Brazil and Indonesia expanding their influence.

OVERVIEW

There has been a significant increase in geopolitical tensions since the inception of the GPI. The *neighbouring countries relations,* which measures the strength of tensions between neighbouring countries, deteriorated by 13 per cent from 2008 to 2025, the fifth largest deterioration of any indicator in the GPI. Relations between neighbouring countries deteriorated in 59 countries and improved in just 19.

This deterioration in country relations is part of a much broader trend of increasing geopolitical and economic fragmentation that encompasses not just diplomatic tensions but also increasing risk of conflict. Geopolitical risks today exceed levels seen during the Cold War, driven by heightened military spending, stalled efforts at nuclear disarmament, the diminished role of multilateral institutions, and increasing competition among major and middle powers and regional blocs.

At the same time, contemporary global economic stagnation, increasing debt, and the weaponisation of economic interdependence via trade wars are key factors shaping the economic landscape of geopolitics in the 21st century.

This section looks at long term trends in geopolitical relations, as well as examining the impact of changes in these relations on economic fragmentation, increasing militarisation, and competition for influence.

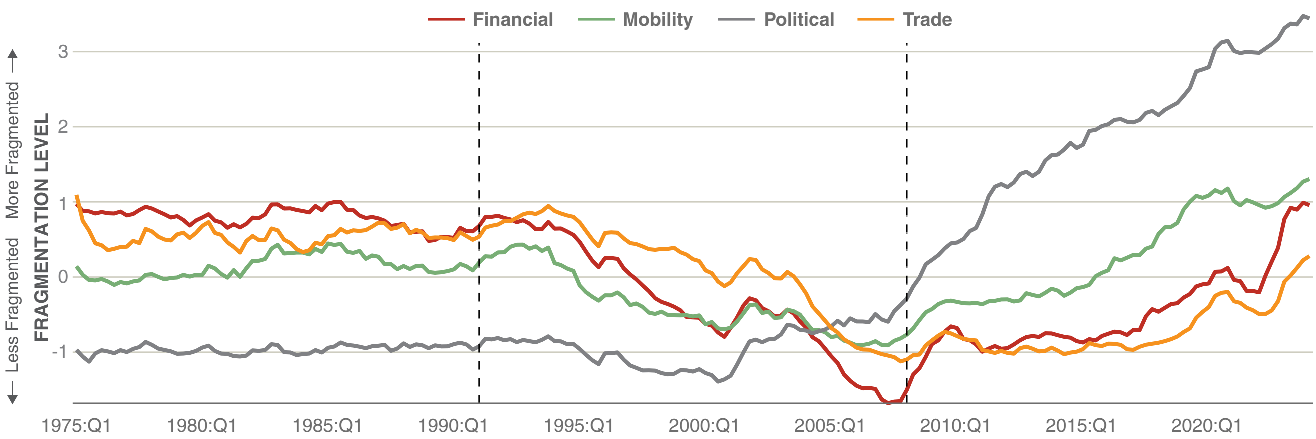
LONG-TERM TRENDS

The long-term trend in geopolitical tensions is shown in Figure 2.8, which shows the trend in geopolitical fragmentation from 1975 to 2024.[36] Geopolitical fragmentation refers to the accelerating breakup of the international system into competing power blocs and shifting alliances, weakening the common rules and institutions that once bound states together. It shows up in sharper strategic rivalries, selective economic decoupling, and a reduced ability to coordinate on trans-national problems. Fragmentation is measured using a wide range of data sources that reflect both economic and political relationships between countries, capturing four key types of geopolitical fragmentation: Financial, mobility, political, and trade.

FIGURE 2.8

Geopolitical fragmentation, 1975–2024

Geopolitical fragmentation has increased significantly since the Global Financial Crisis.



Source: Geopolitical Fragmentation Index

Data from the Geopolitical Fragmentation Index reveals three key phases in geopolitical relations over the past 50 years. There was a stable division of power between Cold War blocs from 1975 to 1990, a period of rapid integration from the early 1990s to the mid-2000s, when global trade and cooperation flourished, and a steady rise in fragmentation since the 2008 Global Financial Crisis. This latest phase has intensified in recent years, with events such as the US-China trade conflict, Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and growing tensions over technology and security pushing the world toward greater division.

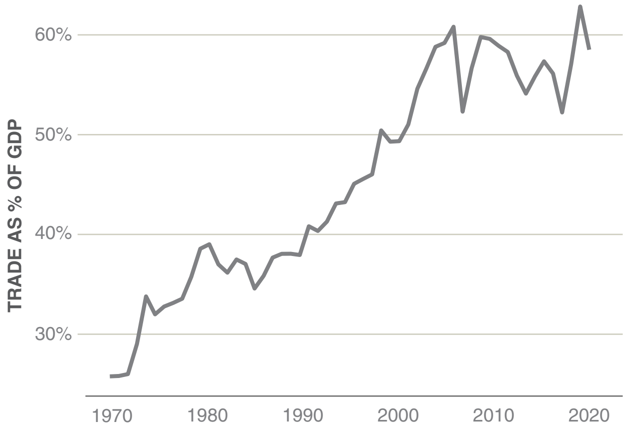
This latest phase of increasing fragmentation was not caused by a sudden collapse of international institutions, but by a steady build-up of frictions over the last 15 years. These include the increasing use of tariffs, export bans, and investment restrictions, as well as new migration and capital controls. Sanctions have become more common and longer-lasting, especially those imposed by Western countries in response to geopolitical disputes. At the same time, political divisions are deepening. For example, voting patterns in the UN General Assembly show growing disagreement between Western countries and China and Russia on key global issues, reflecting a widening split in how different regions view the rules and responsibilities of the international system.

The underlying causes of this fragmentation are both political and structural. The return of great-power competition, the rise of nationalism in many countries, and disputes over control of new technologies and natural resources have all played a role. At the same time, global institutions like the UN and WTO have struggled to respond and have slowly become less effective. As a result, countries are relying more on national or regional strategies, rather than working through global systems. What sets this period apart is how broad and long-lasting these changes are. The global geopolitical and economic systems may be approaching a tipping point and, if passed, it is difficult to predict what the new system would look like. Table 2.1 highlights some of the major changes across the three periods.

FIGURE 2.9

Trade as a percentage of GDP, 1970–2024

Trade as a percentage of GDP has plateaued since the Global Financial Crisis.



Source: World Bank

ECONOMIC FRAGMENTATION

The global economy is significantly more interconnected than it was during the Cold War era. However, there are signs that the extent of this interdependence is beginning to plateau. Figure 2.9 shows trade as a percentage of Global GDP from 1970 to 2024. After rising from under 40 per cent at the end of the Cold War to over 60 per cent by the mid-2000s, it has levelled off and remained at or below 60 per cent since the end of the Global Financial Crisis.

Furthermore, this economic interdependence is increasingly becoming a source of geopolitical tension, as seen by the increase in tariffs, trade wars and deliberate policy choices aimed at decoupling supply chains, particularly in industries deemed critical for national security.

TABLE 2.1

Changes in the international system from the Cold War to the present

Factor	Theme	Cold War (1947–1989)	Post Cold War (1990–2011)	2011–2024
Trade	Global Trade	Represents 40 per cent global GDP	Increases to 60 per cent	Remained at 60 per cent for the past decade
United Nations	Security Council Resolutions	High use of UNSC veto, few resolutions passed	Decline of veto use, increase of resolutions passed	Increase in use of veto, decline of successful resolutions
	Aid Disbursement	Increasing	Increasing	Shift toward bilateral vs multilateral disbursements
Emerging Nations	Number of Countries	76 (1947)	172 (1991)	195 (2011)
	Material Power of Countries	P5 account for 55 per cent of global material power	P5 reduces to 50 per cent of global material power	P5 reduces to 40 per cent of global material power
Nuclear Weapons	Number of Nuclear Powers	2 (1947)	8 (2005)	9 (2006)
	Stockpiles of Nuclear Weapons	Russia 40,000 US 23,000 Rest of the world 1,500 (1986)	Russia 12,000, US 10,000, Rest of the world 700 (1991)	Russia 5,600, US 5,000, Rest of the world 1,500 (2023)

Source: IEP

The current move towards fragmentation has been driven primarily by strategic considerations and national security imperatives, rather than purely market-driven adjustments or shifts in technology and preferences. Several factors are propelling this trend. Prominent among these are escalating geopolitical tensions and strategic competition, such as the China-America tariff war that began in 2018 and the extensive sanctions imposed on Russia following its invasion of Ukraine. These events have solidified the perception that economic dependencies are vulnerabilities that can be strategically exploited. Furthermore, heightened national security concerns, amplified by the supply chain disruptions experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic, have prompted governments and corporations to prioritise resilience and security of supply for essential goods and commodities. This has spurred interest in strategies like reshoring, near-shoring, and "friend-shoring", which involves relocating economic activities to geopolitically aligned partner countries.

The resurgence of large-scale industrial policies targeting strategic sectors such as semiconductors contributes to fragmentation, as these policies frequently incorporate protectionist elements or subsidies that distort global trade and investment patterns. Compounding these factors is the perceived weakening of multilateral institutions like the World Trade Organization, whose diminished capacity to manage trade disputes reduces constraints on unilateral actions. Shifting public and political attitudes in some nations, driven by concerns over globalisation and job losses, have also created political space for more protectionist stances.

The use of trade-restrictive measures has surged globally, with around 3,000 such measures imposed in 2023, nearly triple the number from 2019. Restrictions on commodity trade saw a particularly sharp rise in 2022. Commodity markets themselves show clear signs of fragmentation, with widening price differentials for key materials like lithium and coal across different geographic markets in 2022. For example, Russian coal traded at a price almost three times lower than Australian coal in September 2022. Lithium prices surged globally in 2022 due to a supply-demand imbalance. In China, domestic battery-grade lithium carbonate prices soared by over 100 per cent in the first quarter alone, driven by a widening supply deficit and strong demand from the electric vehicle (EV) sector. This rapid increase in Chinese prices outpaced those in other regions, leading to notable geographic price disparities.

Financial flows are also exhibiting increased sensitivity to geopolitical risk, with some evidence suggesting capital reallocation towards countries perceived as geopolitically closer or as safe havens. The declining share of the US dollar in global reserves and widespread exploration of Central Bank Digital Currencies could further fragment the international payments system. If the US dollar declines further it is unlikely that one currency will dominate as the rising middle power countries will wish to avoid giving away their independence.

This trend towards economic fragmentation carries substantial potential costs. Estimates of long-term global GDP losses vary widely depending on the severity of fragmentation modelled, ranging from 0.2 per cent to nearly seven per cent. Emerging markets and low-income countries are generally considered the most vulnerable, potentially facing disproportionate losses due to reduced access to technology diffusion, higher costs for essential imports like food and commodities and limited policy space to absorb shocks. Fragmentation is also likely to exert upward pressure on inflation by disrupting efficient supply chains and reducing competitive pressures.

MILITARISATION

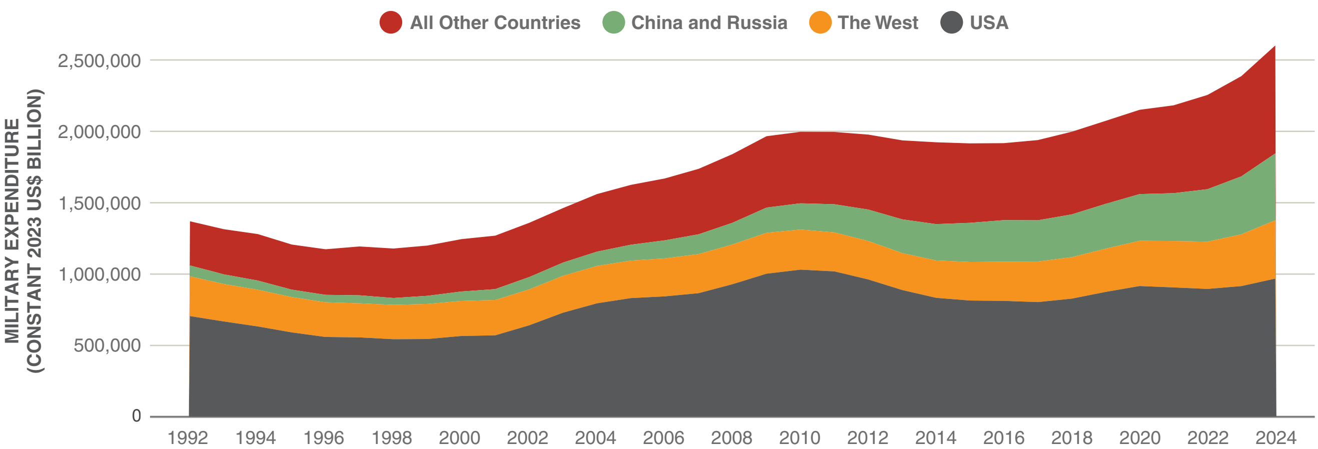
The recent increase in economic fragmentation has been paralleled by a sharp increase in militarisation. This has been particularly noticeable in the past three years, following a period of decline in military focus after the Cold War, characterised by reduced military spending as a share of GDP for the majority of countries and smaller armed forces personnel numbers.

The increase in militarisation in recent years can be clearly seen when measuring total global military expenditure. Figure 2.10 shows that military expenditure declined in the 1990s, before rising steadily from the 2000s and reaching an all-time high in the past year. Global military expenditure reached an estimated $2.7 trillion in 2024, driven by conflicts like the war in Ukraine.

FIGURE 2.10

Military expenditure (constant 2023 US$ billions), 1992–2024

Military expenditure declined in the 1990s, before rising steadily from the 2000s and reaching an all-time high in 2024.



Source: SIPRI, IEP Calculations

The growth rate in military spending is also increasing sharply. The 9.4 per cent increase in spending during 2024 was the steepest year-on-year rise documented since at least 1988, higher than the 6.8 per cent increase seen in 2023 and the 3.5 per cent increase in 2022. Military spending per capita worldwide also reached $334, its highest level since 1990.

Meanwhile, efforts towards nuclear disarmament have stagnated. The major nuclear powers, primarily the United States and Russia, who possess the vast majority of warheads, have seen little progress in stockpile reduction. Indeed, in the past three years, every state with nuclear capabilities has either maintained or increased its arsenal. Iran's continued pursuit of nuclear capabilities, despite the 2015 agreement (from which the United States withdrew in 2018), remains a significant factor influencing Middle Eastern geopolitics.

This surge in militarisation is a direct consequence of a deteriorating global security environment. The ongoing war in Ukraine serves as a primary catalyst, particularly for the dramatic spending increases observed across Europe. Similarly, the war in Gaza and associated regional instability are fuelling higher military budgets in the Middle East. Underlying these specific conflicts is the broader context of great power competition, primarily involving the United States, China, and Russia. This rivalry prompts significant investments in military modernisation as these powers seek to deter adversaries and project influence. Within NATO, the renewed emphasis on the two per cent of GDP spending guideline, driven by the changed security landscape, is another significant contributing factor.

The current phase of militarisation is also characterised by important qualitative shifts, particularly concerning technology and the global arms trade. Despite soaring expenditure, the total number of military personnel worldwide has shown a long-term decline, suggesting a move towards more capital-intensive, technologically advanced armed forces. Investments are increasingly channelled into cutting-edge areas such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), autonomous systems like drones and unmanned underwater vehicles (UAVs/UUVs), cyber warfare capabilities, space-based assets, advanced sensors, and sophisticated missile technology.

For instance, the United States allocated substantial funds in 2024 towards nuclear modernisation and missile defence, while China is rapidly advancing its capabilities in stealth aircraft, UAVs/UUVs, its nuclear arsenal, counterspace systems, and cyber warfare. This technological arms race complicates traditional methods of assessing military power. When taking increased military sophistication into account, IEP estimates that there has been a ten per cent increase in global military capability over the last decade, despite falls in the armed forces personnel rate.

COMPETITION FOR INFLUENCE

The final area in which increasing geopolitical fragmentation can be seen is in increasing competition for influence, particularly among ‘middle power’ countries seeking to extend their influence in lower and middle income countries (LMICs). In the evolving international order, middle powers are emerging as increasingly significant actors.

While the definition of a ‘middle power’ is debated, it generally refers to states occupying an intermediate position in the global power hierarchy, possessing resources and influence below those of great powers but significantly above smaller states. This status is often assessed based on factors like GDP, population size, and military strength, but also on their foreign policy behaviour. Middle powers frequently favour multilateralism, diplomacy, and coalition-building, often carving out specific roles in ‘niche diplomacy’, focusing on areas like peacekeeping, arms control, or human rights.

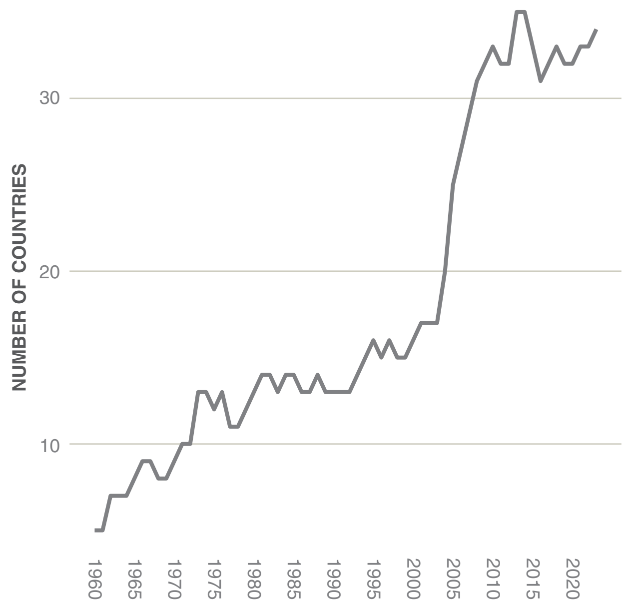
In the current climate of US-China rivalry, these middle powers employ a variety of strategies to protect their interests, maintain autonomy, and exert influence. Some engage in 'balancing', explicitly aligning with one great power to counter another, as seen in Australia's strengthened security ties with the United States through alliances like AUKUS to counter China's influence. Others pursue 'hedging', maintaining workable relations with both competing powers to maximise flexibility and economic benefits while seeking security assurances, a strategy historically employed by nations like Indonesia.

The rise in the importance of middle power countries can be seen by looking at the data on Foreign Bilateral Influence Capacity (FBIC), which measures the amount of economic, diplomatic, and military influence one country has over another. Figure 2.11 charts the number of countries that account for over ten per cent of foreign influence in five or more countries. This number has increased significantly over the past sixty years, rising from five countries in 1960 to 34 in 2023. The steepest increase in the number of countries with significant influence began in 2005.

FIGURE 2.11

Countries with significant geopolitical influence, 1960–2023

The number of globally influential countries has nearly tripled since the end of the Cold War.



Source: University of Denver, IEP Calculations

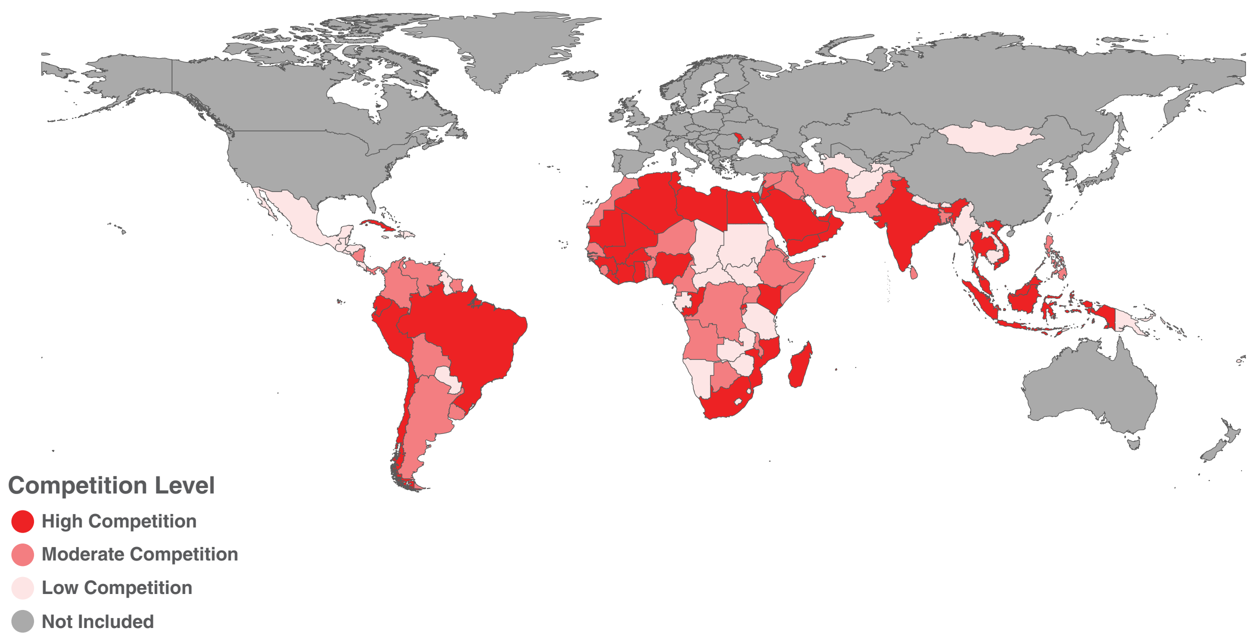
Most of this increase in influence has occurred in LMICs. Figure 2.12 highlights the level of influence competition over LMICs across the world. Influence competition over LMICs largely revolves around material and strategic concerns, such as access to key resources, or the ability to exert strong influence on neighbouring countries. For instance, instability and resource scarcity in the Sahel region of Africa has driven foreign and regional actors to vie for control, contributing to a complex and contested environment. Significant competition for India revolves around its rising economic and military power, which has made the country central to Indo-Pacific geopolitics and an attractive ally to both the United States and China. Foreign competition for influence in Brazil is driven by its leadership in Latin America, its economic power, and its strategic role in global institutions like BRICS. Brazil's growing importance, particularly for China and other emerging economies, has heightened rivalry with the United States and other Western powers.

While countries often exert influence through increased aid, trade, or defence agreements, in cases of countries in conflict, this can manifest through competitive interventions in civil war. Between 2010 and 2023, the number of internationalised intrastate conflicts increased nearly threefold. Many of these conflicts involve large regional or international coalitions involved in peacekeeping or stabilisation operations. In 2023, there were 78 countries that were involved in at least one internationalised intrastate conflict, up from 59 in 2008. In many instances, the involvement of major powers in intrastate wars can intensify the conflict and hinder resolution efforts. This can be seen in the civil war in Sudan, where external actors, including China, Russia, Iran, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Chad, and Libya are supporting rival militias in their battle for control of the country. As a result of the violence that has persisted since 2023, Sudan is now facing the world's worst refugee crisis, with over 10 million people displaced.

FIGURE 2.12

Foreign influence competition in low- and middle-income countries, since 2011

Currently, there are high levels of competition in West Africa, South Asia and Southeast Asia.



11.6%
global GDP

The global economic impact of violence was $19.97 trillion in constant PPP terms in 2024, equivalent to 11.6 per cent of global GDP, or $2,455 per person.

The 2024 result represents an increase of 3.8 per cent from the previous year, largely driven by a six per cent increase in military expenditure and a 44 per cent increase in GDP losses from conflict.

Military Expenditure	GDP Losses
6% ↑	44% ↑

40%

Afghanistan and Ukraine incurred the highest economic cost of violence as a percentage of GDP in 2024. The economic cost of violence in these countries was over 40 per cent of GDP.

In the ten countries most affected by violence, the economic cost of violence averaged 27.8 per cent of GDP in 2024, compared to just 2.5 per cent for the ten least affected countries.

2024

$47.2 billion

Expenditure on peacebuilding and peacekeeping was $47.2 billion in 2024, just 0.52 per cent of total military spending in PPP terms. This represents a decline in real terms of 26 per cent from $64 billion in 2008.

Military and internal security expenditure accounts for 73 per cent of the total economic impact of violence. Military expenditure accounts for 45 per cent of the model, or $9 trillion.

Since 2008, the component of the economic model to experience the greatest increase was conflict deaths, whose cost rose by 421 per cent. The economic impact of conflict deaths, GDP losses, and refugees and IDPs have each more than tripled in the last 16 years.

Between 2023 and 2024, the economic impact of refugees and IDPs rose in 112 countries, with an average increase of 30 per cent, while military expenditure rose in 101 countries, with an average increase of 15 per cent.

3 Economic Impact of Violence

The Economic Value of Peace

In 2024, the impact of violence on the global economy amounted to $19.97 trillion in purchasing power parity (PPP) terms. This is equivalent to 11.6 per cent of global GDP, or $2,455 per person. The total economic impact of violence increased by 3.8 per cent over the past year.

The global economic impact of violence is defined as the expenditure and economic effect related to containing, preventing and dealing with the consequences of violence. Understanding the economic impact of violence provides a basis for calculating the economic benefits resulting from improvements in peace.

Violence and the fear of violence create significant economic disruptions. Violent incidents generate costs in the form of property damage, physical injury, and psychological trauma. Fear of violence also alters economic behaviour, primarily by reducing the propensity to invest and consume. Expenditure on preventing, containing, and dealing with the consequences of violence diverts public and private resources away from more productive activities and towards protective measures. Violence generates economic losses in the form of productivity shortfalls, foregone earnings, and distorted expenditure.

The total economic impact of violence has three components that represent different ways in which violence impacts economic activity: direct costs, indirect costs and a multiplier effect.

The direct costs of violence include the immediate consequences to the victims, perpetrators, and public systems, including health, judicial and public safety. The indirect cost refers to longer-term costs, such as lost productivity resulting from the physical and psychological effects and the impact of violence on the perception of safety and security in society. The multiplier effect represents the economic benefits that would be generated by the diversion of expenditure away from sunk costs, such as incarceration spending, and into more productive alternatives.

The economic impact of violence includes many indicators contained in the GPI, such as military expenditure, conflict deaths and homicides. However, the model also includes costs that are not incorporated into the GPI, such as expenditure on refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs), losses from conflict, the economic impacts of suicides and internal security expenditure.

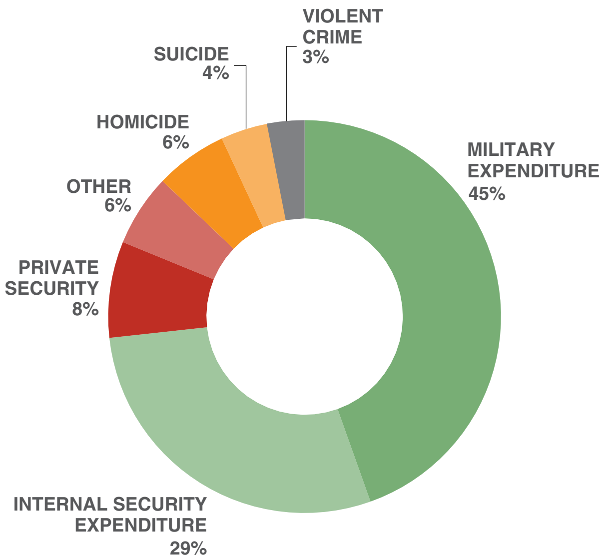
THE VALUE OF PEACE IN 2024

The economic impact of violence was $19.97 trillion in 2024. This was a 3.8 per cent increase from the previous year, owing largely to an increase in GDP losses from conflict, as well as increases in military expenditure. Figure 3.1 displays the breakdown of the total economic impact of violence by 15 categories for 2024.

FIGURE 3.1

Composition of the global economic impact of violence, 2024

Military and internal security expenditure accounts for over 73 per cent of the total economic impact of violence.



Source: IEP Calculations

The single largest component of the global economic impact of violence was military expenditure, which totalled $9 trillion, or 45 per cent of the total economic impact. Note that this is an economic measure of military expenditure that includes a multiplier effect, as well as spending on veterans' affairs and other related costs. For this reason, it differs from other estimates of global military expenditure.

Internal security expenditure was the second largest component, comprising 29 per cent of the global economic impact of violence, at $5.7 trillion. It includes spending on the police and the judicial system as well as the costs associated with incarceration.

Table 3.1 gives a more detailed breakdown of the total economic impact of violence across 15 categories, as well as the change in the impact from 2023 to 2024.

TABLE 3.1

Change in global economic impact of violence, billions of PPP 2024 US dollars, 2023–2024

The total economic impact of violence increased by 3.8 per cent from 2023 to 2024.

	2024				2023	YEAR ON YEAR CHANGE	
CATEGORY	**DIRECT COST**	**INDIRECT COST**	**MULTIPLER**	**TOTAL ECONOMIC IMPACT**	**TOTAL ECONOMIC IMPACT**	**TOTAL CHANGE**	**% CHANGE**
Military expenditure	4517	0	4517	9034	8494	540	6.4
Internal security expenditure	2859	0	2859	5718	5668	50	0.9
Private security	768	0	768	1536	1516	20	1.3
Homicide	99	945	99	1143	1166	-23	-2
Suicide	1	756	1	758	753	5	0.7
Violent crime	51	515	51	617	622	-5	-0.8
Refugees and IDPs	4	345	4	343	352	1	0.3
GDP losses	0	462	0	462	321	141	43.9
Incarceration	71	0	71	142	140	2	1.4
Fear	0	78	0	78	78	0	0
Conflict deaths	28	0	28	56	52	4	7.7
Peacebuilding	15	0	15	30	32	-2	-6.2
Peacekeeping	8	0	8	16	18	-2	-11.1
Small arms	11	0	11	22	24	-2	-8.3
Terrorism	1	6	1	8	15	-7	-46.7

Globally, the economic impact of military expenditure increased by 6.4 per cent in 2024, equivalent to $540 billion. The general trend in military expenditure is rising, with a significant surge observed over the past few years. Many European countries have committed to spending more in the near future, due in large part to the ongoing conflict in Ukraine.[37]

Expenditure on private security increased by 1.3 per cent. Private security is the third largest category in the model and comprises eight per cent of the total. Private security includes all businesses that provide security services, such as bodyguards and armed guards both inside and outside of conflict zones.

Homicide is the fourth largest component in the model, representing six per cent of the global economic impact of violence, or $1.1 trillion. The economic impact of homicide fell by two per cent from the previous year. Homicide has been one of the few categories to show a sustained improvement over the past 16 years.

Suicide is the fifth largest component in the model, representing four per cent of the total impact. Last year, the economic impact of suicide increased by 0.7 per cent. In contrast, the economic impact of violent crime declined by 0.8 per cent in 2024. Violent crime comprises acts such as assault and sexual violence. It is the sixth largest component of the model, representing three per cent of the total economic impact of violence.

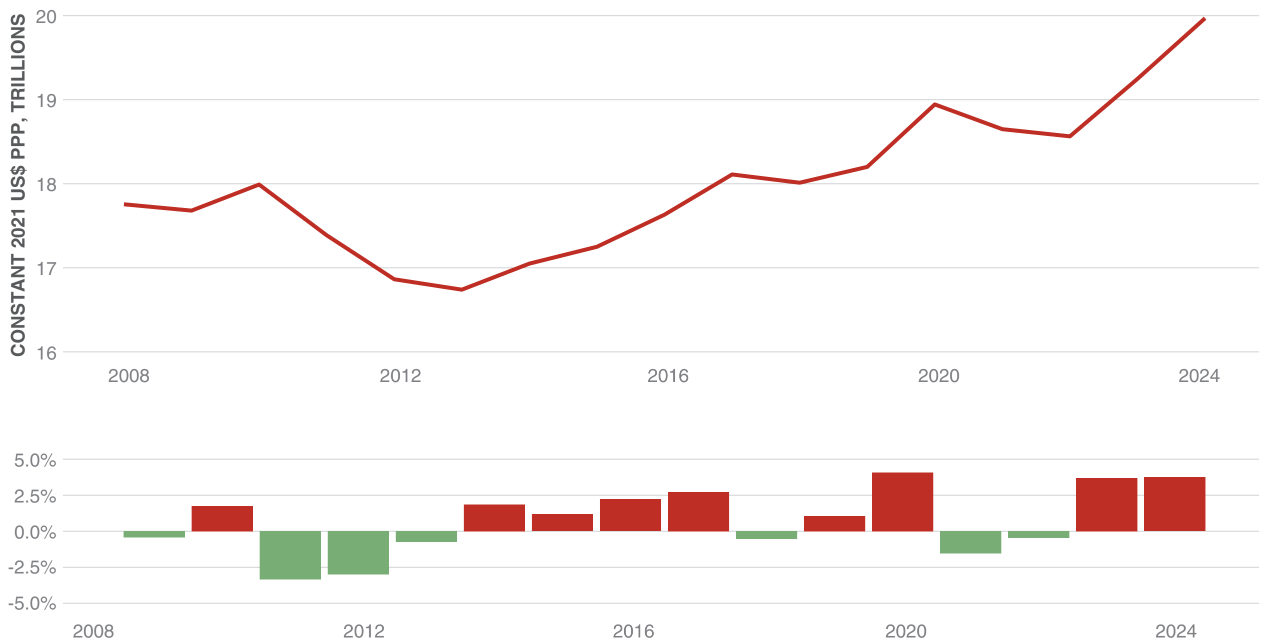
TRENDS IN THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF VIOLENCE

In real terms, the overall impact of violence was 12.8 per cent higher in 2024 than in 2008, as shown in Figure 3.2. Substantial improvements were recorded between 2010 and 2013, after which the impact has steadily risen. Since 2008, 100 countries have recorded deteriorations in their economic impact of violence, while 61 have improved. The average deterioration was 21.9 per cent, while the average improvement was 52.4 per cent.

FIGURE 3.2

Trends in the global economic impact of violence, 2008–2024

The economic impact of violence has increased year on year for 11 of the past 16 years.



Source: IEP Calculations

Table 3.2 shows a breakdown of the change in the economic impact of violence between 2008 and 2024 by category. Costs associated with conflict deaths, GDP losses from conflict, and refugees and IDPs each more than tripled.

TABLE 3.2

Change in global economic impact of violence, billions of PPP 2024 US dollars, 2008–2024

	ECONOMIC IMPACT		CHANGE (2008-2024)	
CATEGORY	**2008**	**2024**	**TOTAL CHANGE**	**% CHANGE**
Conflict deaths	10.6	52.2	44.8	421
GDP losses	90.1	462	372	412
Refugees and IDPs	113	353	240	212
Terrorism	10.3	7.3	-3	-29
Peacekeeping	19.7	16.6	-3.10	-16
Military expenditure	7674	9034	1360	18
Suicide	689	758	68.7	10
Fear	72.3	77.7	5.40	7
Homicide	1188	1143	-44.5	-4
Incarceration	135	141	5.8	4
Internal security expenditure	5325	5717	392	7
Small arms	24.2	24.8	-1.4	-6
Violent crime	611	617	6.1	1
Peacebuilding	44.1	30.6	-13.5	-31
Private security	1750	1536	-214	-12

TABLE 3.3

Economic impact of violence – domains and categories

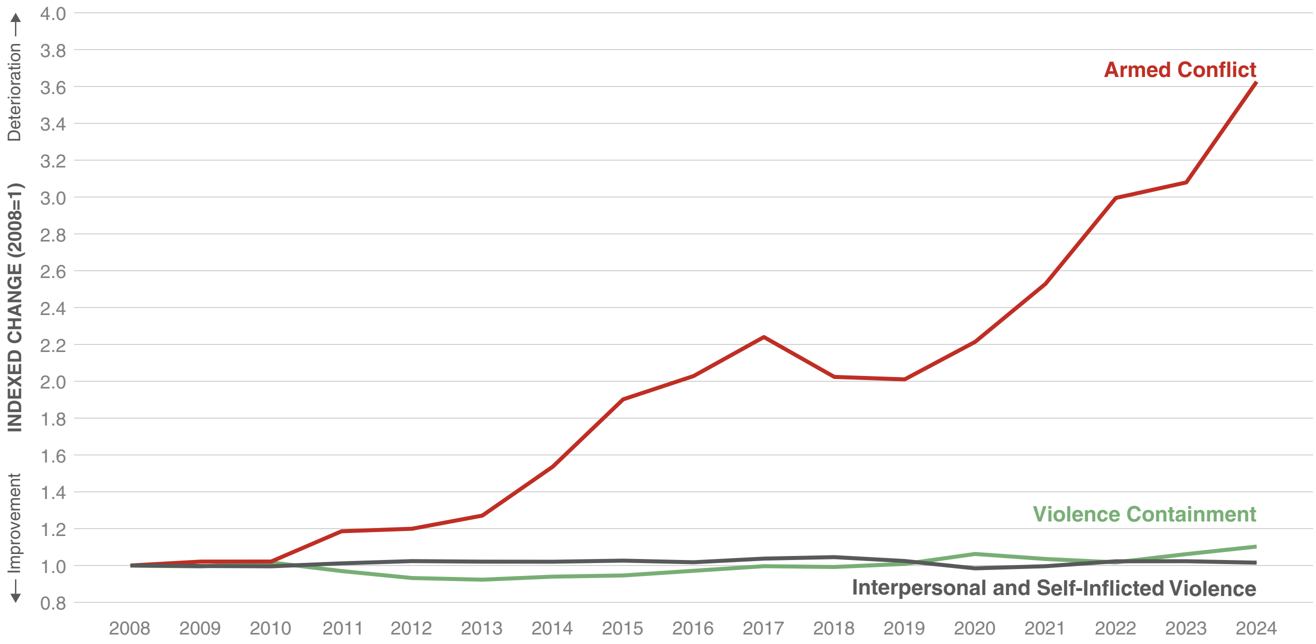
There are 18 categories in the economic impact of violence model.

VIOLENCE CONTAINMENT	ARMED CONFLICT	INTERPERSONAL AND SELF-INFLICTED VIOLENCE
Military expenditure	Direct costs of deaths from internal violent conflict	Homicide
Internal security expenditure	Direct costs of deaths from external violent conflict	Violent assault
Security agency	Indirect costs of violent conflict (GDP losses due to conflict)	Sexual assault
Private security	Losses from status as refugees and IDPs	Fear of crime
UN peacekeeping	Small arms imports	Indirect costs of incarceration
ODA peacebuilding expenditure	Terrorism	Suicide

Figure 3.3

Indexed trend in economic impact by domain, 2008–2024

The economic impact of *Armed Conflict* has almost tripled since 2008.



Source: IEP Calculations

ECONOMIC IMPACT BY DOMAIN

The 15 categories of the economic impact of violence can be grouped into three domains: *Armed Conflict, Interpersonal and Self-Inflicted Violence,* and *Violence Containment.* The relative long-term trends in the economic impact of violence differ significantly across these three domains. Table 3.3 shows the violence categories included in each domain, while Figure 3.3 shows the indexed change in the three domains since 2008. The *Armed Conflict* domain has increased substantially since 2013, while *Violence Containment* and *Interpersonal and Self-Inflicted Violence* have recorded relatively small changes.

ARMED CONFLICT

The economic impact of *Armed Conflict* on the global economy in 2024 amounted to $900 billion, a 17.8 per cent increase from the year prior. The *Armed Conflict* domain includes the costs associated with violence caused by organised groups such as national militaries and security forces, militia groups, and terrorist organisations.

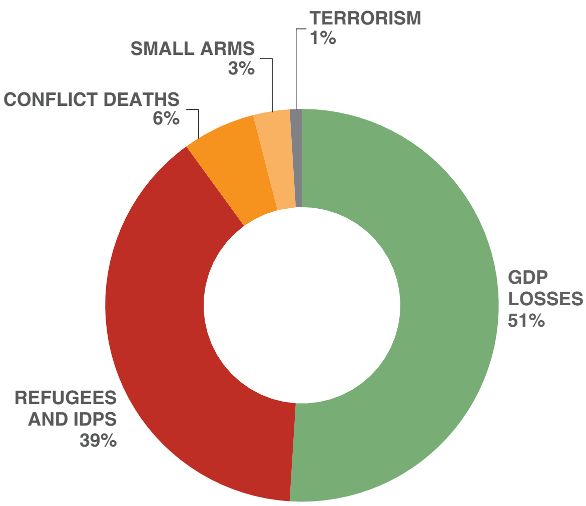
This collective violence includes conflict within and between states, including militias and drug cartels, violent political repression, genocide, and terrorism. The three regions with the highest economic impact from *Armed Conflict* are sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), and South America.

Figure 3.4 shows the composition of the economic impact of *Armed Conflict* in 2024. GDP losses is the largest component, accounting for approximately 51 per cent of the economic impact of the domain, followed by costs associated with refugees and IDPs, at 39 per cent.

FIGURE 3.4

Composition of the Armed Conflict domain, 2024

GDP losses account for over half of the global economic impact of *Armed Conflict*.



Source: IEP Calculations

INTERPERSONAL AND SELF-INFLICTED VIOLENCE

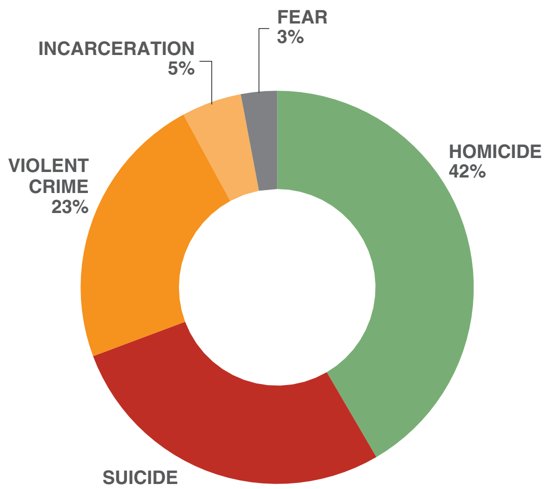
The economic impact of *Interpersonal and Self-Inflicted Violence* aggregates homicide, violent and sexual assault, suicide, and the fear of violence. In 2024, the economic impact of *Interpersonal and Self-Inflicted Violence* on the global economy amounted to $2.7 trillion, a 0.76 per cent decrease from the prior year.

Figure 3.5 shows the composition of the economic impact of the *Interpersonal and Self-Inflicted Violence* domain. Homicide accounts for approximately 42 per cent of the domain's economic impact, followed by suicide at 28 per cent and violent crime at 23 per cent.

FIGURE 3.5

Composition of the Interpersonal and Self-Inflicted Violence domain, 2024

Homicide accounts for more than two-fifths of the economic impact of *Interpersonal and Self-Inflicted Violence*.



Source: IEP Calculations

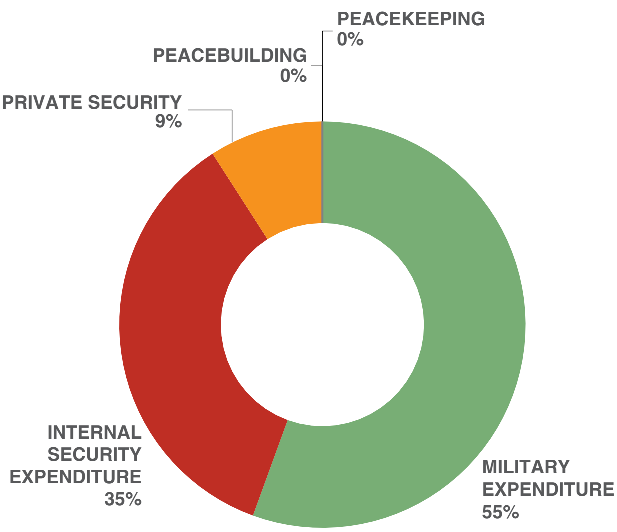
VIOLENCE CONTAINMENT

The domain of the economic impact of violence model with the greatest overall cost is *Violence Containment*. It consists of all spending which aims to prevent and contain the spread of violence. In 2024, the economic impact of *Violence Containment* on the global economy amounted to $16.3 trillion, a 3.9 per cent increase from the prior year. Figure 3.6 shows the composition of the economic impact for this domain.

FIGURE 3.6

Composition of the economic impact of the Violence Containment domain, 2024

Peacebuilding and peacekeeping are only a tiny fraction of the economic impact of *Violence Containment*.



Source: IEP Calculations

Military expenditure is the largest component of this domain, accounting for 55 per cent of the total, while internal security expenditure is the second largest component, at 35 per cent. Internal security expenditure encompasses all the expenses associated with the police and judicial system. Private security accounts for nine per cent of the economic impact *of Violence Containment*, while peacebuilding and peacekeeping combined account for less than one per cent.

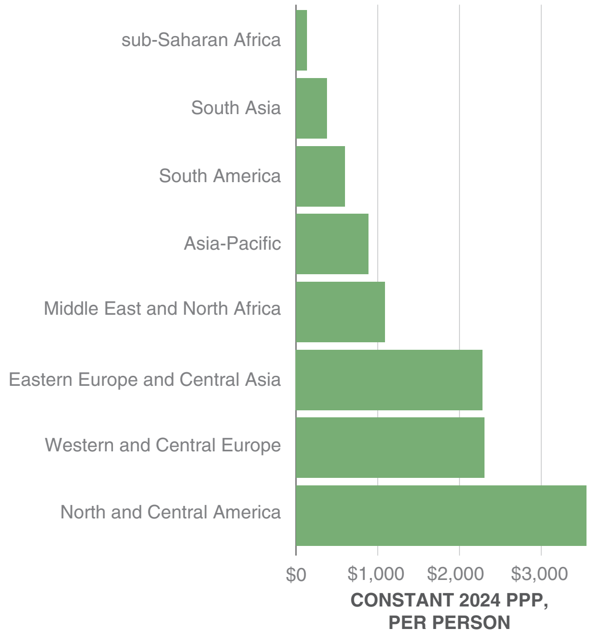
The distribution of the economic impact of *Violence Containment* varies considerably from region to region, as shown in Figure 3.7. In 2024, the cost of violence containment in North and Central America was $3,548 per person, significantly higher than in any other region. In contrast, per capita spending in both sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia was less than $500.

Table 3.4 shows the ten countries with the highest military expenditure as a total, per capita, and as a percentage of GDP. The United States spends the most of any country annually on its military, followed by China, which spends less than half as much. North Korea has the highest per capita spending and has the highest military spending as a percentage of its GDP.

FIGURE 3.7

Per capita containment spending (military and internal security) by region, 2024

In 2024, North and Central America recorded the highest per capita cost of violence containment spending globally.



Source: IEP Calculations

TABLE 3.4

Military expenditure: total, per capita and as a percentage of GDP, 2024

COUNTRY	MILEX (TOTAL, BILLIONS)
United States	949.21
China	449.85
Russia	352.06
India	281.74
North Korea	263.11
Saudi Arabia	135.30
Germany	106.81
Ukraine	102.99
United Kingdom	91.05
Japan	80.25

COUNTRY	MILEX (PER CAPITA)
North Korea	9929.15
Qatar	5620.85
Singapore	4161.67
Saudi Arabia	3983.91
Israel	3458.80
United Arab Emirates	3112.91
United States	2747.94
Ukraine	2720.33
Oman	2572.44
Kuwait	2485.26

COUNTRY	MILEX (% OF GDP)
North Korea	34.38
Ukraine	17.12
Afghanistan	15.25
Algeria	9.13
Palestinian Territories	9.10
Saudi Arabia	7.24
Israel	7.15
Oman	6.71
Mali	6.29
Russia	6.12

REGIONAL AND COUNTRY ANALYSIS

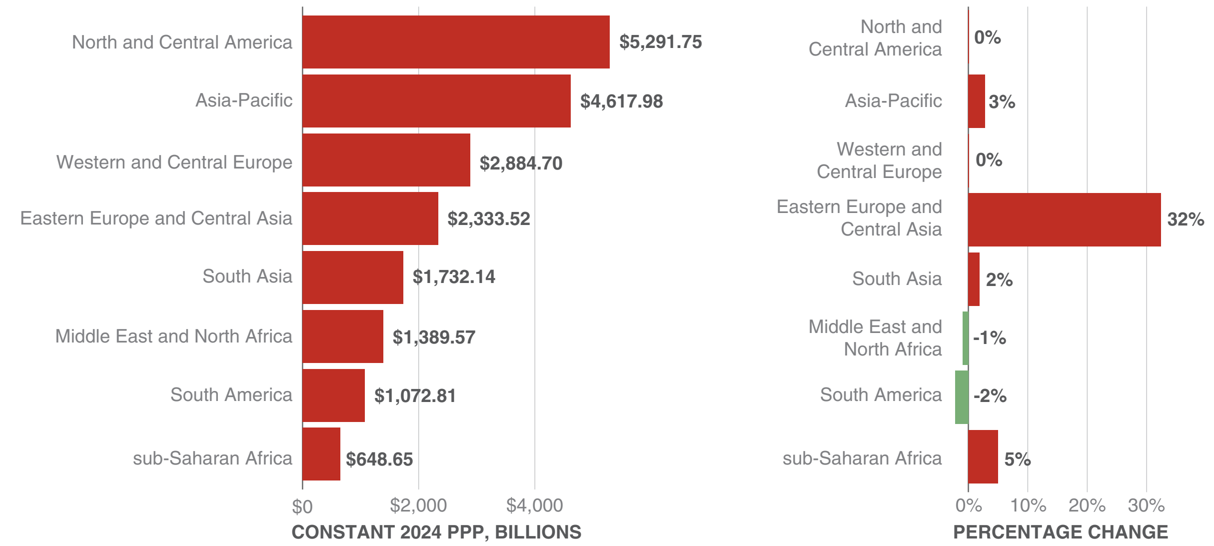
There are noticeable regional differences in the economic impact of violence. In some regions, the *Violence Containment* domain, and in particular military expenditure, accounts for most of the economic impact, while in other regions crime and conflict are the largest components of the economic impact of violence.

The economic impact of violence deteriorated for six regions of the world in 2024 and improved in two as shown in Figure 3.8. Eastern Europe and Central Asia had the largest deterioration, at 37 per cent. This is mostly due to increased impact in Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan. In Russia, this deterioration can be attributed to an increase in military expenditure, conflict deaths from Ukraine's incursion into the Kursk region, and the increasing impact of terrorism. The increase in Azerbaijan was driven by increased military expenditure due to increased weapons imports.

As shown in Figure 3.9, the greatest variation between regions is in military expenditure. It represents 61.2 per cent of the economic impact for the MENA region, compared to 18.5 per cent in South America. The proportions of internal and private security spending also vary between regions, from over 45 per cent in South Asia to just under 32 per cent in South America.

FIGURE 3.8

Total economic impact and change by region, 2023–2024

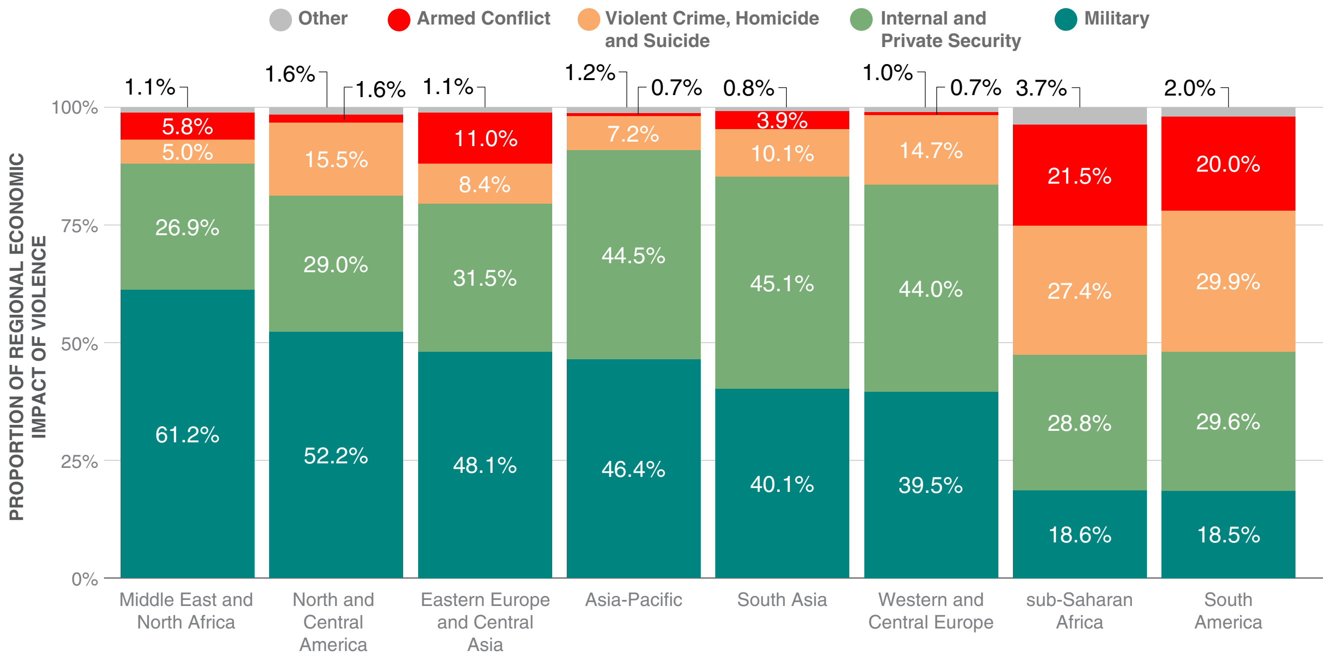


Source: IEP Calculations

FIGURE 3.9

Composition of the regional economic cost of violence, 2024

The Middle East and North Africa has the highest relative impact from military expenditure.



Source: IEP Calculations

Table 3.5 shows the ten countries with the highest economic cost of violence as a percentage of GDP. The economic cost of violence for the most affected countries ranged from 16.8 to 41.6 per cent of their GDP. These countries tend to have combinations of high levels of armed conflict, large numbers of internally displaced persons, high levels of interpersonal violence and large militaries.

In these ten countries, the economic cost of violence averaged 27.8 per cent of GDP in 2024. In contrast, among the world's ten most peaceful countries, the average economic cost of violence was equivalent to 2.5 per cent of GDP.

The countries with the highest costs of violence are Afghanistan and Ukraine. Afghanistan's high cost can be attributed to high military spending relative to its GDP, high internal security costs, and high costs associated with refugees and IDPs. Countries affected by high-intensity conflict suffer higher costs from conflict deaths and losses from refugees and IDP, as well as higher costs from homicide. These countries include Ukraine, Palestine, Somalia, Burkina Faso, Colombia and the Central African Republic.

TABLE 3.5

Countries with the highest economic cost of violence as a percentage of GDP, 2024

There are six countries where the cost of violence is equivalent to more than 20 per cent of GDP, and in two of these, it exceeds 40 per cent.

COUNTRY	ECONOMIC COST OF VIOLENCE (AS % OF GDP)
Afghanistan	41.56
Ukraine	40.92
North Korea	39.14
Syria	33.97
Somalia	24.71
Central African Republic	22.48
Colombia	19.66
Palestinian Territories	19.42
Burkina Faso	18.97
Cyprus	16.75
Average	**27.75**

Global Economic Conditions and Rising Conflict Risk

- Many of the macro-economic adjustments happening globally are likely to increase the risk of conflict in the near future.
- In 2024, global GDP growth remained modest at 3.3 per cent, while inflation stayed elevated at 5.8 per cent, despite easing from its 2022 peak.
- Sub-Saharan Africa has been the largest recipient of Official Development Assistance over the past decade, but recent aid cuts will affect essential services and development.
- Youth unemployment in the Middle East and North Africa remained high, at 24.5 per cent in 2023, over ten percentage points above the global average.
- While total global debt as a proportion of GDP has declined slightly since 2020, public debt continues to rise, reaching $97 trillion in 2023. Debt in developing countries has been growing twice as fast as in advanced economies since 2010.
- Debt service is placing increasing pressure on public finances, with economically developing countries spending an average of 42 per cent of government revenue on servicing debt.

THE GLOBAL ECONOMIC OUTLOOK

The global economy in 2024 was characterised by a mixture of factors that indicate future risk for both economic performance and conflict. Countries in the developing world show the highest levels of increasing risk. GDP growth decelerated to about three per cent in 2023 and was projected to remain at three per cent in 2024, well below the average prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.[38]

Inflation hit multi-decade highs in 20239 due to supply disruptions associated with the pandemic, expansionary policies and commodity shocks. Globally, inflation in 2023 remained elevated, at around six per cent. Many emerging markets and conflict-prone countries have suffered even more extreme inflation. For instance, Sudan and Syria faced triple-digit inflation in 2024.[40] In the Middle East, price increases of 20 to 30 per cent occurred in countries like Egypt, Iran and Yemen and have caused consumer spending to plunge.[41] High inflation, especially for food and fuel, tends to be politically destabilising and can provoke mass protests.[42]

Youth unemployment is exceptionally high in some parts of the world. In the Middle East and North Africa, joblessness among young people is around 25 per cent.[43] In advanced economies, wage gains have not kept up with inflation for many workers, leading to strikes and wage disputes.

Trade growth as a percentage of global GDP has stalled, reversing a 70-year trend. In 2023, global trade expanded by just 0.2 per cent, the weakest performance outside a recession in 50 years.[44] The worst single year contraction occurred in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, with global trade contracting by 8.9 per cent. Supply chain disruptions, geopolitical rifts and protectionist policies have all played a role. The number of government measures restricting trade has surged in recent years.[45] By 2023 there were roughly 2,600 restrictive trade interventions per year, up from only a few hundred per year pre-2008.[46] Governments are increasingly turning to tariffs, export controls and “friend-shoring” of supply chains.

Geopolitical tensions have become one of the biggest risks to the global economy, with wars raging in two regions critical to the world’s food and energy supply: Eastern Europe and the Middle East.[47] These conflicts have disrupted commodity flows, prompting export bans and volatility that further strain trade relations.

Another major concern and potential economic stressor is known as ‘conflict contagion’. This can occur when one war destabilises neighbouring states both economically and socially. For example, the war in Ukraine disrupted trade and energy supplies in Eastern Europe, raising tensions in countries like Moldova and causing military mobilisation and skirmishes in places like the South Caucasus. If global economic conditions worsen, fragile regions could see existing conflicts escalate or dormant disputes reignite due to weakening economic and regional conditions. Several ‘frozen conflicts’ are at risk of heating up due to growing state fragility.[48]

One response to insecurity has been higher military spending, which can strain economies further and create a security dilemma. NATO countries, reacting to the Russia-Ukraine war, have boosted defence budgets to levels not seen in decades.[49] While this is intended as deterrence, it also diverts resources from social needs at a time when many European countries are suffering from internal discontent with the established system.

Many governments are also facing unprecedented debt loads. Global public and private debt in developing economies reached 206 per cent of GDP by the end of 2023, nearly double the 2010 level and a seven per cent increase from the prior year.[50] The World Economic Forum reports that over 50 developing countries are spending over ten per cent of their revenues on interest payments, often outstripping what they spend on education or health.[51] About 3.3 billion people live in countries that allocate more to debt interest than to vital public services.[52] Heavily indebted nations are caught in a bind: investors demand austerity measures to restore solvency yet cutting subsidies or raising taxes can trigger social backlash. For example, Kenya in 2023 tried to hike taxes and reduce fuel subsidies to alleviate its debt crisis, only to face deadly protests in response.[53]

With many economies struggling to recover fully from the pandemic and additional shocks like the Russia-Ukraine war, the cost-of-living crisis remains a worldwide concern. Tightening financial conditions are exacerbating debt distress, especially in lower-income states. Weak growth further limits governments' capacity to provide jobs and social support. In short, a confluence of inflation, austerity and weak growth is creating the potential for unrest in many societies.

In summary, the global economic outlook in 2025 is one of high uncertainty and downside risks. Should conditions deteriorate, such as through the emergence of a new financial crisis or the spread of geopolitical 'conflict contagion', many economies and societies would find themselves under severe stress.[54]

REGIONAL ECONOMIC STRESSORS AND DOMESTIC CONFLICT RISK

Hard economic times have historically been linked to surges in civil unrest, from bread riots and general strikes to revolutions and civil wars. When people cannot afford basic necessities or find employment, grievances multiply against the ruling authorities. At the same time, governments facing fiscal crises have and limited options and often resort to repressive measures or unpopular reforms that further inflame public anger. While the intensity varies by region, a common thread is evident: prolonged economic hardship is translating into political volatility. These risks are especially high in three regions: sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and North Africa, and South America.

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Sub-Saharan Africa faces converging economic stressors, most notably rising debt, inflation, youth unemployment and food insecurity. The region was hit hard by the pandemic downturn and then by the global commodity inflation of 2022, which raised import bills for fuel and food. Many African countries also accumulated large debt levels that have become costlier to service with rising global interest rates and weaker local currencies. The result has been a series of debt crises and pleas for relief. For example, Ghana defaulted on its debt in 2022 and had to negotiate a loan program with the IMF, Zambia went into default in 2020, and others like Ethiopia and Nigeria have very high debt-service burdens. Angola's debt servicing to government revenue is over 60 per cent.

Governments under fiscal duress have taken measures that sparked public anger. In mid-2023, Nigeria's new administration removed a long-standing fuel subsidy, causing petrol prices to triple overnight and triggering protests and a major increase in cost of living. Kenya's attempt to raise taxes and cut subsidies to address debt led to unrest and clashes with police.[55] These incidents echo the 'structural adjustment' riots of the 1980s in Africa, when austerity was often met with violent demonstrations.

There is a risk that economic grievances translate into broader anti-government movements. One of the most striking trends in Africa has been a wave of military coups in the last five years in West and Central Africa, toppling governments in Mali, Guinea, Burkina Faso, Niger and Gabon. While each coup has its own context, a common underlying factor is widespread popular frustration with failing governance, including the inability of elected leaders to deliver economic improvement and services. In countries in the Central Sahel region, insurgencies and terrorism were the immediate security justifications for the coups, where the coup leaders themselves exploited public anger at poverty and corruption.[56] Stagnant economies with high unemployment, regional inequalities and few prospects created an opportunity for militaries to seize power.

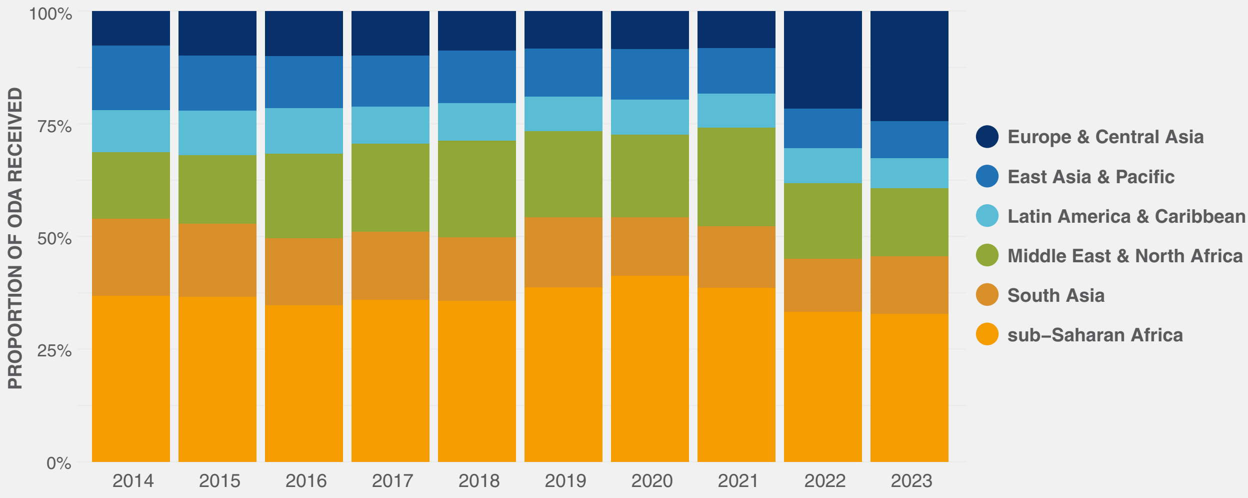
Fragility, conflict, and uncertainty form a vicious cycle in parts of sub-Saharan Africa.[57] Conflict undermines development, and poor economic outcomes in turn make societies more vulnerable to conflict and authoritarian interruptions. The new regimes in Mali, Burkina and Niger have in some cases enjoyed public support but their countries remain in precarious economic shape, under sanctions or cut off from aid.

Figure 3.10 illustrates that sub-Saharan Africa remains the world's largest regional recipient of Official Development Assistance (ODA), with countries like Ethiopia, Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo all receiving substantial foreign aid. This aid is crucial for maintaining stability and supporting essential services like healthcare, education, and infrastructure.

FIGURE 3.10

Regional breakdown of ODA inflows, 2014–2023

Sub-Saharan Africa has been the largest recipient of ODA over the past 10 years.



Source: OECD

However, recent significant reductions in aid, most notably, the US cutting approximately 83 per cent of its USAID programs to the region in early 2025, pose serious risks to these fragile states. Even if some of these cuts are restored, the most optimistic estimates still indicate a 50 per cent reduction from 2023 levels. Such cuts have already led to the closure of health centres and the suspension of critical programs, exacerbating humanitarian crises and threatening the progress made in development and stability across sub-Saharan Africa.[58]

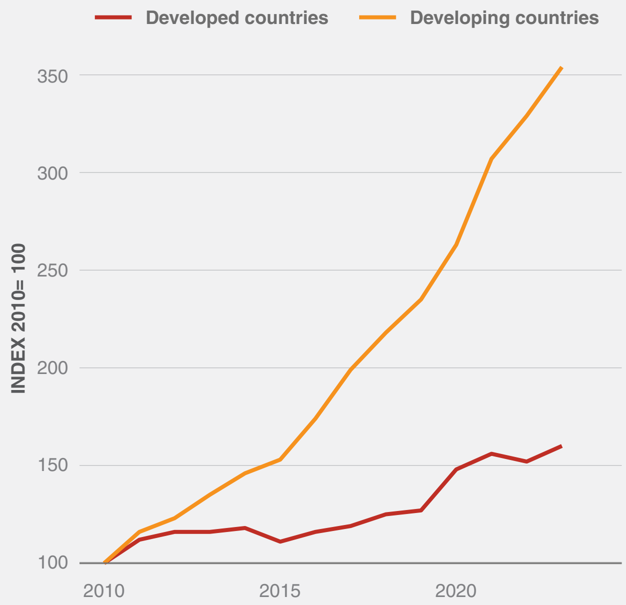
The growing level of debt is also potentially fuelling unrest in Africa. As shown in Figure 3.11, the growth of debt has been particularly pronounced in developing countries, outpacing debt growth in developed nations by a factor of two since 2010. Almost 50 per cent of those countries are in Africa.

The increase in the level of debt is leading many countries in sub-Saharan Africa to outlay a higher percentage of public expenditure on debt servicing, as shown in Figure 3.12. Over 80 per cent of countries in sub-Saharan Africa spend more than 20 per cent of public expenditure on debt servicing, the highest percentage of any region in the world.

FIGURE 3.11

Public debt growth in developed vs developing countries, 2010–2023

Public debt in developing countries is nearly twice as high as in developed countries.

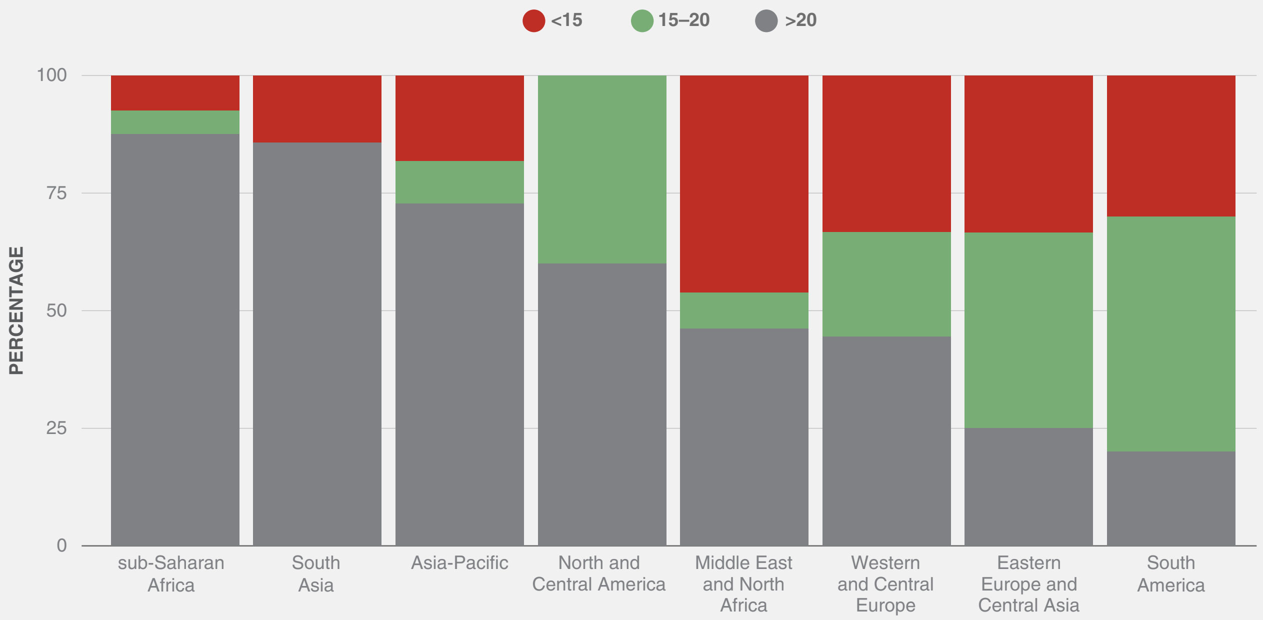


Source: UNCTAD, IEP Calculations

FIGURE 3.12

Percentage of countries by debt servicing level, by region, 2023

Over 80 per cent of countries in sub-Saharan Africa spend more than 20 per cent of their total expenditure on debt servicing.



Source: Debt Service watch, IEP Calculations

Across parts of sub-Saharan Africa, economic stress is manifesting in different forms of internal conflict. this has taken the form of street protests and riots against austerity or price hikes, military coups capitalising on public disillusionment with economic performance, and in the worst cases, state failure and civil war where economic collapse both drives and is driven by conflict.

THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region exemplifies how economic grievances can ignite social upheaval. The Arab Spring uprisings of 2011 were precipitated in large part by economic unrest, including high youth unemployment, soaring food prices, and lack of economic opportunity.[59] In the late 2000s, global food prices jumped to historic levels, contributing directly to unrest. For example, Egypt, the world's largest wheat importer, saw bread prices rise 37 per cent in 2007-2008, and overall food inflation rose nearly 19 per cent on the eve of the 2011 revolution.[60] This was then followed by large-scale instability in other parts of the region including in Syria, Tunisia and Libya.

Many MENA countries are once again under severe economic strain. The pandemic and subsequent commodity shocks hit hard in middle-income countries like Egypt, Jordan, Tunisia and Lebanon. Egypt, for instance, saw its tourism revenue dry up and later its import bill surge. By 2023, Egypt faced an inflation rate of over 30 per cent, forcing millions into poverty and prompting intermittent protests.

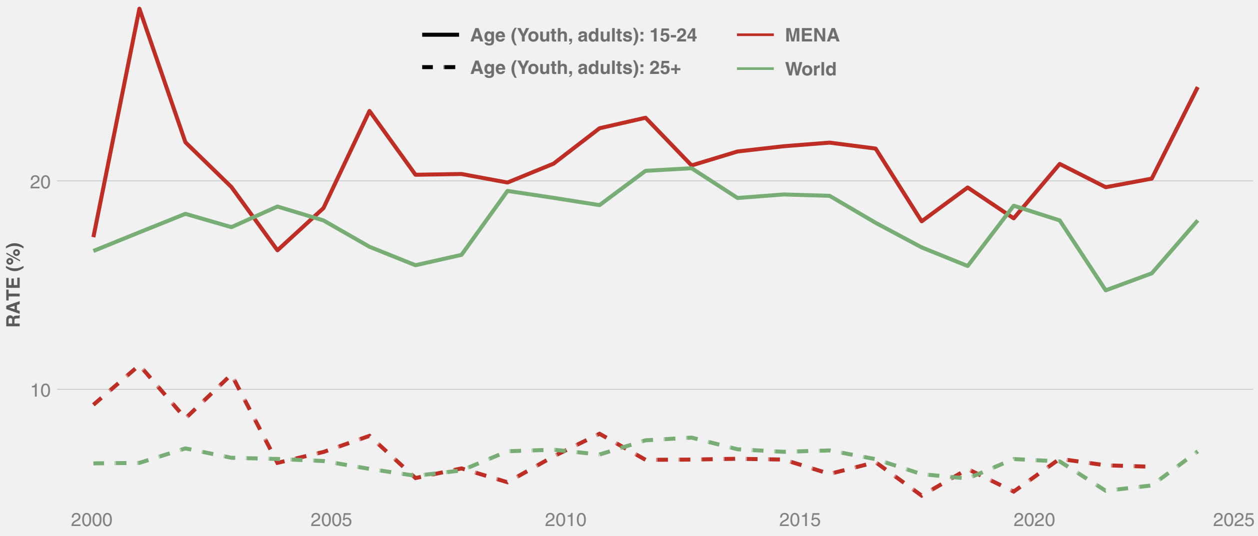
A similar dynamic has been seen in Lebanon. The country has been experiencing one of the worst economic collapses in modern history. Between 2018 and 2023, its GDP shrank by 40 per cent, and the economic crisis has pushed over 80 per cent of the population into poverty.[61] The 2023 escalation of the conflict between Israel and Hezbollah has further damaged the economy. The country's economic collapse has not yet resulted in open civil war, but it has led to a breakdown of order and periodic unrest. The potential for conflict in such a vacuum remains high. In North Africa, Tunisia is facing increasing food prices, with chronic food shortages also reported in Yemen, Syria and Lebanon as of late 2024.[62]

Youth unemployment is another concern. The youth unemployment rate in the MENA region was almost 25 per cent in 2023, almost twice as high as the global average, as shown in Figure 3.13. Youth unemployment in the MENA region is heavily impacted by political instability and conflict, with many working in informal jobs despite a rise in paid employment. Over the past two decades, structural shifts have largely moved toward traditional, low-productivity service sectors like trade and transport. MENA, alongside sub-Saharan Africa, is one of only two regions projected to see continued youth labour force growth through 2050, heightening the urgency for sustainable and decent job creation.[63]

FIGURE 3.13

Unemployment, MENA vs rest of the world, since 2000

Youth unemployment in MENA is more than five percentage points higher than the global average.



Source: ILO, IEP Calculations

The MENA region remains highly vulnerable to civil unrest and insurgency fuelled by economic hardship. The current global context of high food prices and debt servicing is applying pressure on countries that were already economically fragile and facing existing security crises.[64]

SOUTH AMERICA

South America entered the 2020s with a legacy of economic inequality and periodic debt crises that have frequently sparked social turmoil. The recent global inflation wave hit several South American countries hard, given the region's history of price instability. In 2023, Argentina's inflation rate exceeded 200 per cent, impoverishing millions and eroding trust in mainstream politicians.[65] The economic pain contributed directly to political disruption, and in late 2023, voters elected a government from a new political coalition after losing patience with other parties' failure to tame inflation.[66]

Other countries in the region have seen similar dynamics. Ecuador and Peru experienced waves of protests in recent years, partly triggered by fuel price hikes and high living costs. Chile experienced violent protests in 2019, initially sparked by a transit fare increase. In Venezuela, an extreme case, years of hyperinflation under an authoritarian regime led to a humanitarian crisis and the exodus of millions of refugees. While mass protests did occur, the government's heavy repression largely suppressed open conflict, leading instead to a slow-burning social collapse.

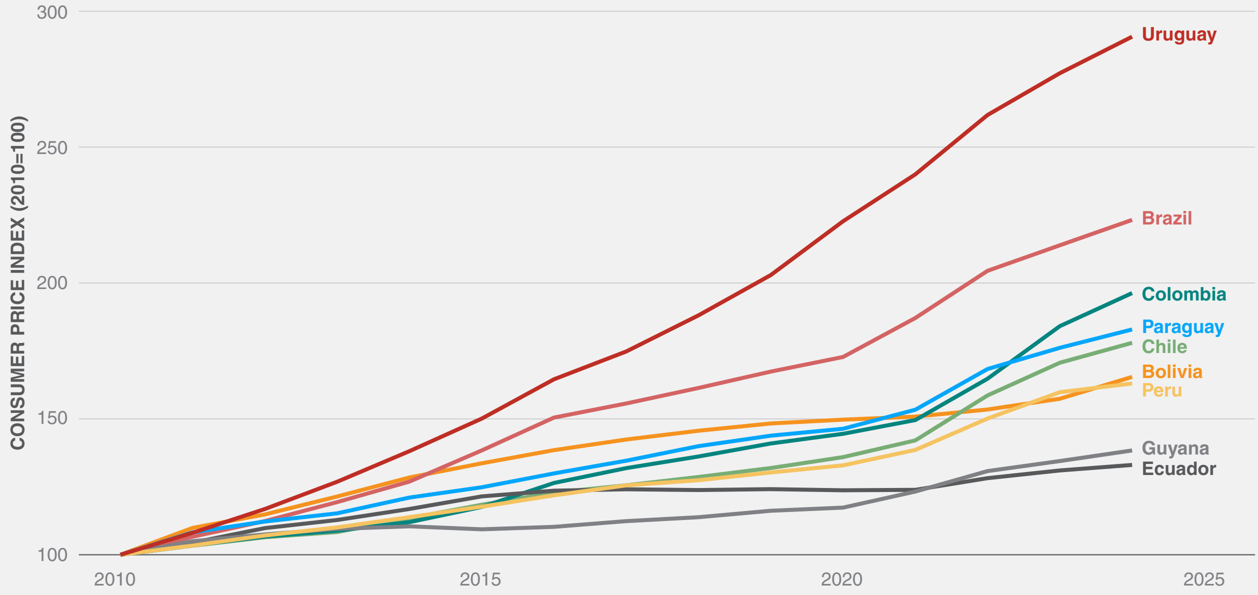
Figure 3.14 shows the trend in consumer price index (CPI) since 2010 in South America. The rising CPI across the region highlights ongoing economic challenges, including currency depreciation, high inflation, and governance limitations in effectively controlling cost-of-living increases. When commodity prices were high early in the decade, food and fuel became more expensive. As economic growth slowed, weaker currencies further increased import costs, compounded by monetary expansion. Inflation from 2020 to 2024 was driven by pandemic-related supply chain issues and stimulus packages. A strong US dollar and higher global interest rates kept regional currencies under pressure, so imported inflation also played a role.

One promising factor is that foreign debt levels are generally lower relative to GDP than they were in the 1980s, but the risk remains that economic pain could escalate into instability. Governments across the region are trying to curb inflation and restore fiscal order without igniting mass protests against austerity. South America's conflict risk manifests primarily as social unrest prompted by economic shocks, and those risks are elevated in the current climate of price instability and slow growth.

FIGURE 3.14

Consumer price index, South America, 2010–2024

Consumer prices increased across all South American countries in the past three years.



Source: WDI, IEP Calculations

Methodology at a Glance

The global economic impact of violence is defined as the expenditure and economic effects related to containing, preventing, and dealing with the consequences of violence. The estimate includes the direct and indirect costs of violence, as well as an economic multiplier. The multiplier effect calculates the additional economic activity that would have accrued if the direct costs of violence had been avoided.

Expenditure on containing violence is economically efficient when it effectively prevents violence for the least amount of spending. However, spending beyond an optimal level has the potential to constrain a nation's economic growth. Therefore, achieving the right levels of spending on public services such as military, judicial and security services is important for the most productive use of capital.

This study includes two types of costs: direct and indirect. Examples of direct costs include medical costs for victims of violent crime, capital destruction from violence and costs associated with security and judicial systems. Indirect costs include lost wages or productivity from crime due to physical and emotional trauma. There is also a measure of the impact of fear on the economy, as people who fear that they may become a victim of violent crime alter their behaviour.

An important aspect of IEP's estimation is the international comparability of country estimates, thereby allowing cost/benefit analysis of country interventions. The methodology uses constant prices purchasing power parity (PPP) international dollars, which allows for the costs of various countries to be compared with one another. By using PPP estimates, the analysis takes into consideration the differences in the average level of prices between countries. For instance, if the US dollar cost of a basket of goods in country A is higher than the US dollar cost of the same basket of goods in country B, then one US dollar will have a lower purchasing power in country A than in B. Thus, an expense of a certain amount of US dollars in country B will be more meaningful than a similar expense in country A. IEP's use of PPP conversion rates means that the estimates of the economic impact of violence accurately captures the true significance of that impact or expense in each country.

IEP estimates the economic impact of violence by comprehensively aggregating the costs related to violence, armed conflict, and spending on military and internal security services. The GPI is the initial point of reference for developing the estimates for most variables, however some variables are not in the GPI, such as suicide, and are calculated separately.

The 2025 version of the economic impact of violence includes 15 variables in three groups, shown in Table 3.5.

The estimation only includes variables of violence for which reliable data could be obtained. The following elements are examples of some of the items not counted in the economic impact of violence:

- The cost of crime to business
- Domestic violence
- Household out-of-pocket spending on safety and security
- Spillover effects from conflict and violence

A unit cost approach was used to cost variables for which detailed expenditure was not available. The unit costs were obtained from a literature review and appropriately adjusted for all countries included. The study uses unit costs from McCollister, French and Fang for homicides, violent and sexual crimes.[67] The McCollister, French and Fang cost of homicides is also used for battle deaths and deaths from terrorism. The unit cost for fear of crime is sourced from Dolan and Peasgood.[68]

- **Direct costs** are the cost of violence to the victim, the perpetrator and the government. These include direct expenditures, such as the cost of policing, military, and medical expenses. For example, in the calculation of homicides for a given country, the total number of homicides is computed and multiplied by the unit costs estimated by McCollister, French and Fang. The result is updated and converted using country specific inflation and exchange rates.

- **Indirect costs** accrue after the violent event and include indirect economic losses, physical and physiological trauma to the victim, and lost productivity.

- **The multiplier effect** represents the flow-on effects of direct costs, such as the additional economic benefits that would come from investment in business development or education, instead of the less-productive costs of containing or dealing with violence. Box 3.1 provides a detailed explanation of the peace multiplier used.

The term **economic impact of violence** covers the combined effect of direct and indirect costs and the multiplier effect, while the economic cost of violence represents the direct and indirect costs of violence. When a country avoids the economic impact of violence, it realises a **peace dividend**.

BOX 3.1

The multiplier effect

The multiplier effect is a commonly used economic concept, which describes the extent to which additional expenditure improves the wider economy. Every time there is an injection of new income into the economy, this will lead to more spending, which will in turn create employment, further income and additional spending. This mutually reinforcing economic cycle is known as the “multiplier effect” and is the reason that a dollar of expenditure can create more than a dollar of economic activity.

Although the exact magnitude of this effect is difficult to measure, it is likely to be particularly high in the case of expenditure related to containing violence. For instance, if a community were to become more peaceful, individuals would spend less time and resources protecting themselves against violence. Because of this decrease in violence there are likely to be substantial flow-on effects for the wider economy, as money is diverted towards more productive areas such as health, business investment, education and infrastructure.

When a homicide is avoided, the direct costs, such as the money spent on medical treatment and a funeral, could be spent elsewhere. The economy also benefits from the lifetime income of the victim. The economic benefits from greater peace can therefore be significant. This was also noted by Brauer and Tepper-Marlin (2009), who argued that violence or the fear of violence may result in some economic activities not occurring at all.[69]

More generally, there is strong evidence to suggest that violence and the fear of violence can fundamentally alter the incentives for business. For instance, an analysis of 730 business ventures in Colombia from 1997 to 2001 found that with higher levels of violence, new ventures were less likely to survive and profit. Consequently, with greater levels of violence, it is likely that we might expect lower levels of employment and economic productivity over the long-term, as the incentives faced discourage new employment creation and longer-term investment.

This study assumes that the multiplier is one, signifying that for every dollar saved on violence containment, there will be an additional dollar of economic activity. This is a relatively conservative multiplier and broadly in line with similar studies.

59

The world is facing a violent conflict crisis. There were 59 state-based conflicts in 2023, the highest number since the end of World War II.

Deaths from state-based violent conflict reached a 32-year high in 2022. Although the number of deaths is below levels seen during the Cold War, the sheer number of active conflicts increases the risk of at least one conflict rapidly escalating.

Fewer violent conflicts now end with a peace deal or clear victory. Since the 1970s, the percentage of conflicts that end with a clear victory has dropped from 49 per cent, to nine per cent, while the proportion of conflicts ending in peace agreements has fallen from 23 to four per cent.

78 countries

The number of internationalised intrastate conflicts have increased 175 per cent since 2010. Seventy-eight countries were directly involved in a war beyond their borders in 2023.

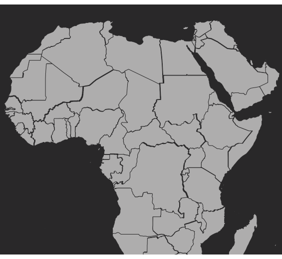
9

IEP has identified nine major factors which increase the likelihood that conflict will increase in intensity or severity.

These factors have played a key role historically in increasing the severity of conflict, including in the Spanish, Greek, and Sri Lankan civil wars, the ongoing conflict in Sudan, and Ethiopia's recent Tigray war.

IEP was able to assess the strength of these nine factors for 62 state-based conflict dyads. Of these 62 conflicts, 22 per cent had at least one escalation factor with the maximum possible score of five, and all 62 dyads had at least one escalation factor with a score of at least three out of five, indicating that it had a significant escalation risk.

The risk of conflict escalation can clearly be seen when looking at the conflict in Kashmir. An April 2025 terror attack in the region sparked reprisals and halted dialogue, bringing nuclear-armed India and Pakistan closer to open war.



Countries with the highest risk factors to their conflicts are the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan, Syria, and in the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea. All have current conflicts that could become substantially worse.

4 Why Conflicts Escalate

Overview

The results of the 2025 GPI reveal that global peacefulness continues to decline, with the number of active conflicts rising across the world. The longer-term trend is even more alarming, with more countries involved in conflicts outside their borders and fewer wars and violent conflicts ending through negotiated settlements.

The international conflict-management system is overstretched at precisely the moment geopolitical fragmentation is increasing, and political appetite for external mediation and peacebuilding has fallen. Given these conditions, identifying where peacebuilding can deliver the greatest gains has become even more crucial.

Identifying where conflict prevention efforts can have the greatest impact requires an understanding of the factors that lead to conflicts intensifying. Last year's GPI identified several of the key characteristics of war in the 21st century. It noted that Ukraine, Gaza and Ethiopia were the world's three most intense theatres of war in 2023, yet only a few years earlier Ukraine and Gaza were classified as low-level conflicts and Ethiopia's Tigray war had not begun.

A host of factors, ranging from low GDP per capita to a history of previous violence, affect conflict onset, duration and termination. This section extends the analysis from last year's GPI, by examining which factors distinguish the wars that escalate into high-severity or high-intensity conflicts, marked by exceptionally large numbers of battle or civilian deaths. This research aims to address the following two questions:

- Why do some conflicts experience periods of extreme violence?
- What makes certain wars more lethal than others?

This section of the report looks firstly at conflict trends in the 21st century. Secondly, it identifies nine key factors that are strongly associated with conflict escalation. Thirdly, it looks at historical examples of conflicts that have escalated, and the role played by some or all of these key factors. Finally, it looks at the emerging conflict landscape and assesses the potential for an existing conflict hotspot to rapidly escalate.

TRENDS IN CONFLICT

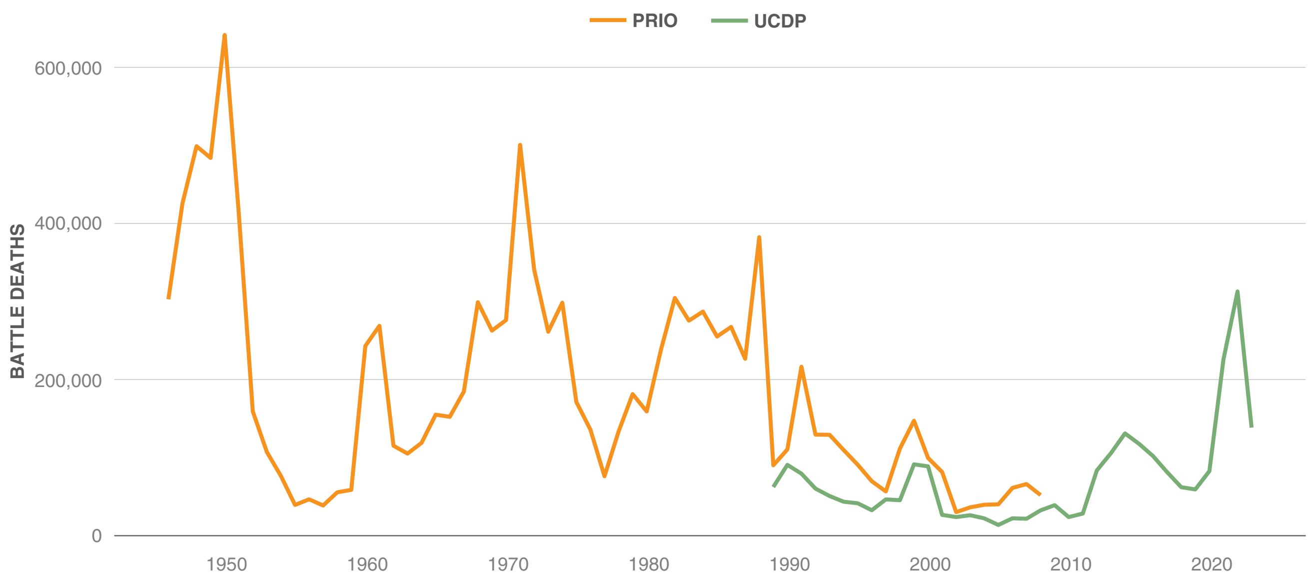
The world appears to be at a tipping point, with many smaller conflicts threatening to erupt into larger scale conflicts and the resources available to preventing conflict contracting.

However, it should be noted at the outset that although the number of deaths from armed conflict was at a 30-year high in 2022, the total number of conflict deaths remains considerably lower than at many points in the post-World War II era, as shown in Figure 4.1. The steep decline in battle deaths coincided with the end of the Cold War in 1991. There were more than 200,000 battle deaths in 24 out of the 53 years between 1946 and 1999, compared to just one year so far in the 21st century. The average number of deaths per year between 1946 and 1999 was almost 210,000, compared to just under 69,000 per year between 2000 and 2023. However, the trend is on the rise again, and given increasing geopolitical fragmentation and the rise in influence of middle-power countries, there is a real risk of a return to the level of fatalities seen in the Cold War era.

FIGURE 4.1

Total battle deaths, 1946–2023

Battle deaths are still well below the levels seen in the mid-20th century.



Source: PRIO, UCDP

Although the average number of deaths so far in the 21st century is much lower than in the preceding 50 years, the total number of conflicts is now higher than at any point since World War II. This implies that there is more potential for major conflicts to erupt.

For example, the Russia-Ukraine War, Israel-Palestine War and various subnational conflicts in Ethiopia were minor conflicts in 2019. Ethiopia's Tigray war was not even considered a conflict prior to 2020, but it quickly escalated to be the deadliest conflict since the Rwandan genocide. There were 59 conflicts in 2023 where at least one actor involved was a state, as shown in Figure 4.2. This number rises even higher when including non-state conflicts and instances of one-sided violence, with a further 75 and 42 conflicts respectively.

The total number of conflicts involving a state has increased by over 50 per cent since 2010. However, as can be seen in the above figures, the increase has not been constant across the four different types of state-based conflicts. A short summary of each of these types of conflicts is as follows:

- **Extra-systemic Conflict:** This involves a state battling a non-state group outside its own territory. Most colonial wars of independence fall into this category.
- **Interstate Conflict:** Both conflicting parties are recognised sovereign states.
- **Intrastate Conflict:** This type of conflict occurs within a single country, where the government is fighting against one or more domestic rebel groups without any foreign military intervention.
- **Internationalised Intrastate Conflict:** Similar to intrastate conflict, but with the significant distinction of foreign governments participating with troops, supporting either the government or the rebels.

There was very little change in the number of interstate and intrastate conflicts between 2010 and 2023. However, over the same period the number of internationalised intrastate conflicts increased by over 175 per cent. Many of these conflicts involve large regional or international coalitions engaged in peacekeeping or stabilisation operations. In 2023, there were 78 countries that were involved in at least one internationalised intrastate conflict, up from 59 in 2008.

There has also been a considerable shift by region, with more and more middle-power nations across multiple regions becoming involved in external conflicts. The most striking example of this is in sub-Saharan Africa, where 36 of the 42 countries in the region were involved in at least one external conflict between 2018 and 2023, compared to just seven countries in the region for the period 2002 to 2006.

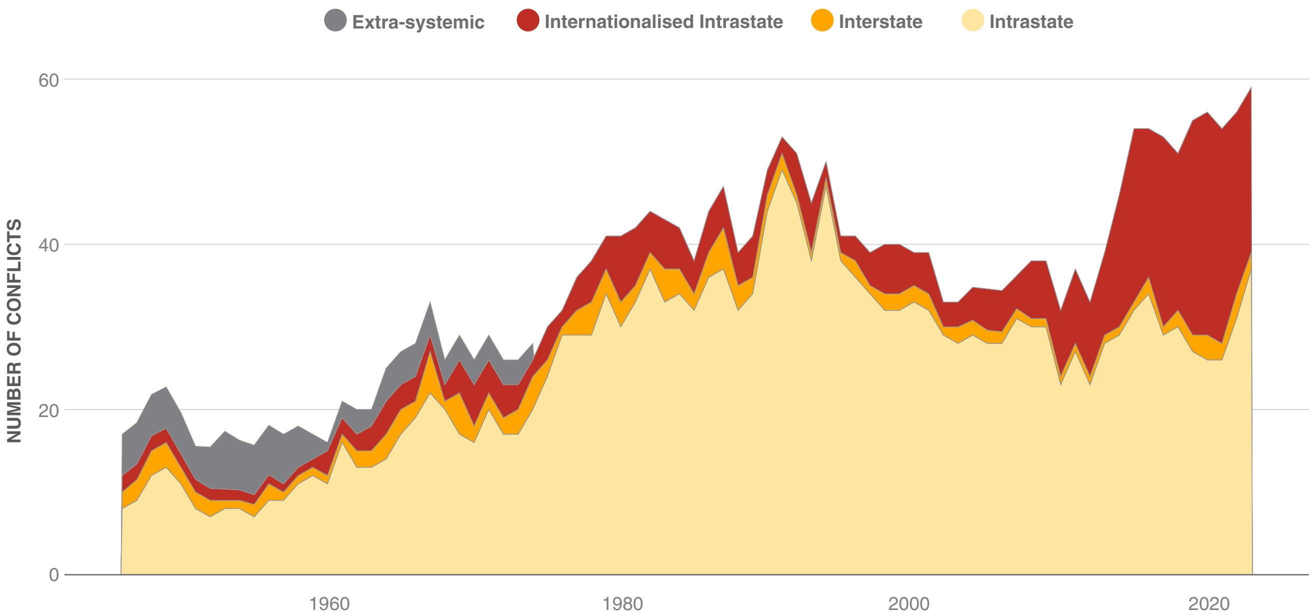
In the 21st century, the overall number of conflicts has increased, but the number of fatalities and intensity of these conflicts has not increased at the same rate. There are a larger number of conflicts, many of which now involve some form of external intervention.

As shown in Figure 4.3, the average number of conflict dyads per conflict has almost doubled, meaning the average conflict today involves nearly twice as many rival actor pairings as in the 1950s. A conflict dyad is defined as a pair of opposing armed actors, such as a government and a rebel group, that are engaged in conflict. To count as an armed conflict, there must be at least 25 deaths in a calendar year.

FIGURE 4.2

Number of state-based conflicts by type, 1946–2023

The total number of state-based conflicts is now higher than at any point since WWII.

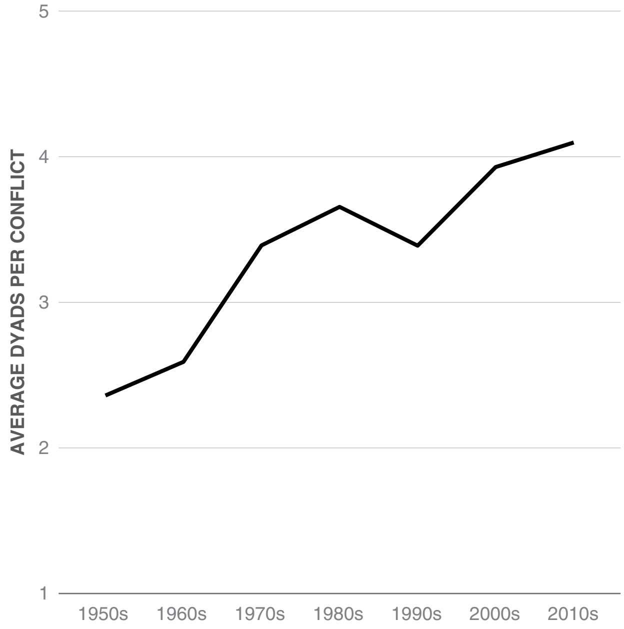


Source: UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset

FIGURE 4.3

Number of conflict pairings per conflict, 1950–2019

The average number of dyads per conflict has almost doubled since the 1950s.



Source: UCDP ACD, IEP Calculations

The increase in the number of dyads per conflict reflects a shift in the nature of conflict, wherein more armed groups are involved in a single conflict event. This takes the form of not only external combatants becoming involved in a civil conflict, but also multiple rebel groups opposing a government, or even fighting against each other, all within the same conflict. As one rebel group is defeated or merges with other groups, new groups might emerge to continue fighting and prolong the conflict. This makes solving conflicts much more difficult.

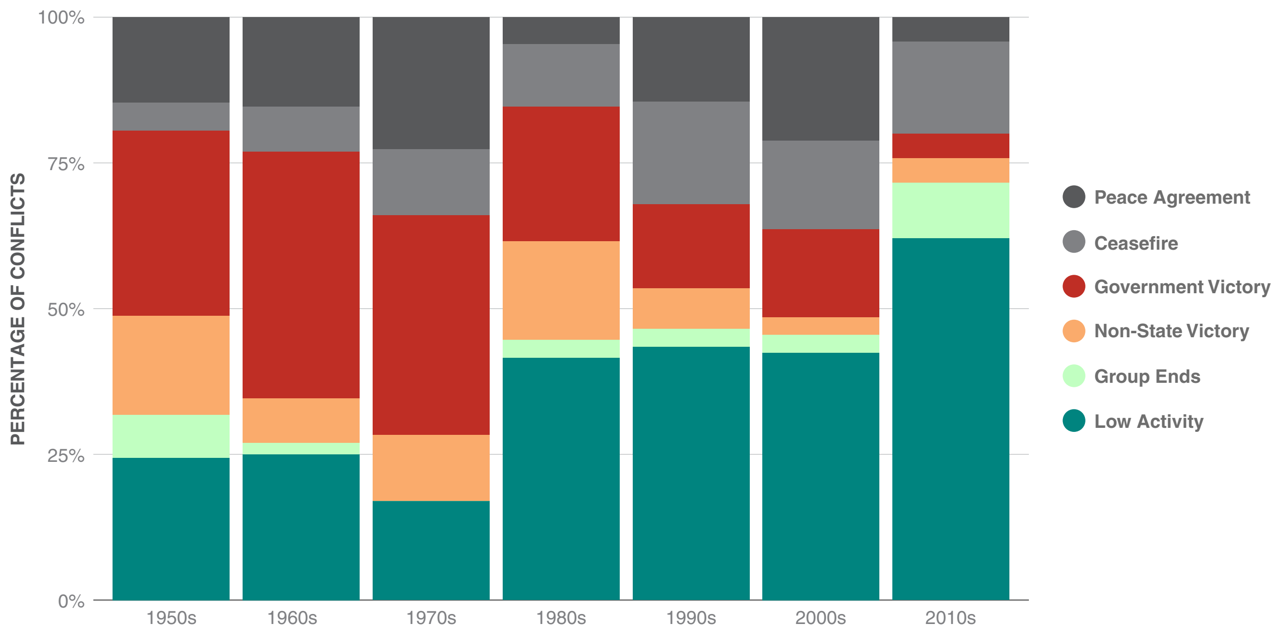
As more groups have become involved in armed conflicts, there has also been a significant shift in the way conflicts end. Figure 4.4 shows how conflicts have ended for every decade from the 1950s to the 2010s.

The biggest shift that has occurred over this period is the increase in the percentage of conflicts that end through being classified as low activity but with no negotiated outcome, leaving the possibility of further escalation. The number of conflicts ending in ceasefire has remained steady, which points towards many conflicts being left unresolved. Coinciding with this is a decrease in the percentage of conflicts that end through a clear victory for either the government or the non-state side. This holds true for both major and minor conflicts, where a major conflict is defined as one where at least one year resulted in more than 1,000 deaths. Since the 1970s, the percentage of conflicts that have ended with a clear victory has dropped from 49 to nine per cent.

FIGURE 4.4

How conflicts end, 1950–2019

Conflicts are now far less likely to end with either some of kind of formal agreement or with one side being clearly victorious.



Source: UCDP Conflict Termination Dataset, IEP Calculations

Conflict Escalation Factors

Although the number of state-based conflicts is now higher than at any time since the end of World War II, and the number of non-state conflicts is near a record high, not all of these conflicts are equally likely to escalate.

Many relatively deadly conflicts can continue for a long time without large increases in violence, while others may experience extreme violence over a very short period. This can be seen in Figure 4.5, which shows the relative level of monthly conflict deaths by country from 2002 to 2024. Only countries with more than 10,000 total deaths in this period are included in the figure.

The time-series makes clear that many of the world's deadliest conflicts simmer for years at a relatively steady pace. Countries such as Pakistan, the Philippines and Mexico rarely registered dramatic single-month surges in the past two decades, yet persistent violence accumulates into heavy tolls. Afghanistan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo illustrate the same pattern on a larger scale: long stretches of monthly fatalities in the hundreds or low thousands, interrupted only occasionally by sharper peaks.

By contrast, a smaller set of conflicts erupt with brief but ferocious intensity. Syria's civil war escalated almost overnight to become the deadliest conflict in the world in the early 2010s. Ethiopia's Tigray war and Russia's invasion of Ukraine show similar vertical spikes, with single-month fatality totals higher than any other country. In Ethiopia's case, almost all of the killings occurred in a single year. Such sudden escalations overwhelm humanitarian systems, trigger mass displacement and can redraw geopolitical fault lines. Understanding why conflicts escalate rapidly is thus crucial for preventing such escalations in the future.

There are many possible factors that contribute to the likelihood of conflicts escalating in intensity and severity. This section provides an overview of nine key factors selected from a review of data and academic literature. These nine factors are outlined in Table 4.1.

FIGURE 4.5

Monthly conflict deaths in countries with more than 10,000 deaths, 2002–2024

Most conflicts do not escalate rapidly, but some can have substantial increases in deaths in just months.

Source: UCDP GED, IEP Calculations

TABLE 4.1

Conflict escalation factors

Conflict Escalation Variable	Impact on Conflict	Example Conflicts
Urban origin onset	Immediate and potentially existential threat to regime, significant resources within urban areas, high populations can result in more severe conflicts.	Sudan civil war (2023-present), South Sudan civil war (2012-2018), Syrian civil war (2011-2024).
Accessible terrain	Higher accessibility inhibits actors, especially non-state actors, from hiding and avoiding direct confrontation with more powerful state forces.	Russia-Ukraine war, Sudan civil war, Tigray war.
High logistical supply	Warfare is a logistically intensive endeavour. High logistical supply supports the ability to fight with the significant, overwhelming force associated with the most violent conflicts.	Syrian civil war, Russia-Ukraine war, Mexican cartel wars.
Non-state actor heavy weapons	The provision of heavy weapons - e.g. artillery, aircraft, etc - gives significant high lethality capacity to rebel groups who may choose to seek direct confrontation with government forces.	Tigray war, Syrian civil war, Sudan civil war, Afghanistan war, Yemen civil war.
Significant external support	External actors provide significant military support in forms including arms, logistics, troops, intelligence, and safe haven, so they have higher capacity to fight more deadly wars.	Yemen civil war, Sudan civil war, Syrian civil war, Wars in Eastern DRC.
Private military contractors	Private military contractors often have significantly higher warfighting capacity in terms of training and materials, and are prepared to use significant force to achieve their contracted terms.	Malian civil war, Iraq War, Syrian civil war.
High levels of ethnic exclusion	Higher levels of ethnic exclusion, where one ethnic group dominates for example, is linked to more severe conflicts where the outcome could be considered more existential for the excluded or in-power groups.	Myanmar civil war, South Sudan civil war, Syrian civil war, Malian civil war.
Fratricidal coercion	Fratricidal coercion is a military strategy where a state or non-state actor enforces compliance by harshly punishing disobedience and desertion, often with execution, which leads to higher death tolls as forces are willing to follow even highly deadly commands.	Russia-Ukraine war, Syrian civil war.
Conflict instrumentalisation	Conflict instrumentalisation can escalate the severity of conflict by entrenching nationalist or ideological narratives over top of existing smaller conflicts, justifying aggressive policies and mobilising public support for military action, thereby reducing space for negotiation and increasing the likelihood of sustained or intensified violence.	Darfur civil war, Eastern DRC wars, Malian civil war.

The presence of these factors does not guarantee that a conflict will escalate, nor does the presence of all factors necessarily make escalation more likely than in cases where only some are present. Each factor may vary in intensity and interact with the other factors, as well as with broader socio-economic and political dynamics. Nevertheless, on average, conflicts in which these factors are present are more likely to escalate than those in which they are absent.

GEOGRAPHIC PATH DEPENDENCIES

Recent research shows that conflict intensity is associated with path dependencies linked to their place of onset. Peripheral rebellions, far from capitals, tend to be less intense but last longer. Conflicts sparked by coup attempts tend to be shorter but much more intense. Conflicts triggered by state disintegration are likely to be both high intensity and long in duration.[70]

The geographic setting of conflict onset plays a decisive role in shaping both severity and duration. Violence that breaks out in densely populated urban centres, particularly national capitals, directly threatens the political core of the state and frequently involves forces with greater organisation and firepower than insurgencies launched from peripheral regions. Proximity to powerful institutions and access to well-trained troops, such as factions of the regular military involved in coup attempts, enable non-state actors to mount immediate, potentially deadly challenges to the ruling regime. States respond by mobilising extreme force, accelerating the pace and lethality of combat.

The reverse dynamic applies where terrain is highly challenging, or communities are socially and culturally distant from the centre. Inaccessibility can increase the likelihood of rebellion and conflict onset and prolong hostilities by impeding government control and complicating negotiations. However, such inaccessibility can also restrain large-scale operations and prevent a conflict from escalating rapidly. Battles in remote borderlands, mountainous zones or other hard-to-reach areas rarely endanger a government's grip on the heartland, reducing incentives for either side to deploy overwhelming force. Armed groups based in such locations often lack the material capacity to sustain high-intensity warfare, further limiting escalation.[71]

Inaccessible terrain is closely associated with protracted conflicts, yet it rarely produces the highest casualty counts. Mountain ranges, dense forests and other hard-to-reach landscapes provide insurgents with natural strongholds, encouraging guerrilla tactics that favour small-unit skirmishes over large, set-piece battles. Recent cases in Myanmar, Nepal and Afghanistan, as well as the Kurdish struggle across several Middle Eastern countries, illustrate this pattern. Fighting stretches on for years or even decades, but monthly death tolls remain relatively modest compared with the world's most lethal wars.

Difficult geography places severe constraints on state forces, which must overcome steep logistical hurdles to move troops, ammunition and heavy equipment. The resulting supply bottlenecks limit the size and frequency of engagements, dampening overall violence even as they lengthen hostilities. This dynamic has appeared across conflict types, from partisan resistance in Nazi-occupied Belarus during World War II to several modern African civil wars. Rugged terrain, therefore, is a consistent indicator of long-running warfare but a weak predictor of the extreme lethality seen in high-intensity conflicts fought on more accessible ground.[72]

GROUP DYNAMICS

Ethnic exclusion has been shown to exacerbate the severity of violence in civil wars. When a government marginalises certain ethnic groups, it creates deep grievances and a polarised 'us versus them' dynamic. Conflict involving excluded communities often becomes a life or death struggle, leaving little room for compromise. Regimes facing rebellion from an excluded group may respond with extreme brutality, viewing the entire ethnic community as complicit and effectively framing the conflict in group-survival terms. Regimes confronting multiple excluded ethnic groups tend to escalate violence to deter other potential challengers, and to quickly defeat the insurgency by destroying its civilian support base. Governments fighting under such conditions are more likely to perpetrate genocide or politicide during a civil war.[73] This reflects a broader pattern wherein political exclusion heightens conflict intensity by encouraging indiscriminate violence and collective punishment strategies. Lacking inclusion, excluded groups also have greater incentives to fight for some share of power in a zero-sum game, further fuelling high casualty levels.

EXTERNAL SUPPORT

External involvement is pervasive in high-severity civil wars, and most modern intrastate conflicts receive some form of foreign military assistance.[74] Across the world, many conflicts involve an increasing number of external supporters. Direct military intervention is now the predominant mode of support. External assistance takes many forms, from arms transfers, funding and intelligence sharing, to training and the deployment of combat troops. External support often prolongs civil wars, as arms or funding for insurgents bolster their capabilities and delay termination. External military aid tends to lengthen conflicts by preventing quick victories, unless one side receives overwhelming backing that enables a decisive win. Such support also escalates violence, as outside backing, especially for rebel forces, significantly increases conflict severity.[75] External support is also linked to increased risks of mass atrocities including genocide.[76]

However, in some circumstances external support to rebels can lead to a reduction in conflict intensity, if that support comes in the form of major conventional weapons. Rebel groups with these capabilities, but lacking external support, are not constrained in their behaviour or strategy and will seek direct confrontation.

External support can also come in the form of private military and security companies (PMSCs), whose presence is linked to heightened conflict severity. Both governments and rebel factions that hire PMSCs effectively inject additional professional firepower into the conflict, escalating the bloodshed and destruction.[77] Weak-state governments may also contract PMSCs as a deliberate escalation strategy to recapture territory from insurgents. Contractors either substitute for or augment state forces, enabling major offensives and substantially raising conflict lethality.[78] Across multiple conflicts, empirical evidence confirms that civil wars with PMSC involvement experience significantly higher fatalities, indicating greater severity, regardless of which side deploys them.

TACTICS AND IDEOLOGY

Certain military tactics may also lead to much higher battle deaths in conflict. For example, fratricidal coercion is the deliberate threat or application of violence by military authorities against their own soldiers to deter desertion, enforce discipline and compel obedience in battle. Unlike accidental friendly fire, it is an intentional, top-down instrument of control that relies on fear to sustain battlefield performance.

Soldiers from areas with government repression are more likely to fight to the death due to conditioning towards induced obedience.[79] Regimes which employ fratricidal coercion to enforce compliance and reduce desertions or retreats generally see higher death tolls, fewer medals and military honours awarded, and are less likely to win wars. Regimes and some non-state actors often employ fratricidal coercion in the form of blocking detachments, which are special military units deployed behind the frontline to prevent or block retreat or desertion.[80]

Additionally, conflict instrumentalisation refers to a school of thought which argues that minor conflicts can be instrumentalised by outside actors to advance their own interests. This can involve co-opting narratives or overlaying new ideological framings onto existing conflicts which previously lacked them.[81] While instrumentalisation can lead to minor and major conflicts, it can often escalate levels of violence, especially where existing conflicts are augmented with national or transnational dynamics.

Case Studies

Examining conflicts from the past 100 years demonstrates that, despite shifting geopolitical contexts, certain drivers consistently propel wars toward higher intensity. To gauge how escalation factors recur across eras, a cross-temporal analysis was carried out on six intrastate wars that registered major surges in violence owing to at least one of the nine factors identified above.

The Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) exemplifies the interaction between extensive external backing, well-supplied non-state forces and access to heavy weaponry. Foreign intervention not only magnified the scale of fighting but also foreshadowed the broader escalation dynamics that would soon engulf Europe in World War II. The Greek Civil War (1946-1949), often regarded as the first large clash of the Cold War, combined great-power involvement with village-level struggles rooted in pre-existing local rivalries, illustrating how macro and micro factors can intersect to intensify violence.

The Guatemalan Civil War (1960-1996) offers a contrasting model of escalation. Conflict lethality surged during the early 1980s after a government coup coincided with shifting regional and global alignments, enabling a violent campaign against indigenous communities perceived as rebel sympathisers. The Sudanese Civil War (2023-present) provides a contemporary parallel in which a relatively contained dispute in Darfur during the late 1980s escalated significantly: first into the 2003-2005 genocide and ultimately into today's nationwide civil war.

The Sri Lankan Civil War (1983-2009) underscores how prolonged guerrilla conflicts can pivot to high-intensity conventional warfare when external support shifts and combatants acquire more advanced capabilities. Finally, Ethiopia's recent Tigray war (2020-2022) represents the most lethal country-year of conflict since the Rwandan genocide, demonstrating how political fractures within a governing coalition, combined with many of the same escalation drivers identified in earlier cases, can propel violence to exceptional levels. Together, the six case studies confirm that external assistance, logistical capacity, terrain, and proximity to political power repeatedly shape whether civil wars escalate.

SPANISH CIVIL WAR (1936–1939)

TABLE 4.2

Spanish civil war escalation factors

Conflict Escalation Variable	Present?
Urban origin onset	Yes
Accessible terrain	Yes
High logistical supply	Yes
Non-state actor heavy weapons	Yes
Significant external support	Yes
Private military contractors	Yes
High levels of ethnic exclusion	No
Fratricidal coercion	Yes
Conflict instrumentalisation	Yes

Eight of the nine escalation factors were present in the Spanish Civil War, which was rooted in Spain's deep social and political fissures in the 1930s. It erupted after years of ideological polarisation during the Second Spanish Republic, as left-wing reforms and right-wing reactions bitterly divided society. A host of unresolved issues such as land ownership, church influence, regional autonomy, and class tensions created the conditions for war.[82] In February 1936, a leftist Popular Front government was elected, but in July 1936, a group of generals led a coup d'état against the Republic. The coup only partially succeeded, splitting Spain between the Republican loyalists and the Nationalist rebels. Both sides claimed legitimacy, using the underlying fractures in Spanish society to instrumentalise and mobilise the whole country. The conflict quickly escalated into full-scale civil war.[83]

Unlike many guerrilla insurgencies, the Spanish Civil War was fought as a conventional war between two organised armies of considerable size with consistent logistical support that fought in cities and other more accessible terrain, as well as in mountainous areas. By 1938, roughly one and a half million combatants were engaged along mostly stable fronts. This symmetrical force-on-force warfare produced intense battles with visible front lines, a dynamic known to be especially deadly for combatants. The Republican camp, while defending a legally elected government, was internally divided between communists and anarchists. The Nationalists, led ultimately by General Francisco Franco, capitalised on military discipline and external support.

Crucially, foreign intervention and external support intensified the conflict: Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini sent planes, tanks and troops to aid Franco, while the Soviet Union provided arms and advisors to the Republican side and facilitated the International Brigades of foreign volunteers. These forms of external support helped turn Spain into a proxy battleground for competing ideologies. Nazi Germany, for example, used Spain as a testing ground for new military technology and tactics, including aerial bombing of civilians in Guernica, where German condor legions bombed the city in April 1937.[84] This internationalisation of the war escalated its severity and foreshadowed the wider conflict of World War II.

The Spanish Civil War reached extreme levels of violence both on the battlefield and against civilians, with two major phases of bloodshed. The first came early in the war, when chaos and revolutionary fervour led to large-scale extrajudicial killings in the rear-guard of both sides. Within the first months, Republican militias murdered thousands of suspected Nationalist supporters, clergy, and right-wingers in a period often termed the "Red Terror", even as Nationalist forces carried out systematic massacres of leftists, trade unionists and liberals in conquered areas, known as the "White Terror". Civilians in contested villages often became victims if labelled as enemies by the controlling faction, a pattern demonstrating that violence against civilians in conventional civil wars is often strategic, used to punish or eliminate enemy supporters in contested zones.[85]

There is evidence to suggest both sides also employed fratricidal coercion, executing deserters and enforcing repressive coercive practices within fighting units. While there were no private military companies in the civil war, there were many non-Spanish military actors, such as North African troops that fought with Nationalist forces and German, Italian and Russian troops that fought for both sides. Additionally, there were thousands of foreign fighters who fought for Republican forces under the International Brigades as volunteers.

The second phase of violence came after the end of the war, when Franco's regime unleashed a sweeping campaign of repression to cement its rule. Tens of thousands of Republicans were executed or imprisoned under brutal conditions. An estimated 100,000 defeated Republicans were executed in the immediate post-1939 purge, and many more died from starvation, disease or abuse in prisons and concentration camps.[86]

In total, estimates suggest that about 500,000 people died as a direct result of the war. Of these, roughly 200,000 were combatants killed in action. In addition, Nationalist forces executed approximately 75,000 civilians during the conflict, while Republican factions are estimated to have killed 55,000. Around three per cent of Spain's population perished, and another seven per cent or more were left wounded or displaced, making the war one of the most devastating in modern European history.

GREEK CIVIL WAR (1946–1949)

TABLE 4.3

Greek civil war escalation factors

Conflict Escalation Variable	Present?
Urban origin onset	No
Accessible terrain	Mixed
High logistical supply	Yes
Non-state actor heavy weapons	Yes
Significant external support	Yes
Private military contractors	No
High levels of ethnic exclusion	No
Fratricidal coercion	No
Conflict instrumentalisation	Yes

The Greek Civil War was a conflict between the Democratic Army of Greece (DAG), which was the military arm of the Communist Party of Greece (KKE), and the Greek government, royalist and centrist forces, backed by Britain and later the United States. It was the culmination of bitter divisions sown during the World War II occupation, when rival partisan groups, primarily the leftist EAM–ELAS and various right-wing or monarchist forces, vied for influence. The war's roots lay in both internal strife, in the form of a polarised struggle between left and right, and external Cold War geopolitics. It became the first major episode of the Cold War.

Greek communist leaders were supported by neighbouring socialist regimes in Yugoslavia, Albania and Bulgaria. Opposing them was the Greek National Army, loyal to the Athens government and the restored King, and aided by British military presence and massive US military and economic aid under the Truman Doctrine. The struggle was thus both an ideological civil war over Greece's governance and a proxy battleground of East-West interests. Importantly, the conflict was not a simple two-sided affair. Local militias and paramilitary bands also proliferated. Right-wing "Security Battalions" and other anti-communist gangs persecuted leftist civilians in a "White Terror" after 1945, while communist partisans targeted opponents as "collaborators", deepening a cycle of retributive violence. These reprisals and purges on both sides set the stage for open warfare.

Open hostilities began in March 1946. In 1946 and 1947, the DAG waged guerrilla warfare across the mountainous countryside, assassinating officials and ambushing government outposts. Violence against civilians in this period was strategic, with each side using selective terror to coerce loyalties and obtain local intelligence.[87] Zones of contested authority, such as villages caught between insurgent and government control, saw the most intense persecution as informants and rival partisans settled scores. The national ideological struggle was filtered through local feuds and vendettas, with village-level politics heavily shaping who sided with whom, which showed very clear signs of conflict instrumentalisation.[88]

By late 1947, the scale of conflict had escalated with the transformation of the DAG from a hit-and-run guerrilla force into a more conventional army. Major battles soon followed. In early 1948, the DAG launched bold offensives and expanded operations in central and southern Greece. However, this shift to conventional warfare proved a strategic misstep. The insurgents' numbers were insufficient to match the increasingly well-armed National Army. Under US General James Van Fleet's advisement, the Greek Army adopted improved counterinsurgency tactics and gained air superiority. By mid-1948, the insurgents controlled large swathes of remote highlands, but the cities and plains remained under government control. The civil war had thus evolved into a grinding war of attrition, with the DAG operating from mountain strongholds and across northern border zones, while the National Army besieged these areas with superior firepower. Each side's tactics reinforced the other's brutality.[89]

The war reached its most severe phase in 1948-1949, when intensified campaigns led to unprecedented bloodshed. After heavy fighting throughout 1948, including pitched battles in the Peloponnese and Macedonia, the conflict's epicentre shifted to the northwestern frontier. The external dynamics changed in mid-1948 when Yugoslav leader Josip Broz Tito closed his border and cut off aid in July 1949 after the KKE sided with the USSR against Yugoslavia.[90] Deprived of its main supply source, the DAG was now in a precarious position.

Sensing an opportunity to end the war, the Greek government and its US advisers escalated operations drastically in the summer of 1949. In a final offensive called Operation Pyrsos in August 1949, the National Army concentrated overwhelming force on the last communist strongholds in the Grammos–Vitsi area. Heavy artillery barrages and continuous air strikes pummelled the rebel positions. Human losses peaked for both sides, with one analysis estimating that in this final campaign the insurgents lost 70 per cent of their remaining strength, killed, wounded or captured, and government battle-deaths tripled relative to earlier averages. On October 16, 1949, the KKE officially conceded defeat by ordering its fighters to stand down and evacuate Greece. An estimated 100,000 Greeks had died as a result of the conflict, and many more were displaced in a nation of only seven million.

GUATEMALAN CIVIL WAR (1960–1996)

TABLE 4.4

Guatemalan civil war escalation factors

Conflict Escalation Variable	Present?
Urban origin onset	No
Accessible terrain	No
High logistical supply	Yes
Non-state actor heavy weapons	No
Significant external support	Yes
Private military contractors	No
High levels of ethnic exclusion	Yes
Fratricidal coercion	Yes
Conflict instrumentalisation	No

The Guatemalan Civil War was a 36-year armed conflict between successive military-dominated governments and leftist insurgents. It began in 1960 after a failed revolt by junior army officers against the US-backed regime, rooted in discontent over the 1954 coup that ended Guatemala's brief democratic reform period. The war's key actors included the Guatemalan Army versus various guerrilla groups that later unified as the URNG (*Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca*). Indigenous Maya civilians were heavily caught in the middle, often accused of supporting rebels. Throughout the conflict, the military leadership exercised disproportionate power in politics, and external actors played influential roles. The war went through phases of varying intensity: low-intensity counterinsurgency in the 1960s, increased guerrilla mobilisation and state repression in the 1970s, peak violence in the early 1980s, and a gradual de-escalation leading to peace accords in 1996. In total, an estimated 200,000 people were killed or "disappeared", the vast majority indigenous civilians.[91]

The early 1980s marked the most brutal phase of the war, when state violence escalated to brutal levels. In 1978, General Romeo Lucas García's regime intensified counterinsurgency against growing guerrilla influence in the highlands, which was mainly populated with Mayans, targeting not only armed rebels but also rural communities suspected of abetting them. Repression surged further after General Efraín Ríos Montt took power in a 1982 coup. Army units, including the elite *Kaibil* special forces, systematically massacred villagers, destroyed crops and homes, and forced survivors into militarised "model villages" or exile. Notorious operations like Operation Sofía in the Ixil Maya area exemplified this strategy of annihilation.

According to Guatemala's post-war truth commission, 81 per cent of the war's victims were killed in 1981-1983, with 48 per cent of all deaths occurring in 1982 alone.[92] The violence explicitly targeted Maya ethnic groups, and the UN-backed Commission for Historical Clarification later concluded that the Guatemalan Army committed genocide against four Mayan peoples, aiming to physically destroy these communities.[93] This genocidal counterinsurgency effectively decimated the guerrillas' social base and pacified much of the highlands. By 1983 the insurgency was severely weakened, enabling the military to initiate a controlled transition to civilian rule in 1985 while largely preserving its impunity.

Cold War geopolitics heavily shaped the conflict's dynamics and the extreme violence of the early 1980s. Guatemala's military regimes framed the leftist insurgency as a communist threat, aligning with the United States' anti-communist agenda in the region. The United States had long supported the Guatemalan Army with training and intelligence. Even when direct military aid was restricted in the late 1970s, American allies such as Israel, South Korea and Taiwan provided weapons, and counterinsurgency techniques honed by the United States in Southeast Asia were transferred to Guatemala.[94]

While framed as anti-communist warfare, the violence in Guatemala had a distinctly racialised character, demonstrating high levels of ethnic exclusion. The majority of guerrilla recruits and sympathisers were poor Mayan peasants, reflecting long-standing indigenous grievances over land, exclusion, and abuse. Guatemalan military and elite ideology historically devalued the indigenous population, casting Maya communities as inferior or inherently disloyal to the nation's non-indigenous rulers. The Army's propaganda described insurgents as guerrilla terrorists and often implied that the indigenous were either communists or dupes of communists, effectively marking them for elimination. This violence arguably stemmed from 'radicalised security politics', a mindset in which leaders become convinced that destroying a perceived ethnic or political bloc is necessary to save the state. In Guatemala, the national security doctrine took on a racial dimension: Maya villages were seen as permanent breeding grounds of subversion. This ideological fusion of counterinsurgency with ethnic hatred made extreme violence seem not only justified but necessary.[95]

The peak of violence in the early 1980s succeeded in crushing the guerrilla movement and reasserting the military's control. Internationally, the Guatemalan Civil War's darkest phase highlighted how Cold War imperatives and local racism could intertwine to produce mass atrocity. The war formally concluded with the 1996 peace accords, which integrated the URNG into politics and established the Commission for Historical Clarification.

SUDANESE CIVIL WAR (2023–PRESENT)

TABLE 4.5

Sudan civil war escalation factors

Conflict Escalation Variable	Present?
Urban origin onset	No
Accessible terrain	Yes
High logistical supply	Yes
Non-state actor heavy weapons	Yes
Significant external support	Yes
Private military contractors	No
High levels of ethnic exclusion	Yes
Fratricidal coercion	No
Conflict instrumentalisation	Yes

Sudan's current civil war, which by some estimates is deadlier than either the war in Ukraine or Gaza, traces its origins to earlier national crises, most notably the Darfur conflict and genocide. The escalation in Darfur stemmed from a convergence of regional power politics, Arab-Islamic ideological extremism, resource competition and calculated conflict instrumentalisation.

Modern violence in the region can be traced to the 1980s, when longstanding local grievances collided with imported ideologies. Decades of political and economic marginalisation left both Arab and non-Arab communities in Darfur neglected by the central government in Khartoum. During the mid-1980s, Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi pursued an expansionist "Arab belt" strategy across the Sahel, using Darfur as a staging ground in Chad and arming recruits through his so-called Islamic Legion. The arrival of these fighters and their Arab-supremacist ideology ignited Darfur's first overtly ethnic war in 1987, pitting Arab militias against the Fur ethnic group as well as other groups.

Local disputes over land and water were recast along racial lines, and Arab returnees from Libya formed an "Arab Alliance" that promoted exclusionary dominance. Non-Arab communities responded by adopting a collective "African" identity, entrenching polarised narratives that would later fuel mass violence. By the late 1980s, external radicalisation and resource stress had militarised identity politics in Darfur, while Khartoum's mobilisation of the Janjaweed in the 1990s folded these militias into Sudan's wider wars against the Sudan People's Liberation Army.

The regime of Omar al-Bashir refined this approach, arming Arab militias to wage counterinsurgency across Sudan's peripheries. When the Sudan Liberation Army and the Justice and Equality Movement rose in 2003, driven by anger at Darfur's exclusion and underdevelopment, the government authorised Janjaweed auxiliaries to supplement regular forces.

Between 2003 and 2005, these militias, backed by government air strikes, carried out a campaign that many scholars and the US labelled a genocide. Hundreds of thousands of civilians were killed and more than two million displaced as attacks razed villages, destroyed food stocks, felled orchards and poisoned wells in a deliberate effort to eradicate the Fur, Masalit, Zaghawa and other non-Arab communities.

Weak borders with Chad and Libya supplied a steady flow of arms and fighters, while external allies continued to furnish Khartoum with weapons despite international embargoes. The combination of local grievance, racial ideology, state exploitation and foreign support produced one of the 21st century's most devastating conflicts, laying the groundwork for the nationwide civil war that began in April 2023 and now threatens Sudan's territorial integrity.

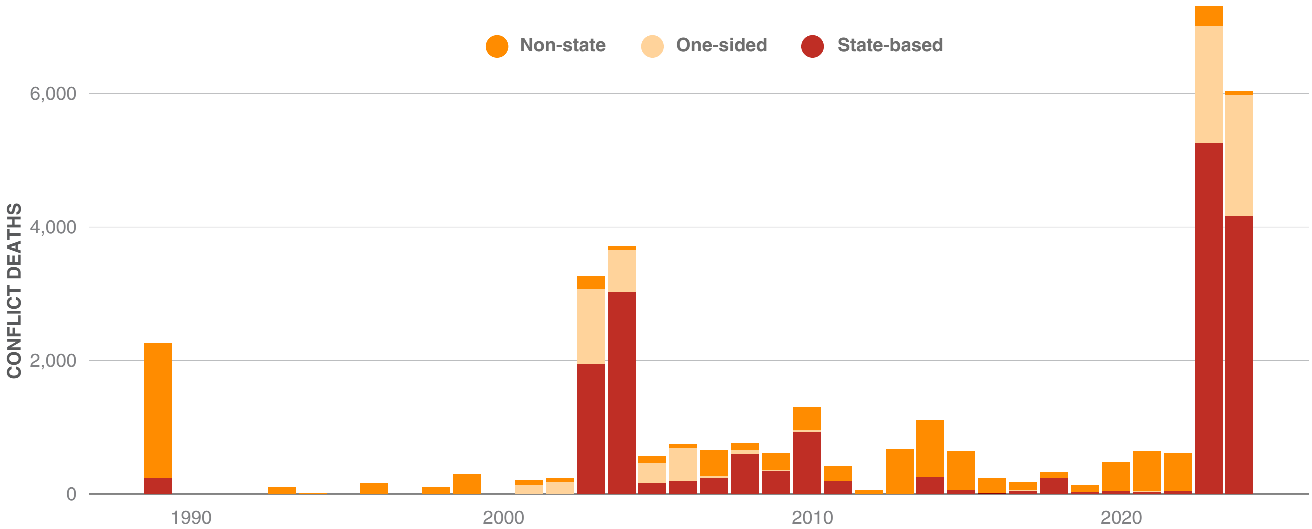
Following the 2003–2005 genocide, violence in Darfur subsided but never ceased. Khartoum moved to formalise its proxy forces, rebranding the Janjaweed in 2013 as the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) under the command of Mohammed Hamdan "Hemedti" Dagalo. A 2017 statute conferred legal status on the RSF, placing it within Sudan's security architecture and deploying units as border guards, yet its field tactics remained as brutal as those of the Janjaweed. RSF contingents were dispatched against uprisings in South Kordofan, Blue Nile and the still-volatile districts of Darfur while simultaneously amassing wealth through control of gold mines and smuggling routes. External patrons expanded the group's reach: the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Saudi Arabia recruited RSF fighters for the Yemen war after 2015, providing both funding and regional stature. By the late 2010s the RSF had matured into a semi-autonomous power centre, poised to play a decisive role after President Omar al-Bashir's ouster in 2019.

Tensions between the RSF and the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) erupted into full-scale war in April 2023, igniting new bloodshed in Darfur and across Sudan. Drawing on Darfuri Arab

FIGURE 4.6

Yearly conflict deaths caused by Darfur conflict dyads, 1989–2024

State involvement greatly increased fatalities in the early 2000s and in the past two years.



Source: UCDP GED, IEP Calculations

networks, RSF units quickly overran most of the region and renewed attacks on non-Arab civilians. Observers documented mass killings and village burnings reminiscent of the 2003–2005 atrocities. In the city of El Geneina alone, tens of thousands of civilians were killed between April and June 2023, in what independent monitors described as ethnically motivated violence.

The conflict assumed a proxy dimension as Egypt and Saudi Arabia backed the SAF, while Khalifa Haftar in Libya, the UAE and, reportedly, Russia's Wagner Group supplied weapons and funds to the RSF. The pattern that was first set in motion two decades earlier has thus re-merged at a national scale. Local Arab militias wage unrestricted war on marginalised ethnic groups, driven by a quasi-independent RSF endowed with external sponsorship, ample logistics and heavy weaponry, and stoked by ideological and tribal grievances dating to the 1980s.

SRI LANKAN CIVIL WAR (1983–2009)

TABLE 4.6

Sri Lankan civil war escalation factors

Conflict Escalation Variable	Present?
Urban origin onset	Yes
Accessible terrain	No
High logistical supply	No
Non-state actor heavy weapons	Yes
Significant external support	Yes
Private military contractors	No
High levels of ethnic exclusion	Yes
Fratricidal coercion	Yes
Conflict instrumentalisation	No

The Sri Lankan Civil War (1983–2009) began when Tamil separatists, led by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), took up arms against Sinhala-majority rule. The conflict unfolded in four phases, known as Eelam Wars I–IV, each punctuated by brief truces.

During Eelam War I (1983-87) the LTTE eliminated rival Tamil factions and drew India into the fighting. An Indian peacekeeping force deployed from 1987 to 1990, but it withdrew without a settlement. Eelam Wars II (1990-95) and III (1995-2002) brought large battles, including the army's capture of Jaffna and the LTTE's counter-offensives, causing heavy losses on both sides. A Norway-brokered ceasefire in 2002 allowed the LTTE to hold parts of the northeast, yet the truce frayed after a key 2004 split: commander Vinayagamoorthy Karuna defected, weakening the Tigers and passing intelligence to the central government in Colombo.

With no political deal in sight, the stage was set for a decisive end to the conflict. The LTTE was classified as a terrorist organisation by the US in 1997. The terrorist classification significantly impacted its foreign revenue. The classification led to international financial restrictions and a crackdown on diaspora support, which substantially reduced their funding.

Eelam War IV (2006–09) began when the LTTE resumed attacks, aiming to secure a favourable stalemate. President Mahinda Rajapaksa's government responded by abandoning negotiations and seeking outright victory. Defence spending rose to roughly four per cent of GDP, and army strength expanded from about 120,000 troops in 2005 to more than 200,000 by 2009. Coordinated offensives on multiple fronts employed overwhelming firepower, while the LTTE struggled with shrinking manpower, dwindling revenue, forced recruitment of youths, and a rigid conventional strategy that the army repeatedly outmanoeuvred.

Eelam War IV was enabled by significant geopolitical shifts and significant increases in external support for the central government of Sri Lanka. During the 1980s, India had been deeply involved in the conflict and remained sensitive to Tamil civilian suffering due to domestic pressure from Tamil Nadu. However, in the late 2000s India's stance evolved, influenced in part by the terrorist classification of the group. New Delhi also became more tolerant of Colombo's offensive, partly to counter growing Chinese influence in Sri Lanka. By 2007, India was quietly supporting the Sri Lankan government, deviating from its earlier calls for negotiations and humanitarian pauses.[96] Meanwhile, China and Pakistan emerged as crucial allies to Sri Lanka. Beijing provided critical military aid, including arms supplies and about $US one billion in loans, enabling Colombo to sustain its enlarged war effort. Pakistan – along with Russia, Libya, and Iran – supplied weapons and expertise as well.[97]

By early 2009 the Tigers had lost their de facto capital, Kilinochchi, and were encircled in the Vanni region, signalling their military collapse and the war's end. Figure 4.7 shows the trend in conflict deaths in the civil war from 1989 to 2009, clearly illustrating how the war escalated in 2008 and 2009.

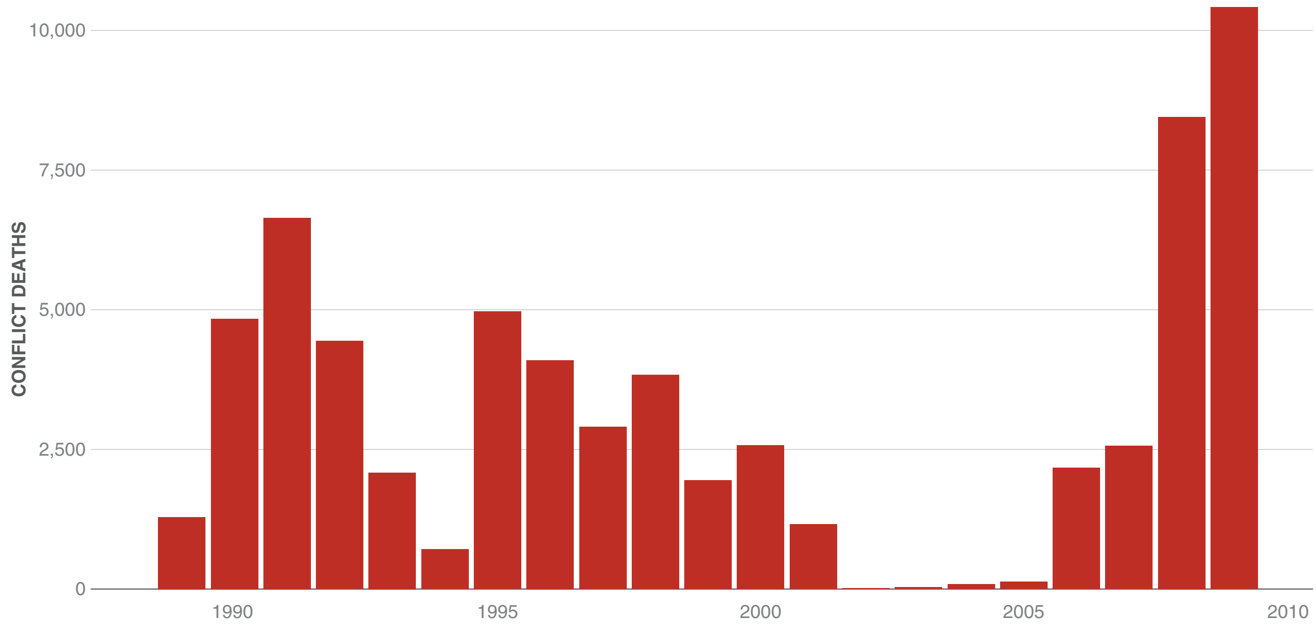
The closing months of the war were by far the deadliest for civilians. As the army pushed into the last LTTE-held enclaves, the government declared several "No Fire Zones" to which Tamil civilians were encouraged to flee, then subjected those zones to sustained shelling. The Sri Lankan military repeatedly shelled hospitals, UN aid posts, and food distribution lines, despite knowing civilians were concentrated there. The LTTE, on the other hand, prevented civilians from escaping the war zone, using them as human shields to slow the army's advance. In the final battles around Mullivaikkal (April–May 2009), thousands of non-combatants were killed each week.

According to a UN review, there are credible allegations that most civilian deaths in the final phase were due to government shelling, with tens of thousands of Tamil civilians killed in just a few months.[98] This represented a dramatic increase in civilian targeting compared to earlier stages of the war. The government's intent was to eliminate the LTTE leadership at any cost. By May 2009, the LTTE's top commanders, including its leader Velupillai Prabhakaran, were killed, effectively ending the war amid what has been described as a humanitarian catastrophe.

FIGURE 4.7

Yearly conflict deaths in Sri Lanka, 1989–2009

Violence erupted in 2006 after four years of relatively few conflict deaths.



Source: UCDP GED, IEP Calculations

TIGRAY WAR (2020–2022)

TABLE 4.7

Tigray war escalation factors

Conflict Escalation Variable	Present?
Urban origin onset	Yes
Accessible terrain	Yes
High logistical supply	Yes
Non-state actor heavy weapons	Yes
Significant external support	Yes
Private military contractors	No
High levels of ethnic exclusion	Yes
Fratricidal coercion	Yes
Conflict instrumentalisation	No

The Tigray war stands as perhaps the most striking example of rapid conflict escalation in the 21st century, with hundreds of thousands of fatalities recorded in less than a year. The war was rooted in longstanding political tensions within Ethiopia's ethnic federal system.

The Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) was the dominant force in Ethiopia's ruling coalition (the EPRDF) for nearly three decades. In 2018, mass protests by the Oromo and Amhara communities led to the rise of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, marginalising the TPLF's influence in Addis Ababa. Abiy's early reforms, including peace with Eritrea and the dissolution of the EPRDF in favour of a new Prosperity Party, alienated TPLF leaders. Tensions escalated further in September 2020 when the Tigray regional government defied a pandemic-related election postponement and unilaterally held regional polls, which Abiy's government declared illegal.

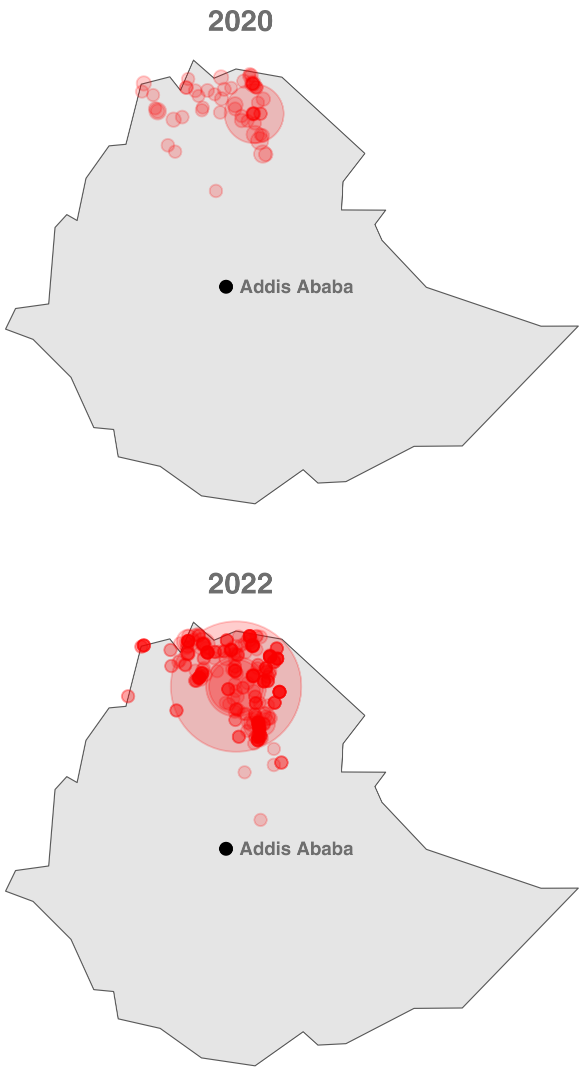
Full-scale war erupted on 4 November 2020. Tigrayan forces attacked the Ethiopian National Defense Force's Northern Command bases in Tigray and looted federal military assets. Within hours, federal troops, with support from neighbouring Eritrea, launched a massive 'law enforcement operation' in Tigray. Ethiopian federal forces, allied with Eritrean troops and Amhara regional militias, advanced rapidly in late 2020. By the end of November 2020 they had captured key Tigrayan cities, including the regional capital Mekelle. Despite the federal army's initial gains, Tigrayan resistance did not end. TPLF leaders retreated to the mountains and reorganised their fighters as the Tigray Defence Forces (TDF), employing guerrilla tactics.[99]

In June 2021, the war's momentum dramatically shifted. The TDF recaptured Mekelle after routing federal units, forcing Addis Ababa to declare a unilateral ceasefire and withdraw most of its troops. Triumphant Tigrayan forces then expanded the war beyond their region. Between July and November 2021, they advanced into the neighbouring Amhara and Afar regions, at one point coming within a few hundred kilometres of the capital Addis Ababa. The TPLF formed a tactical alliance with other anti-government groups, including the Oromo Liberation Army. This phase saw heavy combat and retaliation in Amhara and Afar; all sides were implicated in atrocities, and hundreds of thousands of civilians were displaced as the warfront widened.

By late 2021, however, the federal side had regrouped. Bolstered by foreign-supplied combat drones and mass mobilisation, Ethiopian forces beat back the Tigrayan advance. In December 2021, the TDF announced a strategic retreat into Tigray, and Abiy's government claimed to have averted the immediate threat to the capital. This set the stage for a tense stalemate. The threat the TPLF counter-offensive posed to the state is a telling example of how the later mass violence was incentivised by an existential threat to the regime.[100]

FIGURE 4.8

Geographic spread of violence in Ethiopia, 2020–2022



Active combat diminished in early 2022, and both sides hesitantly engaged with international mediation efforts. In March 2022, the federal government announced an "indefinite humanitarian truce", allowing limited aid into famine-stricken Tigray. For several months, open fighting paused, but underlying issues remained unresolved. By late August 2022, ceasefire talks collapsed amid mutual recriminations, and full-scale war reignited.

The conflict's most violent phase occurred in its final months. Hostilities resumed on 24 August 2022, shattering the truce. Ethiopian forces, now openly reinforced by Eritrean troops, launched a coordinated offensive from multiple fronts. Heavy fighting erupted along Tigray's borders, and intense battles raged throughout the region. By September, Eritrea had mobilised its reservists to join the assault on Tigray. The humanitarian situation, already dire, grew catastrophic as supply lines were again cut. Indiscriminate artillery barrages and airstrikes hit population centres. By October, the joint Ethiopian-Eritrean offensive had overrun major parts of Tigray. The strategic city of Shire fell to federal forces following aerial bombardment and artillery shelling by Ethiopian–Eritrean forces to capture the city, along with the towns of Alamata and Korem.

With Tigrayan forces in a fight for survival, casualties mounted quickly. High levels of violence against civilians were reported, with as many as 100,000 people being killed in just weeks. There are reports of large battles involving World War I-style human wave attacks.[101] By late October 2022, Tigrayan defences were crumbling under the military pressure, Mekelle was surrounded and cut off. Facing imminent defeat, the TPLF agreed to enter peace talks. A breakthrough came on 2 November 2022 in Pretoria, South Africa, where Ethiopian government and TPLF delegates signed a "Cessation of Hostilities Agreement", effectively ending the war. The TPLF agreed to disarm in exchange for restoration of services and humanitarian access, while Eritrea was expected to withdraw its forces. This deal took effect on 3 November 2022, exactly two years after the war's beginning. The war unleashed one of the world's worst man-made humanitarian crises, with combined conflict and humanitarian deaths being as high as 600,000.[102]

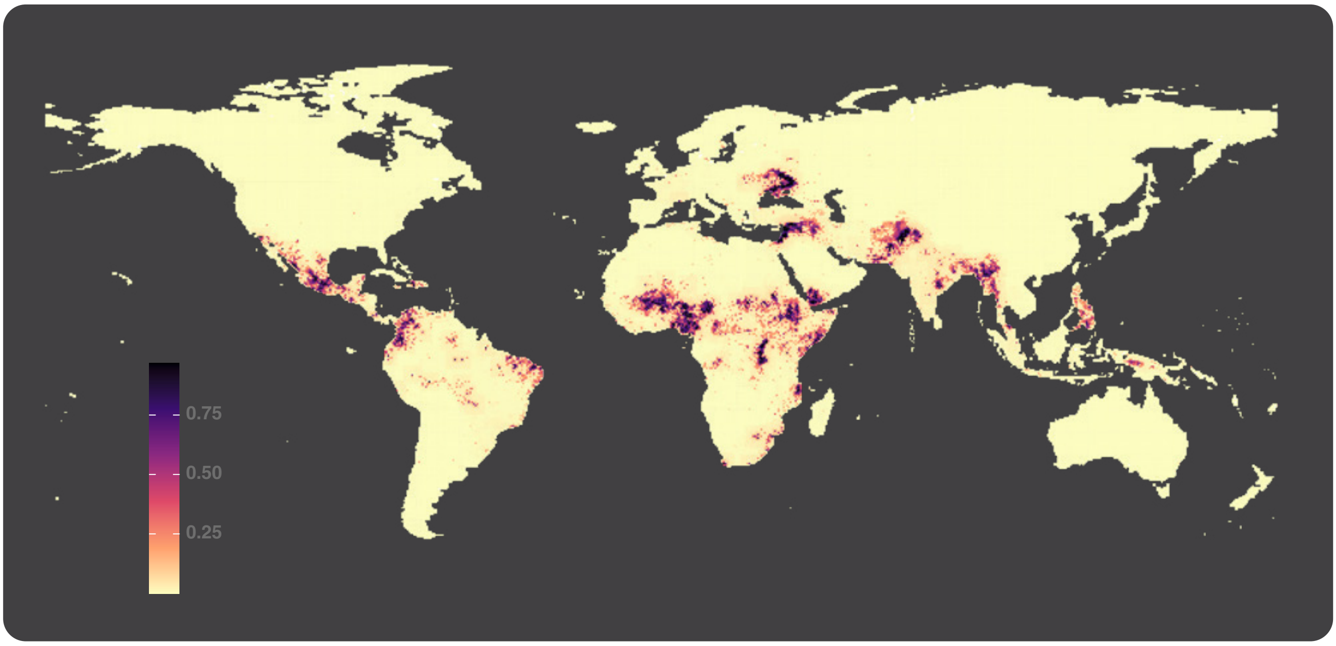
Escalation Hotspots

Figure 4.9 shows the likelihood of conflict around the globe at the grid level, which divides the world into 50×50km areas to allow for highly localised conflict prediction. Many of these are already in active conflict, while others have the potential to become active. Still others, although already in active conflict, have the potential to become more lethal.

FIGURE 4.9

Likelihood of violent conflict in 2025–2026

Ukraine, the Sahel, and Kashmir are all conflict hotspots.



The map shows the likelihood of at least one violent conflict death being recorded between June 2025 and June 2026. There are notable conflict hotspots in the Central Sahel, Mexico, Ukraine, Bangladesh, and the disputed Kashmir region in India and Pakistan.

This model, however, cannot predict the timing or magnitude of conflict escalation. IEP has developed a scoring scale for each of the nine escalation factors, to better understand whether conflicts are likely to escalate. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 4.14 at the end of this section, which lists 62 different conflict-dyads where one of the conflict actors is a state. Each of the escalation factors is scored from one to five, where a higher score reflects a stronger presence of that factor.

Of these 62 conflict-dyads, 22 per cent had at least one escalation factor with the maximum score of five, and eight per cent had maximum scores for three or more escalation factors. Every single conflict-dyad had a score of at least three for at least one of the escalation factors, and 25 per cent had a score of at least three for five or more factors.

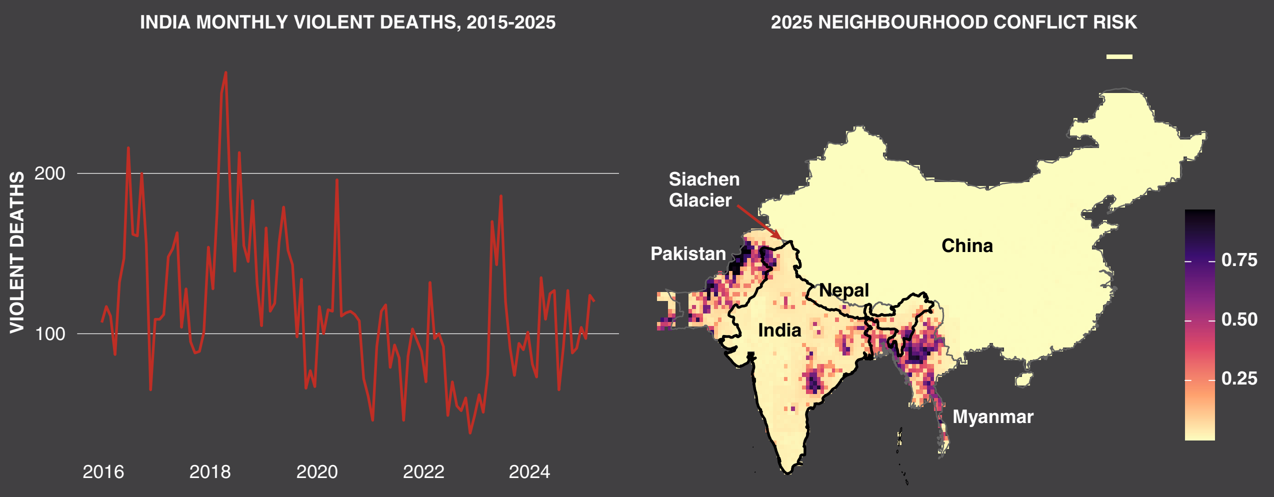
IEP has listed five conflicts below, along with a description of the risk factors, that have a high risk of substantially worsening. They are Kashmir, Syria, the DRC, South Sudan and Ethiopia-Eritrea.

Kashmir Conflict

FIGURE 4.10

Conflict history and escalation hotspots in India

Conflict is highly likely in the Kashmir region over the next year.



Source: ACLED, conflictforecast.org

Applying the escalation-risk indicators to the Kashmir dispute finds it has the potential for rapid deterioration. On 22 April, five gunmen attacked a group of Indian tourists near Pahalgam in Indian-administered Kashmir, killing 26 and triggering a sharp rise in India-Pakistan tensions. New Delhi accused Pakistan's military or intelligence services of orchestrating the assault, whereas Islamabad asserted it was not involved. In response, both governments suspended different types of bilateral agreements designed to keep tensions under control.

A four-day conflict ensued from 7-10 May 2025 and was the deadliest escalation between the countries in several years. India initially launched missile strikes into Pakistan targeting what it described as terror camps and facilities, later striking Pakistani airbases and military facilities. Pakistan responded with strikes of its own across northern India, while sporadic mortar fire and limited clashes broke out along the Line of Control, the de facto border between the Indian- and Pakistani-administered parts of the disputed region of Jammu and Kashmir.[103]

A renewed confrontation over Kashmir would involve the two nuclear-armed rivals. Although a deliberate nuclear strike remains highly unlikely, any conventional campaign confined to the disputed territory could still inflict heavy battlefield losses and easily spill beyond the Kashmir region.

The dispute traces back to the 1947 partition of British India, when a Pakistan-backed tribal incursion prompted Kashmir's Hindu ruler to accede to India, sparking the first Indo-Pakistani war. Armed clashes in 1965 and 1971 again failed to settle the region's status, and the 1972 Simla Agreement merely formalised the Line of Control: India retained the Kashmir Valley, Jammu and Ladakh, Pakistan administered Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan, and China held Aksai Chin.

A separatist insurgency erupted in Indian-administered Kashmir in 1989, fuelled by local grievances and support from Pakistan. New Delhi deployed hundreds of thousands of troops, turning the Himalayas into one of the world's most militarised zones. More than 40,000 people have died since 1989, and crises such as the 1999 Kargil war and the 2008 Mumbai attacks have repeatedly heightened tensions between India and Pakistan. A 2003 ceasefire reduced large-scale hostilities, but cross-border shelling and militant raids still occur.

Tensions rose in August 2019, when India revoked the region's semi-autonomous status under Article 370 and split the former state into two federally governed territories. The move was enforced with mass arrests, communication blackouts and a sizeable troop surge, while Pakistan expelled India's envoy and suspended trade. Violence and alienation remain. Targeted killings and insurgent strikes persist, answered by intensified crackdowns and media restrictions. India now maintains up to half a million security personnel in Jammu and Kashmir, while Pakistan fields an estimated 60,000 along the Line of Control, reinforcing a volatile standoff that runs the risk of escalating rapidly. Table 4.8 outlines the existing military and police presence in the region on both sides.

TABLE 4.8

Military presence in the Kashmir region

Category	India (Jammu & Kashmir)	Pakistan (Azad Jammu & Kashmir)
Estimated total troops	470,000 – 500,000+	30,000 – 60,000
Regular army presence	~210,000 (including infantry, artillery, Rashtriya Rifles)	~30,000–40,000 (including Azad Kashmir Regiment and X Corps elements)
Paramilitary forces	~130,000 (CRPF, BSF, ITBP, etc.)	A few thousand (Frontier Corps, Rangers, etc., depending on need)
Local police	~130,000 (J&K Police and Special Police Officers)	Unknown (police forces exist but are not militarised at the same scale)
Deployment areas	Across the Kashmir Valley, Jammu region, and Line of Control (LoC)	Line of Control, Muzaffarabad, urban centres, strategic passes
Purpose	Counterinsurgency, LoC monitoring, internal security, civil unrest control	Border security, LoC patrolling, internal security, protest management
Specialised units	Rashtriya Rifles, National Security Guard (NSG), Special Forces	Azad Kashmir Regiment, Special Services Group (SSG – potentially rotational)
Force mobilisation in tensions	Increases to ~600,000 during high tensions	May increase to ~70,000 or more

Conflict Escalation Factors

Four of the nine escalation factors are present in the Kashmir conflict. Their potential impact on the conflict is outlined here.

TABLE 4.9

Kashmir conflict escalation factors

Conflict Escalation Variable	Present?
Urban origin onset	No
Accessible terrain	No
High logistical supply	Yes
Non-state actor heavy weapons	No
Significant external support	Yes
Private military contractors	No
High levels of ethnic exclusion	Yes
Fratricidal coercion	No
Conflict instrumentalisation	Yes

Logistical Supply Issues

Kashmir has mountainous terrain. The Himalayas and the high-altitude Siachen Glacier pose extreme logistical challenges for both India and Pakistan. Each side maintains large forces along the Line of Control and at remote outposts only reachable via narrow mountain roads or air, incurring enormous costs to supply troops with food, fuel and ammunition. Both New Delhi and Islamabad have poured resources into mountain roads, all-weather tunnels and air logistics, to sustain their Kashmir deployments, yet the region's geography continues to heavily tax their military supply chains and budgets.

External Support

Militant groups operating in Indian-administered Kashmir have long benefited from external support, chiefly from Pakistan's territory and intelligence apparatus. India has repeatedly traced major attacks to Pakistan-based organisations like Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), which India describes as nurtured by Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence in the past.[104] Weapons, training, and infiltrating fighters move across the Line of Control.

Ethnic Exclusion

Governance in Indian-administered Kashmir over the past decade has marginalised much of its Muslim-majority populace. In August 2019, the Indian government revoked Jammu and Kashmir's special autonomous status (Article 370) and forced Kashmiris to fully conform to Indian laws and land policies.

Conflict Instrumentalisation

Both India and Pakistan have frequently used the Kashmir conflict to serve broader political and strategic objectives. India has leveraged Kashmir policy to appeal to nationalist sentiment and bolster its domestic legitimacy. The August 2019 revocation of Kashmir's autonomy was presented as fulfilling a long-standing promise to integrate the nation.[105] Pakistan, for its part, has persistently used Kashmir as a rallying cry to unify its public and justify its powerful military establishment. Pakistani leaders raise the Kashmir issue in international forums and state media to cast India as an oppressor and themselves as guardians of Kashmiri Muslims.

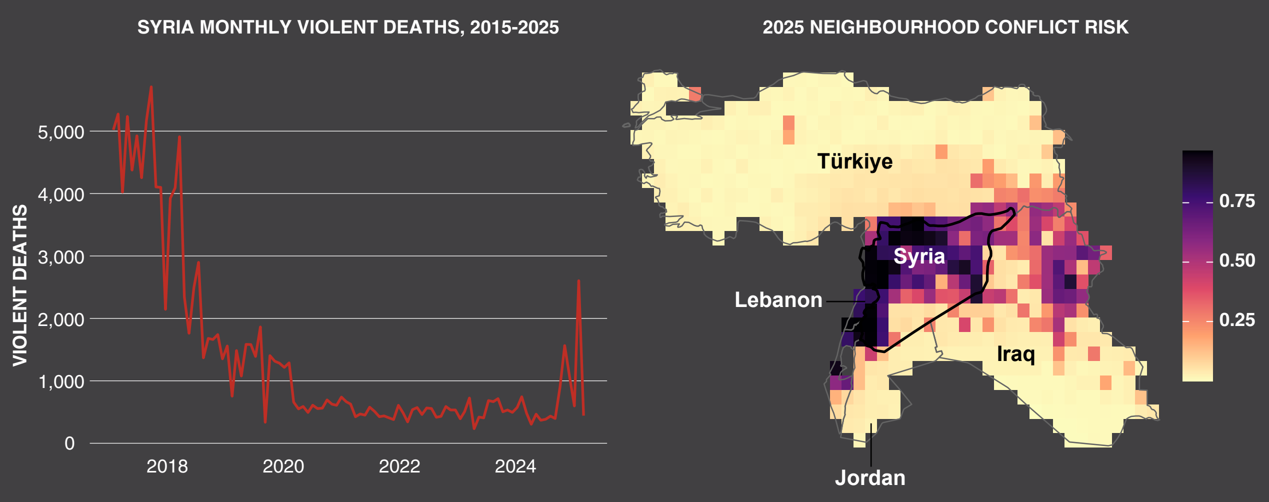
The conflict over Kashmir has the potential to substantially escalate or even become a full-blown war. Past triggers like terror attacks and corresponding Indian strikes on Pakistan have been controlled and external actors have placed significant pressure to de-escalate. There is also a substantial risk of conflicts or increased violence inside India and Pakistan, with the potential for anti-Muslim violence in India or rebel groups like Balochistan separatists or the Pakistani Taliban taking advantage of any conflict between the countries.

Syrian Civil War

FIGURE 4.11

Conflict history and escalation hotspots in Syria

Violence in Syria spiked in early 2025.



Source: ACLED, conflictforecast.org

In Syria, following the collapse of Bashar al-Assad's regime in December 2024, the political organisation and paramilitary group known as Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) quickly assumed control of Damascus. It declared a caretaker government, later replaced by a transitional administration led by the group's leader Ahmed al-Sharaa. A new constitutional declaration followed. Despite some international engagement and limited recognition, authority remains fragmented. The United States, the United Kingdom and the EU have begun easing sanctions on the country, conditional on political progress. However, concerns persist over a lack of broad-based consensus and the absence of meaningful inclusion in governance structures.

Syria's political and conflict landscape is currently composed of a patchwork of competing influences and contested territories, each shaped by evolving alliances and unresolved tensions from over a decade of war. At the centre of the emerging post-conflict order is the transitional government and New Syrian Army, established in January 2025 from the remnants of Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) and elements of the Syrian National Army (SNA). These forces officially merged under a newly formed ministry of defence, bringing significant portions of western and northern Syria - including Damascus - under nominal government control. However, this authority remains fragile, as the transitional leadership struggles to consolidate power and project unified governance across the country.

In the northeast, the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) continue to wield control over vast territories rich in oil and gas. A landmark agreement signed in March 2025 set out a roadmap for integrating the SDF into Syrian state institutions and the national army by the end of the year. While this process is seen as pivotal for achieving national unity and resource stability, it is fraught with complications. The SDF's demands for regional autonomy and ongoing concerns over ties to the PKK have created tension and uncertainty around the pace and outcome of integration.[106]

Meanwhile, Türkiye maintains a significant footprint in northern Syria, where it has historically supported various SNA factions. Although many of these factions have formally joined the new Syrian army, Ankara continues to exert influence through political pressure and strategic coordination. This dynamic underscores the enduring complexity of foreign involvement in Syria's internal affairs.

Adding further volatility are pro-Assad insurgents, who remain active in several parts of the country. Concentrated primarily in the Alawite-majority coastal governorates of Latakia and Tartus, these loyalist forces have carried out attacks against transitional government units, including coordinated assaults in Hama as recently as March 2025.[107] Their presence poses a direct challenge to the new order and threatens to re-ignite sectarian divisions that had begun to recede.

Compounding these challenges is the continued activity of remnants of Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), who, despite losing territorial control, remain embedded in the expansive Syrian Desert (Badiya Al-Sham) and isolated pockets of the Jazira region. The group persists through guerrilla attacks and recruitment efforts, sustained in part by the thousands of radicalised fighters and family members still held in refugee camps such as Al-Hol and Roj.[108] Their ongoing presence represents a long-term security concern with both national and regional implications.

Beyond these, a variety of local factions continue to assert influence, particularly in areas where central authority remains weak. In Suwayda, for example, Druze militias maintain their own security arrangements and have engaged in localised clashes, while cautiously negotiating terms of engagement with the transitional government. These decentralised power centres reflect the broader fragmentation that still defines Syria's political and security environment.

The formal integration of HTS and SNA elements into a new Syrian Army, alongside the SDF's March 2025 agreement to integrate, are significant political steps. However, achieving true operational unification is a formidable challenge. Deep-seated mistrust between these groups, their divergent command structures, powerful external loyalties, particularly the SNA's ties to Türkiye and concerns about PKK influence within the SDF, and reports of ongoing abuses by some factions suggest that the new national army is a fragile coalition susceptible to internal fragmentation and influence by external sponsors.[109]

The fall of the Assad regime has not heralded an era of peace. Significant violence persists across multiple fronts. Clashes between the SDF and Turkish-backed groups in northeastern Syria during the civil war have led to the displacement of an estimated 1.1 million people.[110] March 2025 witnessed an escalation of violence in Alawite-majority areas, resulting in hundreds of fatalities amid clashes and massacres.

External powers are possible destabilising forces in Syria's conflict. Türkiye maintains a military presence in the north to counter Kurdish groups, while Israel conducts airstrikes to prevent Iranian or Hezbollah entrenchment and views the HTS-led government as a threat. The US continues counter-ISIL operations alongside the SDF.

A proposed lifting of sanctions could shift Syria's economic and political landscape. Meanwhile, Iran and Russia, though diminished in influence, still pursue strategic goals through proxy support and military footholds. These clashing agendas fuel proxy competition, raising the risk of escalation.

Syria's fragile stability faces multiple potential flashpoints that could trigger renewed conflict. Key risks include a breakdown in the SDF's integration process, particularly over autonomy and resource control; a resurgence of the pro-Assad insurgency in coastal regions; and a major ISIL offensive exploiting current instability. Additional threats stem from possible Turkish military incursions, Israeli pre-emptive strikes against perceived threats, and internal fractures within the transitional government. A convergence of these events could overwhelm government capacities, draw in external powers and push Syria toward further fragmentation or regional conflict.

Conflict Escalation Factors

TABLE 4.10

Syria conflict escalation factors

Conflict Escalation Variable	Present?
Urban origin onset	Yes
Accessible terrain	No
High logistical supply	No
Non-state actor heavy weapons	Yes
Significant external support	Yes
Private military contractors	No
High levels of ethnic exclusion	Yes
Fratricidal coercion	No
Conflict instrumentalisation	Yes

Conflict Location

Syria's conflict zones are spread across strategically vital areas, each carrying distinct risks. Damascus is central to political control; the Alawite coastal areas are a base for insurgents; the north is influenced by Türkiye and contested by the SNA and the SDF; the northeast contains key oil fields and hosts both the SDF and US forces; and the desert serves as an ISIL refuge. Southern Syria, bordering Israel, adds further tension. These overlapping zones, with multiple armed groups in close proximity, increase the risk of escalation through direct clashes or retaliatory actions.

Accessibility of Terrain

Syria's terrain complicates control efforts. The desert allows ISIL to operate covertly, while mountainous areas like Latakia offer insurgents defensive advantages. Urban centres present operational challenges due to dense populations and infrastructure, often resulting in high casualties and prolonged conflict. The terrain reduces the effectiveness of the new army and prolongs insurgencies, making it harder for the transitional government to assert control nationwide.

Logistical Supply Issues

Conflict has devastated Syria's infrastructure, creating severe supply challenges. Border crossings remain unstable, fuel and currency shortages are acute, and international aid access is inconsistent. The SDF controls most oil resources, giving it leverage but also making the region a target. The government's reliance on fragile supply chains and aid complicates its ability to maintain control and deliver basic services, exposing vulnerabilities to attacks on logistics and infrastructure.

External Support for Warring Parties

Foreign involvement shapes Syria's conflict dynamics. The US backs the SDF and remains active in counter-ISIL operations. Türkiye supports former SNA elements and engages with the transitional government, primarily to limit Kurdish autonomy. Israel carries out airstrikes to deter threats, while Iran and Russia pursue limited influence and strategic footholds. The UAE has allegedly armed the SDF. Conflicting interests among these actors risk triggering escalation and undermine political stability.

Access to Heavy Weapons

Non-state actors in Syria, including ISIL, the SDF, pro-Assad insurgents and SNA remnants, possess significant weaponry, ranging from RPGs to heavy artillery. These arsenals, often bolstered by foreign support or black-market access, increase the chance that minor clashes could escalate quickly. This widespread militarisation undermines disarmament efforts and complicates efforts to build a cohesive national force.

Ethnic Exclusion

Syria's sectarian divisions continue to fuel instability. Alawite communities have faced targeted violence, reinforcing insurgency. Kurds seek autonomy and resource rights, while Druze groups remain cautious. The HTS-led government's perceived Islamist tilt deepens minority distrust. Without meaningful inclusion in governance, these tensions may provoke further resistance and fragmentation, opening the door for external interference and renewed conflict.

Presence of PMSCs (Private Military Contractors)

There is little evidence that private military contractors (PMSCs) are playing a direct role in Syria's 2025 conflict. While Syria once served as a logistical hub for Russian PMSCs like the Wagner Group, their activities now focus elsewhere.

Fratricidal Coercion

There are no reports indicating that Syrian factions systematically use fratricidal coercion. While isolated cases may occur, this is not a defining feature of the conflict. ISIL at its height was prominently identified as using such practices but it is not currently reported to do so.

Conflict Instrumentalisation

All major actors in Syria use the conflict to serve broader goals. Israel aims to counter hostile forces; Türkiye seeks to limit Kurdish power and manage refugee return; the United States balances counter-terrorism and regional stability. Internally, the transitional government and the SDF use their respective leverage to gain support. These overlapping agendas complicate peace efforts and make de-escalation vulnerable to strategic manipulation by internal and external actors.

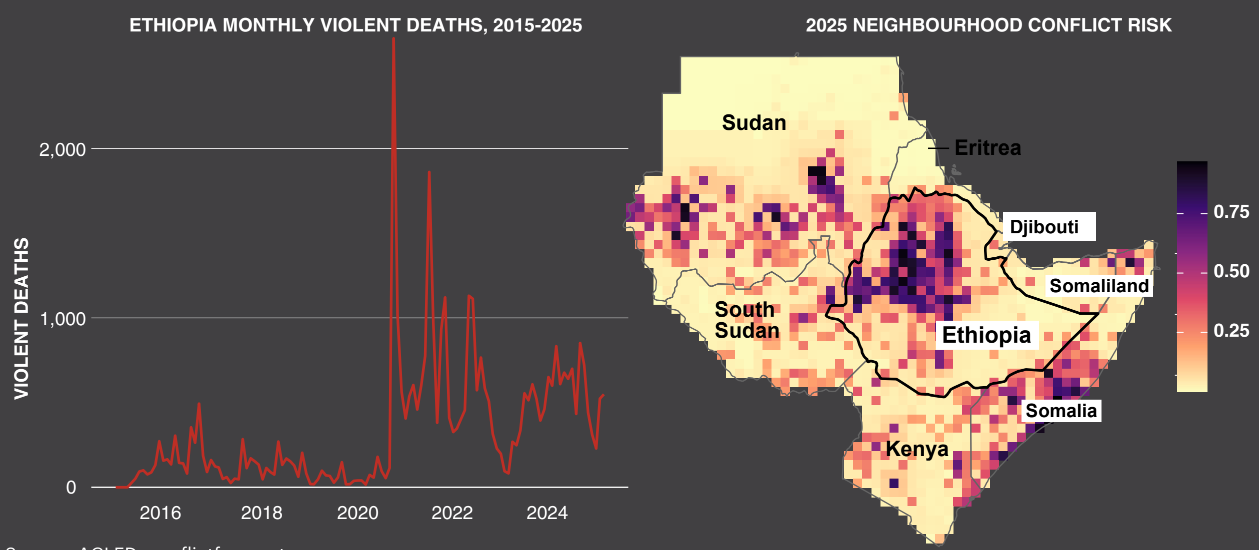
Syria in 2025 remains highly unstable. The transition after Assad's fall has not resolved deep-rooted divisions or halted violence. The transitional government faces major challenges: fragmented control, fragile military integration, ongoing insurgencies and severe economic distress. External powers continue to exert influence, often at cross-purposes. While private military contractors and coercion within ranks are not major escalation drivers, factors like terrain, logistics, sectarian divides and heavy armament significantly threaten stability. Without inclusive governance, effective disarmament, and international alignment, Syria risks further conflict throughout 2025.

Ethiopia–Eritrea Conflict

FIGURE 4.12

Conflict history and escalation hotspots in Ethiopia

Almost a third of Ethiopia is predicted to experience conflict deaths over the next year.



Source: ACLED, conflictforecast.org

The relationship between Ethiopia and Eritrea in early to mid-2025 is characterised by heightened tension, primarily fuelled by Ethiopia's resurgent ambitions for sovereign access to the Red Sea, juxtaposed against Eritrea's staunch defence of its territorial integrity and sovereignty. Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed has consistently articulated that securing a Red Sea port is an "existential issue" for his landlocked nation, citing both historical precedents and pressing economic needs. Ethiopia's current reliance on Djibouti for approximately 95 per cent of its trade incurs an estimated annual cost of $1.52 billion, a significant economic burden that Addis Ababa seeks to alleviate. This pursuit has led Ethiopia to actions such as a January 2024 memorandum of understanding with the unrecognised country of Somaliland for access to the port of

Berbera, a move that, while not directly involving Eritrean territory, signalled Ethiopia's determination and alarmed Asmara.[111]

Eritrea, whose independence in 1993 resulted in Ethiopia losing its coastline, views its Red Sea ports of Assab and Massawa as an essential aspect of its sovereignty. A 1998-2000 border war, which started over territorial disputes in areas such as Badme, is a reminder of how fragile peace can be. Eritrea continues to see Ethiopia as a threat to its national security and territorial integrity.

Military posturing intensified in early 2025. Eritrea initiated a nationwide military mobilisation in February 2025, reportedly deploying up to 200,000 conscripted forces to its border regions, particularly adjacent to Ethiopia's Tigray and Afar regions. This mobilisation included a missile test conducted off the strategic port of Assab. Concurrently, Ethiopia deployed its own troops, including tanks, heavy weaponry and mechanised units, near the Eritrean border in March 2025, with notable concentrations in its Afar region, which lies in proximity to Assab, and in Tigray. Diplomatic exchanges have mirrored this tension; Eritrea denounced Ethiopia's ambitions as "misguided" and, in a joint statement with Egypt in March 2025, rejected the involvement of non-coastal states in Red Sea security affairs. While Prime Minister Abiy has publicly stressed a preference for peaceful dialogue to achieve sea access, his government still sees a seaport as a strategic objective.[112]

The 2020-2022 Tigray War saw Eritrean forces aligned with the Ethiopian government against the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF). Critically, Eritrean forces reportedly remain in parts of Tigray, including the Irob, Zalambessa and Sheraro districts, in contravention of the November 2022 cessation of hostilities agreement. This continued presence is a source of friction. Ethiopia's internal stability is also a significant factor, with ongoing political fragmentation within Tigray, notably the rivalry between TPLF factions led by Debretsion Gebremichael and Getachew Reda, and a persistent insurgency by Fano militias in the Amhara region.

Conflict Escalation Factors

TABLE 4.11

Ethiopia–Eritrea escalation factors

Conflict Escalation Variable	Present?
Urban origin onset	No
Accessible terrain	No
High logistical supply	No
Non-state actor heavy weapons	No
Significant external support	Yes
Private military contractors	No
High levels of ethnic exclusion	Yes
Fratricidal coercion	Yes
Conflict instrumentalisation	Yes

Conflict Location

The primary locations of potential conflict are concentrated along the shared border, rather than directly threatening the respective national capitals, Addis Ababa or Asmara. Key flashpoints include the Tigray borderlands, encompassing areas like Badme, the historical epicentee of the 1998-2000 war, and the districts of Irob, Zalambessa and Sheraro, where Eritrean troops reportedly maintain a presence. These zones are often characterised by ethnically mixed populations and unresolved administrative statuses, rendering them exceptionally sensitive. Another critical area is the Ethiopian Afar region, which borders Eritrea's Southern Red Sea Zone and is near to the Eritrean port of Assab. Ethiopia has concentrated military deployments in this region. The strategic importance of these specific border zones lies in their direct connection to the core grievances of both states: unresolved territorial claims and historical animosities in Tigray, and the potential fulfillment of Ethiopia's "existential" sea access goal via the Afar/Assab corridor.

Accessibility of Terrain

The Ethiopia-Eritrea border presents a diverse and challenging topography with significant military implications. Much of the Tigray-Eritrea frontier is characterised by rugged, mountainous highlands. The Afar region, which extends towards the Eritrean port of Assab, includes the Danakil Depression, one of the most inhospitable environments on Earth, featuring extreme heat and arid desert conditions. While potentially more conducive to mechanised formations compared to the highlands, the extreme climate imposes severe logistical and operational burdens, particularly concerning water scarcity, heat stress on personnel and equipment, and difficult off-road mobility. Challenging terrain possibly acts as a limited deterrent against large-scale offensives.

Logistical Supply Issues

Both Ethiopia and Eritrea face considerable logistical hurdles that would constrain their capacity to sustain a prolonged, high-intensity conflict. Ethiopia, as a landlocked country, is dependent on the port of Djibouti for 95 per cent of its international trade, incurring substantial annual costs. Addis Ababa has been actively modernising its military, including its air force, alongside developing drones to enhance self-reliance. Recent agreements with Russia for naval development support and Iran for broader security cooperation also point to efforts to diversify military partnerships. Nevertheless, maintaining a major conflict across challenging border terrains, especially while managing internal security challenges in Amhara and potentially Tigray, would severely test its logistical infrastructure.

Eritrea's economy is profoundly strained by decades of militarisation, its policy of indefinite national service, and relative international isolation. This economic fragility significantly curtails its ability to finance and sustain a protracted war against a considerably larger neighbour. The Eritrean military's strength lies in its large pool of conscripted manpower; however, the morale, comprehensive training and equipment standards of this force may be inconsistent, and their sustainment in the field presents ongoing challenges. Furthermore, Eritrea's critical infrastructure, including its ports of Massawa and Assab, is reportedly in disrepair and would require substantial investment to be fully operational for wartime logistics.

External Support for Warring Parties

Ethiopia has cultivated a diverse array of international partners. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has been a significant supporter, providing substantial financial aid, investment, and military assistance. Iran signed a memorandum of understanding with Ethiopia for security and intelligence cooperation in May 2025 and previously supplied drones during the Tigray conflict. Russia entered into a naval cooperation agreement in March 2025 to assist in rebuilding Ethiopia's navy. Türkiye has also previously supplied military drones to Ethiopia. For Eritrea, Egypt has emerged as a key regional ally, particularly given Cairo's longstanding tensions with Ethiopia over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD). Eritrea has also strengthened ties with Iran, reportedly allowing Iranian naval vessel activity in its waters and publicly supporting Houthi maritime actions. This intricate network of external support, where some nations like Iran and the UAE have varying degrees of engagement or interests that might touch upon both sides in different contexts, creates an unpredictable geopolitical environment.[113]

Non-State Party Access to Heavy Weapons

There are armed groups within Ethiopia that Eritrea might support as proxies in the event of an interstate war. Neither Tigrayan nor Amhara forces that would be potential allies against the Ethiopian state are believed to have existing heavy weapons capabilities.

Ethnic Exclusion

Ethnic grievances are deeply embedded in the Ethiopia-Eritrea conflict matrix. Within Ethiopia, Tigrayan resentment persists from the brutal Tigray War (2020-2022), fuelled by concerns over the implementation of the Pretoria Agreement for the cessation of hostilities, the continued presence of Eritrean and Amhara forces in parts of Tigray, and internal TPLF factionalism. Amhara communities harbour grievances concerning disputed territories with Tigray, and a perception of being marginalised by the Pretoria Agreement, which contributes to the Fano insurgency. Eritrea is reportedly sympathetic to Fano's dissatisfaction with the peace agreement. Ethnic exclusion and unresolved territorial claims tied to ethnic identity can provide the backdrop for internal conflict within Ethiopia.

Fratricidal Coercion

Eritrea systematically employs fratricidal coercion, primarily through its policy of indefinite national and military service. This system mandates conscription for a significant portion of the adult population. Eritrea's reliance on such measures to sustain its large military has significant implications. While it ensures a numerically substantial force, this approach likely negatively impacts troop morale, initiative and long-term combat effectiveness, consistent with studies on fratricidal coercion.

Conflict Instrumentalisation

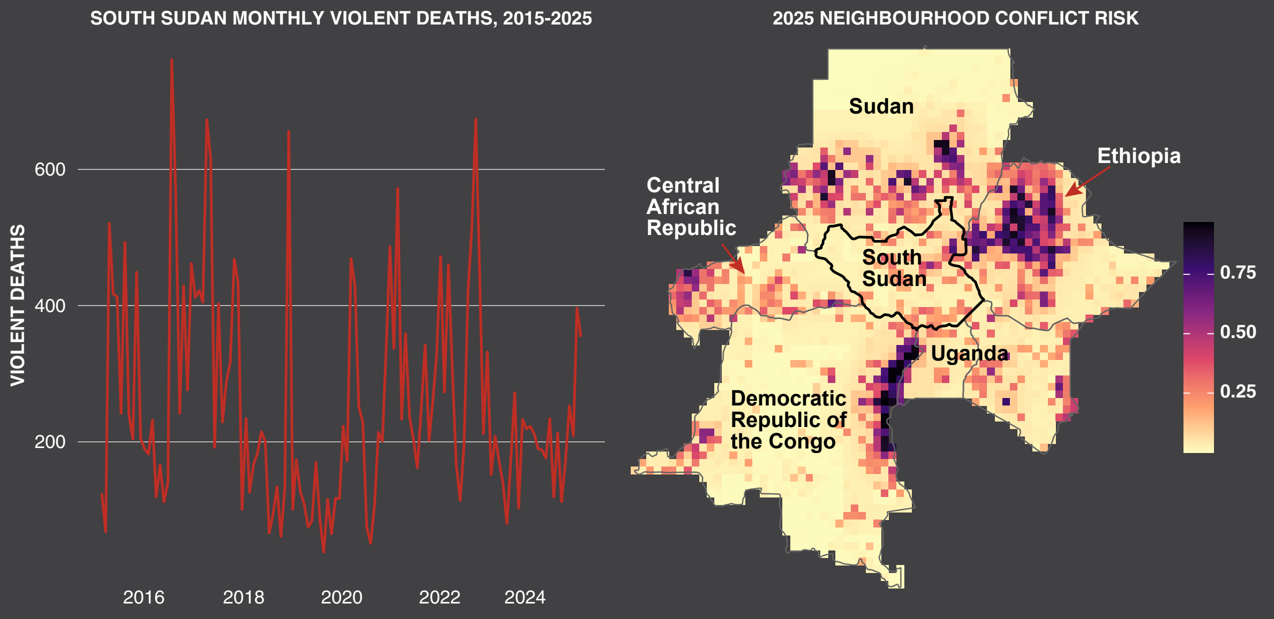
Conflict instrumentalisation is a central characteristic of the Ethiopia-Eritrea relationship, with both states leveraging the conflict narrative for domestic interests. Ethiopia primarily instrumentalises its quest for Red Sea access, framing it as an "existential" national interest essential for economic survival and regional influence. For Eritrea, the perceived threat from Ethiopia is instrumental in justifying its highly militarised state.

Government of South Sudan SSPDF – Sudan People's Liberation Army – In Opposition (SPLA-IO)

FIGURE 4.13

Conflict history and escalation hotspots in South Sudan

The conflict in Sudan is beginning to have an impact in South Sudan.



Source: ACLED, conflictforecast.org

The risk of renewed civil war in South Sudan in early 2025 has increased. The Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS), has effectively collapsed, leading to a resurgence of widespread hostilities and a severe political crisis.

Implementation of the R-ARCSS halted in the first quarter of 2025 because of repeated violations from signatory parties and a significant escalation in armed conflict across multiple states. The systematic nature of these violations, including high-level political detentions and renewed military confrontations, points to the breaches of the peace agreement's core tenets.[114]

The political environment is characterised by deadlock. High-ranking opposition members and parliamentarians have been detained. First Vice President Dr Riek Machar, leader of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-in-Opposition (SPLA-IO), was placed under house arrest in Juba. This action effectively stopped the power-sharing mechanism central to the R-ARCSS. National elections, originally scheduled for December 2024, have been postponed to December 2026.

Renewed and widespread military confrontations between the South Sudan People's Defence Forces (SSPDF) and the SPLA-IO have been reported in the states of Upper Nile, Western Bahr el-Ghazal, Western Equatoria, Unity and Jonglei. Reports indicate that the SSPDF have used improvised incendiary weapons and barrel bombs in Upper Nile State, leading to significant civilian casualties. The military balance has been further affected by significant defections of senior SPLA-IO commanders and personnel to the SSPDF. The renewed conflict has precipitated a humanitarian crisis. Over 125,000 people have been displaced since March 2025 due to armed clashes and aerial bombardments, adding to existing large, displaced populations. An estimated 9.3 million people, nearly three-quarters of South Sudan's population, require humanitarian assistance in 2025, with 7.7 million facing acute food insecurity.

The likelihood of further conflict escalation in South Sudan throughout 2025 is high. The confluence of unresolved political grievances stemming from the R-ARCSS's collapse, active ethnic mobilisation, intense elite competition for resources, particularly oil revenues, and significant external interference creates a volatile environment. The war in neighbouring Sudan has exacerbated the situation through an influx of weapons and combatants, and the involvement of both the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in South Sudan.

The nation's economic collapse has been primarily driven by disruptions to oil exports, which is South Sudan's main revenue source. There has been almost a complete cessation of oil moving through Sudanese pipelines for export as a result of the war. The government's inability to pay salaries, coupled with hyperinflation and soaring food prices, fuels widespread discontent and desperation among both the civilian population and security forces.[115]

Conflict Escalation Factors

TABLE 4.12

South Sudan escalation factors

Conflict Escalation Variable	Present?
Urban origin onset	No
Accessible terrain	No
High logistical supply	No
Non-state actor heavy weapons	No
Significant external support	Yes
Private military contractors	No
High levels of ethnic exclusion	Yes
Fratricidal coercion	No
Conflict instrumentalisation	Yes

Conflict Location

The geographic spread of the conflict in 2025 has been driven by the strategic priorities of combatants. Clashes are not confined to isolated areas but are occurring in regions of vital importance, notably the oil-rich Upper Nile State, Jonglei, Western Bahr el-Ghazal, Western Equatoria and Unity states. Fighting has also erupted near the capital, Juba, directly challenging the government's seat of power.

Accessibility of Terrain

South Sudan's challenging physical geography significantly influences military operations and contributes to the potential for protracted conflict. Vast areas, particularly the Sudd marshlands in the Upper Nile region, are characterised by swamps, numerous rivers, including the Nile and its tributaries, and a limited, poorly maintained road network. Seasonal flooding further exacerbates these conditions, rendering large areas inaccessible, especially to mechanised forces. Historically, the Sudd has served as a natural barrier to conventional military power and a sanctuary for insurgent groups. This difficult terrain inherently limits the SSPDF's ability to project and sustain conventional military power across the country. This makes decisive military victories elusive and increases the likelihood of sustained, dispersed fighting.[116]

Logistical Supply

Both the SSPDF and SPLA-IO face severe logistical constraints in 2025, a factor that shapes the nature of the conflict and heightens escalation risks. The SSPDF, despite access to state resources, is hampered by the nation's economic collapse and dwindling oil revenues, which impacts its ability to pay forces and maintain equipment. While possessing heavy weaponry like attack helicopters, the operational sustainment is costly. The SPLA-IO's logistical situation is marked by chronic shortages of ammunition, fuel, food and medical supplies. These mutual logistical weaknesses prevent either side from mounting sustained, large-scale conventional campaigns, contributing instead to a low-intensity, high-impact conflict characterised by localised clashes, raids for resources and prolonged instability, thereby increasing the risk of continued, albeit fragmented, escalation.

External Support

External military support is a significant driver of conflict dynamics and escalation potential in South Sudan. The Uganda People's Defence Force (UPDF) deployed armed soldiers and military equipment to South Sudan from March 2025, ostensibly to support the government and secure Juba directly, bolstering its military capabilities. Sudan's civil war is having spillover effects, with reports of both the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) participating in the South Sudanese conflict, alongside an influx of illegal arms and combatants.

Access to Heavy Weapons

There is no clear evidence indicating that the SPLA-IO possesses heavy artillery, armoured vehicles or sophisticated anti-aircraft capabilities. This does not prevent escalation but shapes it towards a protracted insurgency model, rather than decisive conventional battles.

Ethnic Exclusion

Ethnic exclusion remains a potent and central driver of conflict escalation in South Sudan in 2025. The primary political fault lines, particularly between President Salva Kiir's government and Riek Machar's SPLA-IO, are deeply intertwined with the Dinka and Nuer ethnic identities, respectively. Incidents such as military operations in Nuer-majority areas and the prominence of ethnic militias like the Nuer White Army in recent clashes, underscore the ethnic dimension of the violence. Historical grievances related to discrimination and violence by both groups are actively exploited. Ethnic exclusion is not a mere byproduct but an organising principle of the conflict, heightening the probability of sustained, identity-based escalation.[117]

Conflict Instrumentalisation

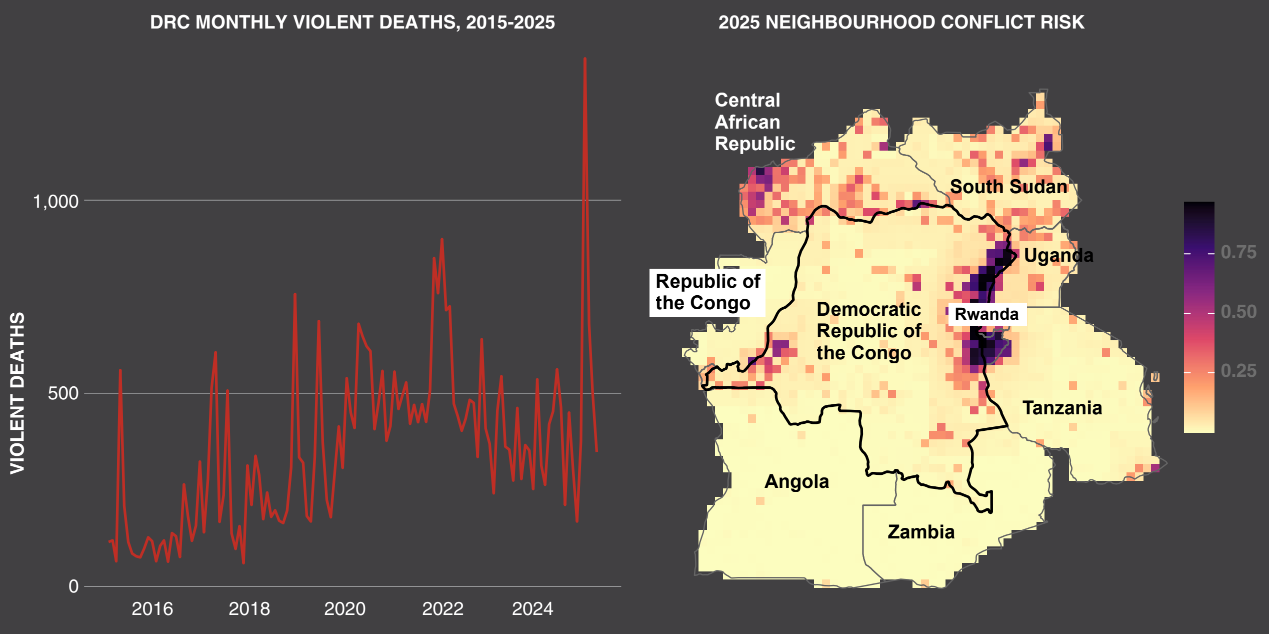
The conflict in South Sudan is shaped by the way political and military elites instrumentalise it to control and distribute power and resources. The military functions within a large and complicated patronage system, where loyalty is often tied to access to resources.[118] The current escalation can largely be understood as a violent renegotiation of the elite pact governing this resource distribution. The collapse of the R-ARCSS has removed the political framework for power-sharing, creating an opening for factions to use force to secure or expand their control over state institutions and the economic benefits they confer. The severe economic crisis, triggered by disruptions in oil production and its export, has intensified this struggle, as the pool of resources available for patronage has shrunk, thereby increasing the stakes for elites and their willingness to resort to violence to maintain or enhance their positions. This instrumentalisation renders the conflict not solely ethnic in nature, but also centred on struggles over power and wealth. With a civilian population already suffering from food shortages, the ongoing consequences of the conflict could be devastating.

Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo - M23

FIGURE 4.14

Conflict history and escalation hotspots in the DRC

The eastern border area of the DRC has experienced a surge in violent conflict in early 2025.



Source: ACLED, conflictforecast.org

This year marked a severe escalation in the conflict between the government of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and the March 23 Movement (M23), a rebel group significantly supported by Rwanda. From late 2024, M23 launched a series of major offensives across eastern DRC, achieving significant territorial gains. Key urban centres and strategic locations fell to the group in rapid succession. The capital of North Kivu province, Goma, which has a population of over two million people, was captured around 27 January. This was followed by the seizure the capital of South Kivu province, Bukavu, which has a population of approximately one million, on 16 February. The strategic mining hub of Walikale in North Kivu was taken on 19 March, representing M23's furthest westward advance in its campaign. Other critical areas, including the vital road junction town of Sake, west of Goma, and Masisi town, also came under M23 control in early 2025.

The scale and speed of these advances suggest a well-resourced and meticulously planned military campaign, heavily reliant on sophisticated external backing. Reports consistently indicate that Rwanda provides M23 with troops, advanced weaponry, and operational direction, effectively transforming the rebel group into a formidable proxy force. In areas under its control, M23 has initiated efforts to establish administrative structures, including appointing officials and undertaking infrastructure projects such as road rehabilitation, signalling intent for a long-term presence and governance.

The intensified conflict has precipitated one of the world's largest displacement crises. Over 7.8 million people have been internally displaced within the DRC. The civilian population has borne the brunt of the violence, with thousands killed. Some estimates suggest as many as 7,000 people were killed in the early months of 2025, including an estimated 3,000 during the M23 attack on Goma. Reports indicate record levels of sexual violence, widespread hunger, and the destruction of critical infrastructure such as schools and health centres. Humanitarian operations are severely constrained by the looting of aid supplies, direct targeting of displacement sites, attacks on humanitarian personnel, and restricted access due to insecurity and the inoperability of key facilities like Goma airport.[119]

Multiple diplomatic initiatives are underway, though their outcomes remain uncertain. Qatar and the US have mediated talks between the DRC and Rwanda, leading to a "declaration of principles" in April 2025. This framework is intended to be the basis for a comprehensive peace agreement, which would include the withdrawal of Rwandan forces from DRC territory and DRC commitments to address Rwanda's security concerns regarding anti-Rwanda militias operating in eastern Congo.

Simultaneously, direct negotiations between the DRC government and M23, also facilitated by Qatar, have progressed more slowly. A significant development occurred in April 2025, with a joint statement committing both parties to an immediate cessation of hostilities, a notable shift from the DRC's previous refusal to engage directly with M23 leadership. However, substantial disagreements persist, particularly concerning M23's demobilisation, disarmament, and potential amnesty for its members. The viability of these diplomatic tracks is challenged by a history of failed ceasefires; for instance, a March 2025 ceasefire agreement between the DRC and Rwandan presidents in Doha had little discernible impact on M23's continued advances.[120]

Overall Likelihood of Further Conflict Escalation

The likelihood of continued, significant violence and instability in eastern DRC throughout 2025 remains high. While concerted international diplomatic pressure and ongoing negotiations might mitigate the risk of a full-scale, regional war, proxy fighting involving M23, the country's armed forces, and a multitude of other armed groups is likely to continue.

Several factors underpin this assessment: M23's demonstrated and enhanced military capabilities, coupled with its control over significant territory; the consistent and potent external support, primarily from Rwanda, that M23 receives; the widely acknowledged structural weaknesses of the national government's armed forces and their reliance on a disparate collection of allies with varying commitments and capabilities; the deep-rooted and unresolved drivers of the conflict, including ethnic tensions, the instrumentalisation of violence for resource control, and complex regional power dynamics; and the inherent fragility of current peace processes, which still face significant hurdles in addressing core contentious issues.

Furthermore, the termination of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Mission in DRC (SAMIDRC) in March 2025, despite its own operational challenges, removes a layer of regional military presence. This withdrawal could be perceived by M23 as a weakening of the forces arrayed against it, potentially creating power vacuums or emboldening the group to consolidate its gains or attempt further expansion if government forces and their remaining allies cannot effectively fill the void.

Conflict Escalation Factors

TABLE 4.13

DRC – M23 escalation factors

Conflict Escalation Variable	Present?
Urban origin onset	No
Accessible terrain	No
High logistical supply	Yes
Non-state actor heavy weapons	Yes
Significant external support	Yes
Private military contractors	No
High levels of ethnic exclusion	Yes
Fratricidal coercion	No
Conflict instrumentalisation	Yes

Conflict Location

Operating in and capturing provincial capitals is a direct challenge to state sovereignty, inevitably provoking government counter-offensives and heightening the risk of large-scale engagements. Control over border areas facilitates the flow of external support for M23, including fighters and material, and enables cross-border operations, thereby increasing the possibility of regional spillover. The proximity of M23's operations to resource-rich zones acts as a powerful incentive for conflict, as control over these areas translates into significant financial gain. M23's deliberate focus on these specific types of locations suggests a calculated approach aimed at maximising political impact, securing economic lifelines, and ensuring operational sustainability. This pattern, coupled with efforts to establish administrative structures, points towards a long-term strategy for entrenchment, fundamentally escalating the conflict from a localised insurgency to a severe challenge to the DRC's territorial integrity.

Accessibility of Terrain

Eastern DRC is characterised by challenging geographical features, including mountainous areas and dense forests, often with limited road infrastructure. This difficult terrain influences the nature and trajectory of the conflict. The terrain complicates M23's ability to consolidate undisputed control over vast rural territories and maintain secure supply lines for conventional defence of urban centres. This dynamic often leads to fluid frontlines and persistent low-to-mid-intensity clashes in rural and remote areas contributing to a protracted conflict dynamic rather than enabling quick, decisive victories for either side.

Logistical Supply Issues

Logistical deficiencies significantly affect government forces. Government forces face considerable logistical challenges, having lost control of key highways. In contrast, M23 has demonstrated a capacity to manage and improve logistics within its areas of control. The logistical weaknesses of the government's forces constrain their operational reach and combat effectiveness. M23's relative ability to manage its own logistics, likely augmented by external support from Rwanda, is crucial for its operational endurance.

External Support for Warring Parties

External support is a critical determinant of the conflict's intensity and trajectory. M23 receives substantial and decisive backing from Rwanda. This support includes the direct involvement of thousands of Rwandan Defence Force (RDF) troops fighting alongside or embedded within M23 units, de facto Rwandan operational control over M23 campaigns, and the provision of advanced weaponry such as tanks, drones and anti-aircraft missiles, as well as ammunition and financial benefits derived from the illicit mineral trade.

Government forces, in turn, receive military support from troops from neighbouring Burundi. The SAMIDRC was deployed to assist the government's efforts, but its mandate was terminated in March 2025 due to its perceived ineffectiveness and significant operational challenges. European Private Military Companies (PMCs), employing Romanian and French nationals, provide the government forces with training, advisory services, logistical support and assistance with unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) operations. The UN peacekeeping mission, MONUSCO, also offers logistical support in specific instances, such as the transport of government security personnel. The DRC government has also reportedly sought military assistance from Chad.

Access to Heavy Weapons

M23 possesses and has effectively utilised a significant arsenal of heavy weaponry supplied by Rwanda. This includes armoured tanks, UAVs, anti-aircraft missile systems, and various forms of artillery. Access to such weaponry fundamentally alters M23's capabilities, transforming it from a typical irregular militia into a formidable, near-conventional military force. These heavy weapons enable M23 to engage government forces and their allied forces on more equal terms, to successfully assault, capture and hold significant territory, including major urban centres, and to potentially deter or challenge government air assets. This enhanced combat power directly fuels military escalation, as it raises the stakes of engagements and allows M23 to project force more effectively.

Ethnic Exclusion

Ethnic identity plays a significant role in the conflict. M23 is predominantly composed of ethnic Tutsis. The group's historical and current narrative consistently emphasises the protection of Congolese Tutsi communities from alleged discrimination, targeted violence and the DRC government's purported failure to address their grievances. This dynamic can create vicious cycles of retaliatory violence between Tutsi and non-Tutsi groups in M23 territory and beyond.

Presence of PMSCs (Private Military Contractors)

Private Military Companies (PMCs), primarily of European origin and employing Romanian and French nationals, actively support government forces, providing training and advisory services to Congolese forces, maintaining aircraft and UAVs.

Conflict Instrumentalisation

The conflict in eastern DRC is instrumentalised by various actors for multiple purposes, contributing to its intractability and escalation. Regional powers, most notably Rwanda, use the conflict to project influence, secure economic interests, and address their own perceived national security concerns within the DRC's borders.

Conflict Escalation Matrix

TABLE 4.14

Conflict escalation scores for state-based conflicts, 2024

Conflict Dyad	Conflict Instrumentalisation	Ethnic Exclusion	External Support	Fratricidal Coercion	Geographic Accessibility	Heavy Weapon Access	Logistical Access	PSMC Presence	Urban Origin
Gov Afghanistan - IS	4.00	4.00	2.60	3.67	2.33	1.00	2.33	2.00	3.00
Gov Afghanistan - NRF	3.00	4.00	2.60	2.33	1.00	2.33	1.00	2.00	1.00
Gov Benin - JNIM	4.00	2.00	2.60		1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Gov Burkina Faso - IS	5.00	3.00	1.80	2.33	1.00	2.33	1.00	2.00	1.00
Gov Burkina Faso - JNIM	4.00	3.00	2.60	2.33	1.00	2.33	1.00	3.00	1.00
Gov Burundi - RED-TABARA	4.00	4.00	2.60	2.33	1.00	1.00	1.00	2.00	1.00
Gov Cameroon - Ambazonia insurgents	3.00	4.00	1.80	2.33	2.33	1.00	2.33	2.00	1.00
Gov Cameroon - JAS	4.00	3.00	2.60	2.33	1.00	2.33	1.00	2.00	1.00
Gov Central African Republic - CPC	4.00	4.00	2.60	3.67	2.33	2.33	2.33	4.00	1.00
Gov Colombia - ELN	3.00	2.00	1.80	2.33	2.33	2.33	1.00	2.00	1.00
Gov Colombia - FARC - Segunda Marquetalia	3.00	2.00	1.80	2.33	1.00	2.33	1.00	2.00	1.00
Gov Colombia - FARC-EMC	3.00	2.00	1.00	2.33	1.00	2.33	1.00	2.00	1.00
Gov DR Congo - AFC	4.00	3.00			2.33		1.00		
Gov DR Congo - IS	3.00	2.00	2.60	2.33	1.00	1.00	1.00	2.00	1.00
Gov DR Congo - Mobondo	3.00	4.00	1.80		1.00	1.00	1.00	2.00	1.00
Gov Ethiopia - Fano	3.00	3.00	1.00		3.67	2.33	3.67	2.00	1.00
Gov Ethiopia - OLA	3.00	4.00	1.80	2.33	2.33	2.33	2.33	2.00	1.00
Gov Haiti - Viv Ansanm		1.00			5.00		5.00	2.00	5.00
Gov India - CPI-Maoist	1.00	2.00	1.00	3.67	1.00	1.00	1.00	2.00	1.00
Gov India - Kashmir insurgents	4.00	4.00	2.60	2.33	2.33	1.00	2.33	2.00	1.00
Gov Indonesia - OPM	2.00	4.00	1.80	2.33	1.00	1.00	1.00	2.00	1.00
Gov Iran - Jaish al-Adl	3.00	4.00	1.80	2.33	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Gov Iraq - IS	5.00	4.00	5.00	5.00	2.33	2.33	3.67	3.00	3.00
Gov Israel - Fatah	4.00	4.00	5.00	1.00	3.67	1.00	3.67	1.00	3.00
Gov Israel - Hamas	5.00	4.00	5.00	2.33	5.00	3.67	5.00	2.00	1.00
Gov Israel - Hezbollah	5.00	3.00	5.00	1.00	3.67	5.00	3.67	2.00	1.00
Gov Israel - PIJ	4.00	4.00	5.00	1.00	5.00	2.33	5.00	1.00	5.00
Gov Kenya - Al-Shabaab	4.00	2.00	2.60	1.00	2.33	2.33	2.33	2.00	1.00
Gov Mali - FLA	3.00	4.00	2.60		1.00		1.00	4.00	1.00
Gov Mali - IS	4.00	3.00	2.60	2.33	1.00	2.33	1.00	4.00	1.00
Gov Mali - JNIM	4.00	3.00	2.60	2.33	1.00	2.33	1.00	4.00	1.00
Gov Mozambique - IS	4.00	3.00	2.60	2.33	1.00	2.33	1.00	4.00	1.00
Gov Myanmar - KIO	4.00	5.00	2.60	2.33	1.00	3.67	1.00	1.00	1.00
Gov Myanmar - KNDF	4.00	4.00	2.60	2.33	1.00	2.33	2.33	2.00	1.00
Gov Myanmar - KNU	4.00	4.00	2.60	2.33	1.00	2.33	1.00	2.00	1.00
Gov Myanmar - MNDAA	4.00	4.00	2.60	2.33	1.00	2.33	1.00	2.00	1.00
Gov Myanmar - NUG	4.00	4.00	2.60	3.67	2.33	2.33	3.67	2.00	3.00
Gov Myanmar - PNLO	3.00	4.00	1.80		2.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Gov Myanmar - PSLF	3.00	4.00	2.60		1.00	2.33	1.00	2.00	1.00
Gov Myanmar - ULA	4.00	4.00	2.60	2.33	1.00	3.67	1.00	1.00	1.00
Gov Niger - IS	4.00	2.00	2.60	2.33	1.00	1.00	1.00	2.00	1.00

Gov Niger - JNIM	4.00	2.00	2.60	2.33	1.00	2.33	1.00	2.00	1.00
Gov Nigeria - IPOB	3.00	4.00	1.80	2.33	3.67	1.00	3.67	2.00	3.00
Gov Nigeria - IS	4.00	4.00	2.60	2.33	1.00	2.33	2.33	3.00	1.00
Gov Nigeria - JAS	4.00	4.00	2.60	3.67	1.00	2.33	1.00	3.00	1.00
Gov Pakistan - BRAS	3.00	4.00	1.80	2.33	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Gov Pakistan - HGB	4.00	3.00			1.00		2.33	2.00	1.00
Gov Pakistan - TTP	4.00	3.00	2.60	3.67	1.00	2.33	2.33	2.00	1.00
Gov Philippines - CPP	3.00	1.00	1.80	2.33	2.33	2.33	1.00	2.00	1.00
Gov Philippines - IS	4.00	2.00	2.60	2.33	2.33	2.33	2.33	3.00	1.00
Gov Russia - IS	4.00	2.00	1.00		2.33	1.00			
Gov Somalia - Al-Shabaab	4.00	3.00	5.00	3.67	2.33	2.33	2.33	4.00	1.00
Gov Somalia - IS	4.00	2.00	2.60	2.33	2.33	1.00	1.00	2.00	1.00
Gov Somalia - Jubaland State of Somalia	4.00	3.00	2.60	2.33		2.33	2.33	2.00	3.00
Gov Sudan - RSF	4.00	4.00	5.00	3.67	3.67	5.00	3.67	5.00	5.00
Gov Syria - IS	5.00	4.00	2.60	5.00	2.33	2.33	3.67	4.00	1.00
Gov Syria - SDF	4.00	4.00	5.00	2.33	2.33	3.67	3.67	3.00	1.00
Gov Syria - Syrian insurgents	5.00	4.00	5.00	5.00	2.33	3.67	3.67	4.00	3.00
Gov Thailand - Patani insurgents	2.00	4.00	1.00	2.33	2.33	1.00	2.33	2.00	1.00
Gov Togo - JNIM	4.00	2.00	2.60		1.00	2.33	1.00		1.00
Gov Türkiye- PKK	4.00	4.00	2.60	2.33	1.00	2.33	2.33	2.00	1.00
Gov Yemen (North Yemen) - PLC	4.00	1.00	5.00		2.33	3.67	3.67	4.00	5.00

The free flow of information is foundational to peace. Societies with open, better information systems consistently rank higher on the Global Peace Index.

Trends in the *Free Flow of Information* Pillar are mixed. While access to telecommunications has improved more than any other indicator in the Positive Peace Index, press freedom and information quality have declined.

Reliable information flows support both domestic stability and global action. Everything from business efficiency to prompt humanitarian responses rely on up to date and accurate information.

Media coverage of conflict remains highly unbalanced. In 2023, civilian deaths in high-income countries received 100 times more media articles than a similar number of deaths in low-income countries.

Major power rivalries dominate headlines. Media reporting on international affairs focuses heavily on competitive interactions between global powers.

Civil conflicts are underreported compared to conflict between countries even when they have substantially higher numbers of fatalities.

While the expansion of telecommunications offers unparalleled access to information, social media is often accompanied by low-quality, inflammatory or partisan content, deepening social divides.

5 Positive Peace, Conflict and Information Flows

Overview

The Global Peace Index ranks countries based on their levels of negative peace, defined as the absence of violence or the fear of violence.

But the counterpart to this concept is Positive Peace, which refers to the *attitudes, institutions and structures* that create and sustain peaceful societies. High levels of Positive Peace occur where attitudes make violence less tolerated, institutions are resilient and more responsive to society's needs, and structures create the environment for productive and efficient society.

The *Free Flow of Information* is one of the eight core Pillars of the Positive Peace Index (PPI). It assesses the extent to which information freely and independently flows within a society, enabling individuals, businesses and civil society to make informed decisions. As a composite measure, it comprises three indicators covering the *freedom of the press*, the *quality of information* disseminated within societies, and the level of *telecommunications infrastructure*, which includes the availability of internet, mobile and broadband technologies. Taken together, these indicators capture the capacity of a society to facilitate open, trustworthy and reliable channels of communication from a variety of different sources.

In the past decade, *Free Flow of Information* has experienced the third largest improvement of any Positive Peace Pillar, improving by 3.3 per cent. This improvement was entirely driven by the substantial expansion of telecommunications technologies, which have brought internet and mobile access to billions of people. Digitised sources of information have also become more and more central to the global information environment, displacing much of the space previously occupied by print media. For example, one dataset focusing on 20 major news outlets saw the number of digital news stories increase from about 315,000 to about 1.8 million between 2000 and 2019, a 471 per cent increase.[121]

The digitalisation of information sharing, particularly through the rise of social media, initially held the promise of a global democratisation of reporting. It was thought that the rising availability of new information technologies and networks could bring global attention to developments and challenges in often overlooked communities and countries around the world.[122] Such global attention can prove vital not only for raising awareness but also for mobilising international responses to crisis situations, enabling vast improvements in knowledge, and empowering global business startups and global connectiveness in ways unimaginable 30 years ago.

This section examines the ways in which this promise of digitalised information has not been fully realised. While online information has improved people's access to knowledge, vastly improved their efficiency and enhanced their creativity, it has also amplified the spread of false and inciteful information, often with the aim of shaping political discourse. Global news coverage is also highly uneven, with disproportionate coverage of more powerful countries. The decline of traditional media's economic models has led to a narrowing of topics and a reduction in the depth of coverage. This dynamic can be seen in relation to the world's conflicts as well as in tensions between countries, where more geopolitically influential states receive more global attention than other states.

When deciding how much space to give a conflict, editors typically weigh a standard set of "news values" such as impact, proximity to core audiences, prominence of the actors involved, and the practical ease of gathering material. Russia's assault on Ukraine involves a major power, creates direct security concerns in Europe, affects global food and energy chains and takes place in locations that are comparatively accessible to foreign reporters. Those factors raise its perceived relevance for large Western outlets.

By contrast, the Tigray war in Ethiopia (2020-2022) unfolded behind internet shutdowns and visa restrictions, in a region viewed as geographically and culturally distant from many newsrooms' primary markets and with fewer immediate spillovers into those markets. Higher logistical barriers and lower anticipated audience interest meant fewer correspondents on the ground and, in turn, less overall coverage. These divergent professional calculations explain much of why some wars receive substantially more attention than others.

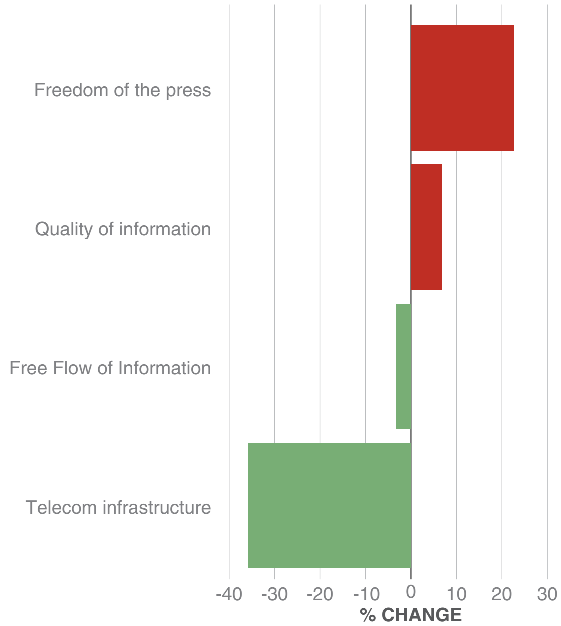
INFORMATION FLOWS: DIVERGENT TRENDS IN ACCESS AND QUALITY

Within the *Free Flow of Information* Pillar, the underlying indicators have been marked by divergent trends over the past ten years. As shown in Figure 5.1, the global average score for *telecommunications infrastructure* has improved by 35.9 per cent. This was the largest improvement of any indicator in the PPI. However, the other two indicators of the Pillar have moved in the opposite direction. The *freedom of the press* indicator has deteriorated by 13.4 per cent over the last decade, the most of any indicator in the PPI, while *quality of information* has deteriorated by 6.9 per cent, the second most of any indicator.

FIGURE 5.1

Change in global Free Flow of Information scores, 2013–2023

The *Free Flow of Information* Pillar has been marked by two diverging trends on its underlying indicators, with technological access improving while press freedom and information quality have deteriorated.



Source: IEP Calculations

The *telecommunications infrastructure* indicator is a composite measure of the rate of internet users and mobile phone and broadband subscribers across countries. The *freedom of the press* indicator is based on an index of measures that include media independence, concentration of media, journalist safety and the quality of news infrastructure. The *quality of information* indicator focuses on the reliability of information disseminated by governments through formal and informal channels, specifically measuring the frequency with which governments and their agents use social media to disseminate misleading or false information to their citizens.

Since 2013, the deterioration on the *freedom of the press* indicator has been widespread, affecting all regions and government types. There are 131 countries that recorded deteriorations on this indicator since 2013, and only 20 that recorded improvements. Twelve countries recorded no change, all of which are authoritarian regimes that recorded the worst possible scores in both 2013 and 2023. Among other government types, full democracies recorded substantial deteriorations, with more than 90 per cent of such countries deteriorating, and nearly 80 per cent of flawed democracies also saw reductions in press freedom. The most severely impacted countries, however, were those with hybrid government types, which are those that combine authoritative and democratic elements. All hybrid regime countries recorded deteriorations in press freedom in the past decade.

Trends across the three indicators of the *Free Flow of Information* Pillar reflect the divergences in the information environment. On the one hand, the volume and accessibility of information has expanded dramatically. Such advancements in telecommunications have empowered individuals and communities with tools to connect, learn and participate in global discourse.

However, the vast amount of information enabled by new technologies has challenged traditional quality control systems, allowing misinformation to spread. Some governments and other actors have taken advantage of this to undermine trust and promote their political agendas. Governments, organisations and citizens who are the target of these misinformation campaigns struggle to find appropriate channels to counter the narratives. As a result, information quality and press freedom have declined, highlighting the growing gap between access and reliability.

This disconnect is reflected in the weakening of the correlation between some of these indicators. As shown in Table 5.1, the level of correlation between the indicators of the *Free Flow of Information* Pillar and the PPI was strong in both 2013 and 2023. However, there has been a noticeable fall in the correlation between the PPI and *telecoms infrastructure*. The large increases in infrastructure have not been matched with corresponding increases in Positive Peace.

TABLE 5.1

Correlation between FFI indicators and the overall PPI

While still significant, the strength of the correlation between *telecoms infrastructure* and Positive Peace has fallen.

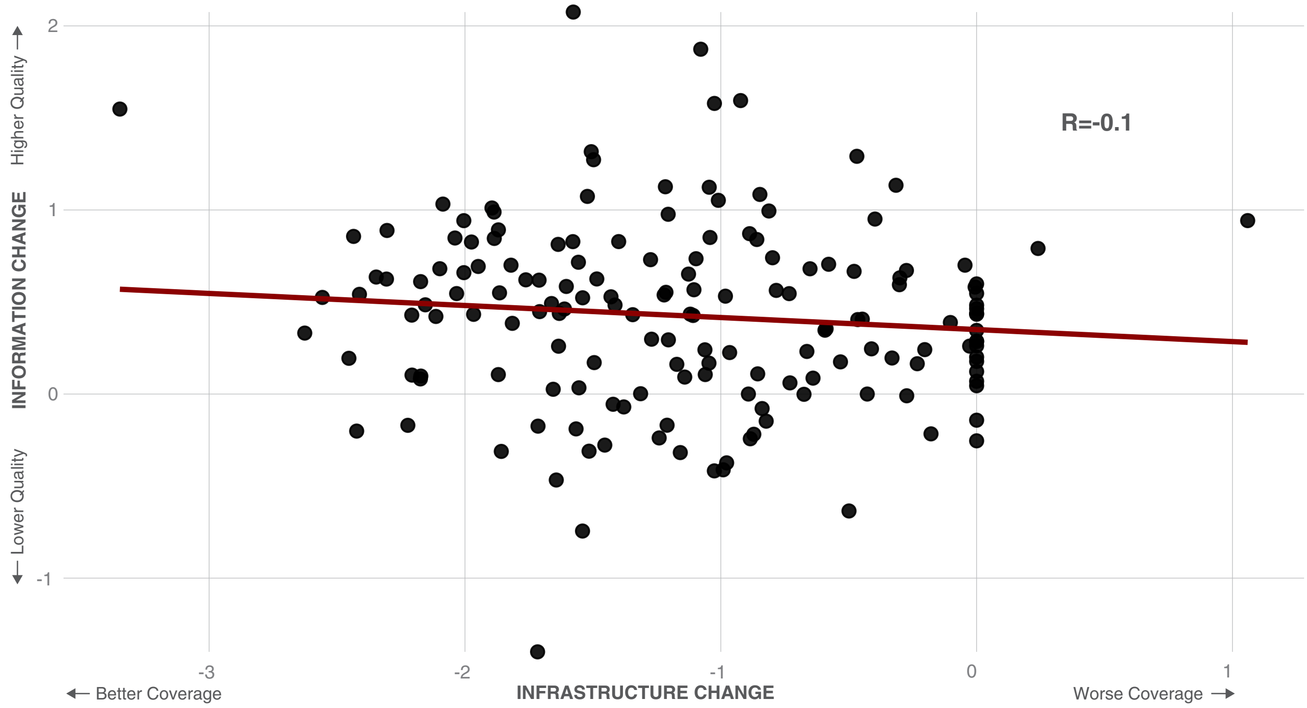
FFI Indicator	2013 Correlation	2023 Correlation	Change
Free Flow of Information	0.92	0.9	0.02
Freedom of the press	0.66	0.72	-0.06
Quality of information	0.76	0.73	0.03
Telecoms infrastructure	0.91	0.78	0.13

This disconnect is further illustrated by looking at the level of correlation between the rate and direction of change in these indicators over time. Figure 5.2 shows the correlation between changes in *telecom infrastructure* and changes in the average scores for *quality of information* and *freedom of the press*.

FIGURE 5.2

Changes in telecom infrastructure vs changes in information quality–press freedom, 2013–2023

Improvements in *telecom infrastructure* have not tended to translate into more freely reported, higher-quality information.



Source: IEP Calculations

Improvements on *telecommunications infrastructure* have been nearly universal, with only two countries registering deteriorations since 2013. In contrast, changes in the press freedom–information quality measure have been more mixed, with more countries experiencing deteriorations rather than improvements. This illustrates the contrasting trends on the *Free Flow of Information* domain. While access to information has never been easier, it has also created an environment where misinformation is easier to spread.

MEDIA REPORTS, ARMED CONFLICT AND INTERNATIONAL TENSIONS

International news coverage does more than recount events; it also responds to audience interests. Outlets inform the public about developments worldwide while satisfying what readers and viewers want to see. Consequently, the prominence a story receives depends not only on its tangible impact but also on what both media producers and consumers consider most engaging.

While the *Free Flow of Information* Pillar upholds the importance for striving for accuracy and neutrality in the dissemination of information, news stories are inevitably shaped by editorial decisions about what consumers wish to read and institutional priorities, which in turn influences public perceptions.[123] Conflicts in less prominent countries, particularly civil wars, tend to receive less attention than those involving more prominent countries, particularly if these countries are involved in interstate conflicts.

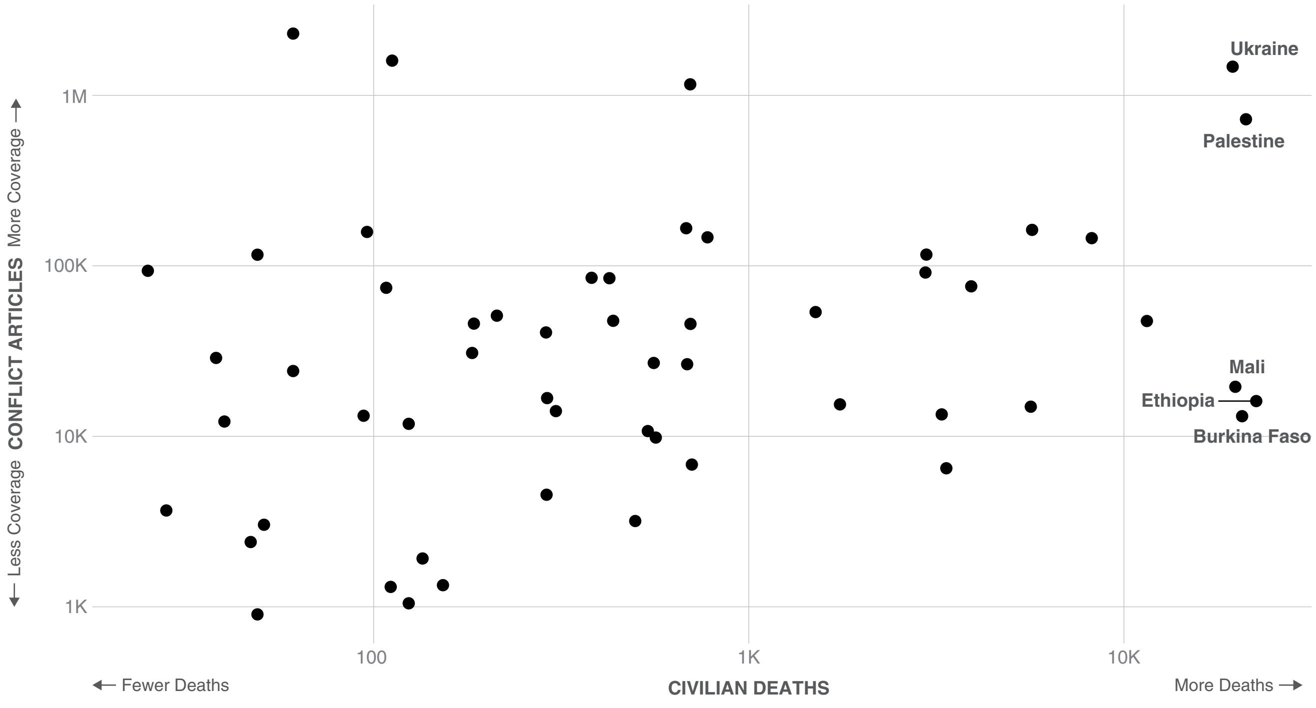
This pattern can be seen by looking at the correlation between media event data and violence and conflict data. Event data is captured in datasets like the Global Database of Events, Language and Tone (GDELT), a platform comprising millions of media records that are assembled and coded in real time to track global events. Conflict and violence data is captured in datasets like the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), a data initiative that collects detailed information on political violence, protest and conflict events across the world. The comparison of the datasets reveals the disproportionality in media attention relative to the lethality of conflict.

Figure 5.3 shows the relationship between the number of conflict-related civilian deaths per country recorded in 2023, as captured by ACLED, and the volume of news articles associated with conflict-related events per country, as captured by GDELT. This figure only includes countries that recorded at least 25 conflict-related civilian deaths in 2023.

FIGURE 5.3

Conflict-related civilian deaths vs number of conflict-related articles, by country, 2023

Conflicts in Mali, Ethiopia and Burkina Faso received relatively little press coverage.



Source: GDELT, ACLED, IEP Calculations

There are substantial disparities in news coverage across countries, and a high number of deaths does not necessarily translate to a high volume of coverage. The disparity in media coverage is most pronounced between major powers and less geopolitically influential countries. For example, of the five countries with the highest ratio of articles to civilian conflict deaths in 2023, all but one were highly economically developed or upper-middle income countries.[4] Conversely, conflicts in less economically developed countries like Ethiopia and Burkina Faso received very little coverage, even though both had over 20,000 recorded civilian deaths. In the case of Ethiopia, the low coverage has been in large part by design, as in recent years there have been far-reaching efforts to restrict information flows and reporting on violence in the country, as detailed in Box 5.1.

The relationship between country economic development and the volume of coverage per civilian death is shown in Figure 5.4. The volume of coverage per death in economically developed countries is significantly higher than in less economically developed countries. The median number of articles per death in high-income countries was 1,663, nearly 100 times more than the 17.4 articles per death in low-income countries.

BOX 5.1

Conflict, press coverage and media blackouts in Ethiopia

In recent years, conflict between Ethiopia's central government and regional forces in Tigray, Amhara and Oromia has repeatedly prompted strict limits on media and social media coverage of the violence. In February 2023, government authorities imposed a nationwide block on major social-media platforms after violent protests spread across Oromia and parts of Amhara.[5] Officials framed the shutdown as a public-safety measure, because of inciteful posts leading to violence, but the offshoot was that domestic journalists reported that the lack of connectivity hampered real-time verification of clashes and made independent reporting difficult, requiring newsrooms to rely on second-hand accounts and official statements.[6]

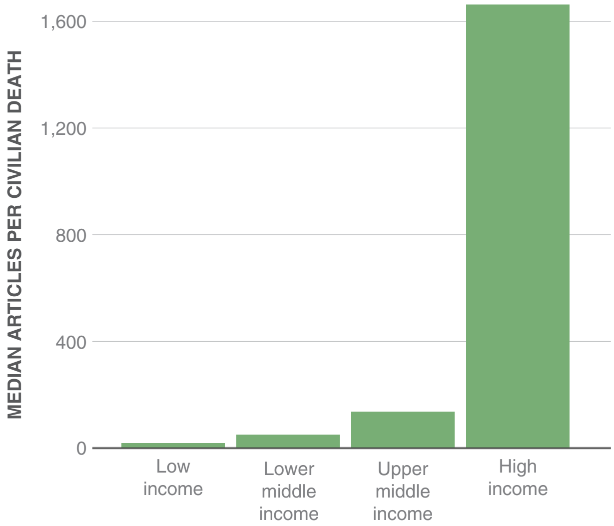
A more extensive blackout followed in early August 2023 when fighting intensified between federal security forces and Fano militia in Amhara Region. The government ordered telecom operators to suspend mobile and fixed-line internet as well as voice services in at least 19 cities, cutting off some 40 million residents from digital communications.[7] With these restrictions, local and international media outlets struggled to report on events.

These restrictions followed a much longer blackout in the context of the country's Tigray conflict (2020-2022). When fighting broke out, authorities declared a regional state of emergency and swiftly shut down internet, mobile phone and landline communications in the Tigray region. This was to impede the rebels' ability to communicate and mobilise, and they barred journalists from entering the area. The near two-year information blockade largely cut Tigray off from the outside world.

FIGURE 5.4

Median number of articles per conflict-related civilian death, by country income group, 2023

There were nearly 1,700 articles associated with the average civilian death in high-income countries, compared to just 17 in low-income countries.



Source: GDELT, ACLED, IEP Calculations

Different types of conflict also result in unequal news coverage. Table 5.2 shows this discrepancy by comparing the number of conflict-related articles per civilian death across countries with the least and most coverage. All five of the countries with the least coverage per civilian death are experiencing civil conflicts. Four of the five countries with the worst coverage are in Africa, suggesting that conflicts in this region receive disproportionately low media attention regardless of their severity and impact on civilians.

Fatigue bias can also contribute to disparities in conflict coverage. Repeated exposure to a specific ongoing issue often causes news audiences to grow tired of it, leading them to avoid the topic and view its coverage negatively. This fatigue, particularly in relation to long-term conflicts, may result in reduced media coverage as audience engagement declines, prompting news producers to scale back reporting on these subjects.[8]

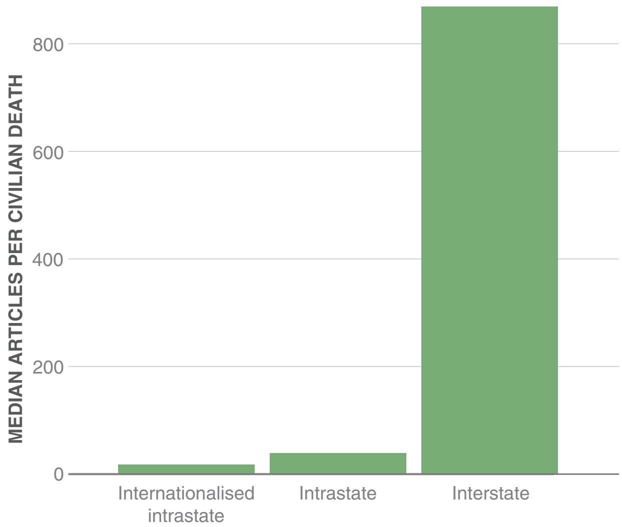
Civil conflicts, which make up the vast majority of conflicts globally, garner far less attention than conflicts between two or more sovereign states, which, in the 21st century, have become relatively rare.

Figure 5.5 illustrates the average number of articles per civilian death for interstate conflicts, intrastate conflicts and internationalised intrastate conflicts. Interstate conflicts receive by far the most media attention, with approximately 870 articles per civilian death. Second are (non-internationalised) intrastate conflicts, which receive about 37 articles per civilian death, followed by internationalised intrastate conflicts, with only about 18 articles per civilian death.

FIGURE 5.5

Median number of articles per conflict-related civilian death, by conflict type, 2023

Interstate conflicts are associated with by far the most media coverage, followed by intrastate conflicts and internationalised intrastate conflicts.



Source: GDELT, ACLED, IEP Calculations

TABLE 5.2

Countries with the highest and lowest numbers of articles per civilian death, 2023

The average number of articles per conflict-related death ranges from fewer than one in Burkina Faso, compared to more than 14,000 in Russia.

	Country	Number of Conflict Articles per Civilian Death	Primary Conflict Type
Fewest articles per death	Burkina Faso	0.6	Intrastate
	Ethiopia	0.7	Intrastate
	Mali	1	Internationalised Intrastate
	Cameroon	1.9	Intrastate
	Haiti	2.6	One-Sided Violence / Violence Against Civilians
Most articles per death	Russia	14,269	Interstate
	Azerbaijan	3,742	Internationalised Intrastate
	Lebanon	2,372	Extrasystemic
	Israel	1,663	Interstate
	Iran	1,647	One-Sided Violence / Violence Against Civilians

Source: GDELT, ACLED, UCDP, IEP calculations

These patterns are not unique to recent coverage of conflicts but reflect enduring trends in how conflicts have been reported.[9] For example, in 2014 the *New York Times* had much higher levels of coverage of conflict in Gaza and Ukraine than in Africa. The 2014 Gaza War was the subject of 134 articles in a single month, while in the first six months of the Russian-Ukrainian War in 2014, Ukraine was on average the subject of more than 70 articles per month.[10] In contrast, the civil war in the Central Africa Republic (CAR) was the focus of only about 4-5 articles per month in the same year, despite the CAR conflict resulting in at least twice as many deaths.

This disproportionate media coverage is often a reflection of relative geopolitical influence but also of the interest of the viewers. Conflicts involving powerful nations or alliances, particularly interstate conflicts, carry broad implications for international diplomacy, security alliances and economic policies. Conflicts that threaten major trade routes, foreign investments, valuable resources or stability in economically significant regions, tend to attract greater media attention. In contrast, conflicts in regions with less economic influence are more likely to be overlooked, regardless of their severity or humanitarian consequences.[11]

This dynamic holds true even when tensions do not erupt into open conflict. In the past decade, many powerful countries have seen a rise in geopolitical tensions with rival powers. Table 5.3 lists the 30 country pairings with the highest volume of international media reports since 2018. It shows that adversarial relationships involving major powers dominate the media landscape. These countries, including Russia, Ukraine, the US, Israel and China, reflect the focus of the media on events which speak to global power dynamics.

TABLE 5.3

Most frequently reported interstate event pairings, 2018–2024

Records from POLECAT show that conflictual relations between global powers tend to dominate the international news coverage on interstate relations.

	Actor Country	Recipient Country	News Item Count	Most Common Code
1	Russia	Ukraine	20,768	Material conflict
2	Israel	Palestine	10,709	Material conflict
3	Ukraine	Russia	10,287	Material conflict
4	United States	Russia	7,839	Verbal conflict
5	United States	China	6,199	Verbal conflict
6	China	United States	6,169	Verbal conflict
7	United States	Iran	6,162	Verbal conflict
8	Russia	United States	5,896	Verbal conflict
9	Iran	United States	4,643	Verbal conflict
10	Israel	Syria	4,495	Material conflict
11	Palestine	Israel	3,764	Material conflict
12	Syria	Israel	3,405	Material conflict
13	Armenia	Azerbaijan	3,316	Material conflict
14	India	Pakistan	2,600	Verbal conflict
15	European Union	Russia	2,536	Verbal conflict
16	Pakistan	India	2,458	Verbal conflict
17	Azerbaijan	Armenia	2,412	Material conflict
18	United Kingdom	Russia	2,341	Verbal conflict
19	United States	Ukraine	2,091	Verbal conflict
20	United States	Venezuela	1,990	Verbal conflict
21	Iran	Israel	1,983	Verbal conflict
22	United States	Israel	1,883	Verbal conflict
23	Yemen	Saudi Arabia	1,780	Material conflict
24	Türkiye	United States	1,750	Verbal conflict
25	United Kingdom	United States	1,739	Verbal conflict
26	United States	United Kingdom	1,714	Verbal conflict
27	Türkiye	Syria	1,666	Material conflict
28	Israel	Iran	1,641	Material conflict
29	North Korea	United States	1,571	Verbal conflict
30	Germany	Russia	1,531	Verbal conflict

Source: POLECAT, IEP calculations

Table 5.3 also conveys how the media portrays interstate relations by listing the most common type of media-reported interactions between pairings. These four codes (material conflict, verbal conflict, material cooperation, and verbal cooperation) categorise the nature of each event. They denote whether the engagement is conflictual or cooperative, and whether it is based purely in words and statements or if it rises to the level of concrete actions. The balance of these codes reflects the prevailing dynamics of interstate relationships. These country pairings are heavily skewed toward competitive interactions, reflecting a strong focus on rivalries between countries.

The relationship between Russia and Ukraine, with over 20,000 total records, is by far the most significant in terms of media coverage in the past six years in the dataset. The number of reports underscores the severity of the ongoing crisis in Russian-Ukrainian relations since the 2014 annexation of Crimea, with tensions escalating dramatically following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022. This conflict, involving substantial geopolitical stakes for Europe, the US and NATO, has garnered widespread attention not only due to its direct impacts on the countries involved but also because of the broader implications for international law, sovereignty and the balance of power in Eastern Europe.

The Israel-Palestine relationship also features prominently, with over 10,000 records. This long-standing conflict has received international attention for decades, but since the Hamas-led attack on Israel in October 2023, which led to the initiation of the Israel-Hamas war, the global focus on Israel-Palestine relations has risen substantially. In addition to the parties directly involved, the conflict holds great significance related to regional stability and cultural identity. Media coverage of this issue not only reflects the persistent tensions but also the broader interests of the international community in seeing a resolution that upholds peace and stability in the Middle East.

Reflecting its influence and engagement all around the world, the US appears as either an actor or recipient country in 13 out of the 30 pairings, with about 50,000 total records associated with it. The country's most common engagements are with Russia and China, with the majority of them tagged as "verbal conflict". These pairings reflect ongoing major-power rivalries. In the case of US-Russia relations, media reports have focused on allegations of interference in domestic affairs, cybersecurity incidents and tensions over arms treaties and military presence in key regions like Eastern Europe. US-China relations, on the other hand, centre on trade disputes, technological competition and territorial claims in the South China Sea.

Beyond these high-profile conflicts, some regional relationships are also among those that amass the most media reports. For example, India and Pakistan, with hundreds of reports categorised as "verbal conflict", exemplify a longstanding rivalry influenced by border disputes, nuclear deterrence and divergent national interests. While the data does not capture events in 2025, the recent eruption of hostilities between India and Pakistan demonstrates how escalating verbal conflict can help give rise to material conflict.

These patterns highlight a core issue with the contemporary information environment: many of the world's most deadly conflicts remain underrepresented in global news. Media coverage often reflects a narrow lens, shaped more by geopolitical significance than by humanitarian urgency.

The rise of social media and the digital expansion of telecommunications has undoubtedly improved access to information, but it has not guaranteed more reliable or proportionate reporting. Declines in press freedom and information quality suggest that even as more data circulates, there is no guarantee of an increase in media quality. This divergence between access and quality complicates the relationship between information and peace.

6 Appendices

APPENDIX A

GPI Methodology

Peace is notoriously difficult to define. The simplest way of approaching it is in terms of the harmony achieved by the absence of violence or the fear of violence, which has been described as Negative Peace. Negative Peace is a complement to Positive Peace which is defined as the attitudes, institutions and structures that create and sustain peaceful societies.

The GPI was founded by Steve Killelea, an Australian technology entrepreneur and philanthropist. It is produced by the Institute for Economics & Peace, a global think tank dedicated to developing metrics to analyse peace and to quantify its economic benefits.

The GPI measures a country's level of Negative Peace using three domains of peacefulness. The first domain, *Ongoing Domestic and International Conflict*, uses six statistical indicators to investigate the extent to which countries are involved in internal and external conflicts, as well as their role and duration of involvement in conflicts.

The second domain evaluates the level of harmony or discord within a nation; eleven indicators broadly assess what might be described as *Societal Safety and Security*. The assertion is that low crime rates, minimal terrorist activity and violent demonstrations, harmonious relations with neighbouring countries, a stable political scene and a small proportion of the population being internally displaced or made refugees can be equated with peacefulness.

Six further indicators are related to a country's *Militarisation* —reflecting the link between a country's level of military build-up and access to weapons and its level of peacefulness, both domestically and internationally. Comparable data on military expenditure as a percentage of GDP and the number of armed service officers per head are gauged, as are financial contributions to UN peacekeeping missions.

The expert panel

An international panel of independent experts played a key role in establishing the GPI in 2007—in selecting the indicators that best assess a nation's level of peace and in assigning their weightings. The panel has overseen each edition of the GPI; this year, it included:

Professor Kevin P. Clements, chairperson
Foundation Chair of Peace and Conflict Studies and Director, National Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, University of Otago, New Zealand

Dr. Sabina Alkire
Director, Oxford Poverty & Human Development Initiative (OPHI), University of Oxford, United Kingdom

Dr. Ian Anthony
Research Analyst, Swedish Defence Research Agency

Dr. Manuela Mesa
Director, Centre for Education and Peace Research (CEIPAZ) and President, Spanish Association for Peace Research (AIPAZ), Madrid, Spain

Dr. Ekaterina Stepanova
Head, Unit on Peace and Conflict Studies, Institute of the World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO), Russian Academy of Sciences, Russia

The Indicators

The GPI comprises 23 indicators of the absence of violence or fear of violence. The indicators were originally selected with the assistance of the expert panel in 2007 and have been reviewed by the expert panel on an annual basis. All scores for each indicator are normalised on a scale of 1-5, whereby qualitative indicators are banded into five groupings and quantitative ones are scored from 1 to 5, to the third decimal point.

ONGOING DOMESTIC & INTERNATIONAL CONFLICT

- **Number and duration of internal conflicts**
  Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) Battle-Related Deaths Dataset, Non-State Conflict Dataset and One-sided Violence Dataset; Institute for Economics & Peace (IEP)
- **Number of deaths from external organised conflict**
  UCDP Georeferenced Event Dataset
- **Number of deaths from internal organised conflict**
  UCDP Georeferenced Event Dataset
- **Number, duration and role in external conflicts**
  UCDP Battle-Related Deaths Dataset; IEP
- **Intensity of organised internal conflict**
  Qualitative assessment by EIU analysts
- **Relations with neighbouring countries**
  Qualitative assessment by EIU analysts

SOCIETAL SAFETY & SECURITY

- **Level of perceived criminality in society**
  Gallup World Poll, IEP estimates
- **Number of refugees and internally displaced people as a percentage of the population**
  Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Mid-Year Trends; Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC)
- **Political instability**
  Qualitative assessment by EIU analysts
- **Political Terror Scale**
  Gibney, Mark, Linda Cornett, Reed Wood, Peter Haschke, Daniel Arnon, and Attilio Pisanò. 2021. The Political Terror Scale 1976-2019. Date Retrieved, from the Political Terror Scale website: http://www.politicalterrorscale.org.
- **Impact of terrorism**
  IEP Global Terrorism Index (GTI)
- **Number of homicides per 100,000 people**
  United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Surveys on Crime Trends and the Operations of Criminal Justice Systems (CTS); EIU estimates
- **Level of violent crime**
  Qualitative assessment by EIU analysts
- **Violent demonstrations**
  Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED); IEP
- **Number of jailed population per 100,000 people**
  World Prison Brief, Institute for Criminal Policy Research at Birkbeck, University of London
- **Number of internal security officers and police per 100,000 people**
  UNODC CTS
- **Ease of access to small arms and light weapons**
  Qualitative assessment by EIU analysts

MILITARISATION

- **Military expenditure as a percentage of GDP**
  The Military Balance, IISS, EIU Estimates
- **Number of armed services personnel per 100,000 people**
  The Military Balance, IISS
- **Volume of transfers of major conventional weapons as recipient (imports) per 100,000 people**
  Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) Arms Transfers Database
- **Volume of transfers of major conventional weapons as supplier (exports) per 100,000 people**
  SIPRI Arms Transfers Database
- **Financial contribution to UN peacekeeping missions**
  United Nations Committee on Contributions; IEP
- **Nuclear and heavy weapons capabilities**
  Military Balance+, IISS; IEP

Methodological Notes

WEIGHTING THE INDEX

When the GPI was launched in 2007 the advisory panel of independent experts apportioned scores based on the relative importance of each of the indicators on a scale of 1-5. Two sub-component weighted indices were then calculated from the GPI group of indicators:

1. A measure of how internally peaceful a country is;
2. A measure of how externally peaceful a country is (its state of peace beyond its borders).

The overall composite score and index was then formulated by applying a weight of 60 per cent to the measure of internal peace and 40 per cent to external peace. The heavier weight applied to internal peace was agreed upon by the advisory panel, following robust debate. The decision was based on the notion that a greater level of internal peace is likely to lead to, or at least correlate with, lower external conflict. The weights have been reviewed by the advisory panel prior to the compilation of each edition of the GPI.

MEASURING THE ROBUSTNESS OF THE INDEX

- Robustness is an important concept in composite index analysis. It is a measure of how often rank comparisons from a composite index are still true if the index is calculated using different weightings. For example, if the GPI is recalculated using a large number of different weighting schemes and Country A ranks higher than Country B in 60 per cent of these recalculations, the statement "Country A is more peaceful than Country B" is considered to be 60 per cent robust.
- IEP finds that the Global Peace Index (GPI) is at the same level of absolute robustness as the Human Development Index (HDI), a leading measure of development since it was first constructed by the United Nations Development Programme in 1990.
- Technically, the robustness of the GPI is measured by the fact that 70 per cent of pairwise country comparisons are independent of the weighting scheme chosen. In other words, regardless of the weights attributed to each component of the index, 70 per cent of the time the pairwise comparisons between countries are the same.

The GPI is a composite index of 23 indicators weighted and combined into one overall score. The weighting scheme within any composite index represents the relative importance of each indicator to the overall aim of the measure, in the GPI's case, global peace. To fully understand the representative nature or accuracy of any measure it is necessary to understand how sensitive the results of the index are to the specific weighting scheme used. If the analysis holds true for a large subset of all possible weighting schemes then the results can be called robust. While it is expected that ranks will be

TABLE A.1

Indicator weights on the GPI

Internal Peace 60% / External Peace 40%

INTERNAL PEACE (Weight 1 to 5)	
Perceptions of criminality	3
Security officers and police rate	3
Homicide rate	4
Incarceration rate	3
Access to small arms	3
Intensity of internal conflict	5
Violent demonstrations	3
Violent crime	4
Political instability	4
Political terror	4
Weapons imports	2
Terrorism impact	2
Deaths from internal conflict	5
Internal conflicts fought	2.56

EXTERNAL PEACE (Weight 1 to 5)	
Military expenditure (% of GDP)	2
Armed services personnel rate	2
UN peacekeeping funding	2
Nuclear and heavy weapons capabilities	3
Weapons exports	3
Refugees and IDPs	4
Neighbouring countries relations	5
External conflicts fought	2.28
Deaths from external conflict	5

sensitive to changes in the weights of any composite index, what is more important in a practical sense is the robustness of country comparisons. One of the core aims of the GPI is to allow for Country A to be compared to Country B. This raises the question that for any two countries, how often is the first ranked more peaceful than the second across the spectrum of weights. The more times that the first country is ranked more peaceful than the second, the more confidence can be invested in the statement "Country A is more peaceful than Country B".

To avoid the computational issue of evaluating every possible combination of 23 indicators, the robustness of pairwise country comparisons has been estimated using the three GPI domains militarisation, societal safety and security and ongoing conflict. Implementing an accepted methodology for robustness, the GPI is calculated for every weighting combination of three weights from 0 to 1 at 0.01 intervals. For computational expedience only weighting schemes that sum to one are selected, resulting in over 5100 recalculated GPI's. Applying this, it is found that around 70 per cent of all pairwise country comparisons in the GPI are independent of the weighting scheme, i.e. 100 per cent robust. This is a similar level of absolute robustness as the Human Development Index.

QUALITATIVE SCORING: THE ECONOMIST INTELLIGENCE UNIT APPROACH

The EIU's Country Analysis team plays an important role in producing the GPI by scoring five qualitative indicators and filling in data gaps on quantitative indicators when official data is missing. The EIU employs more than 100 full-time country experts and economists, supported by 650 in-country contributors. Analysts generally focus on two or three countries and, in conjunction with local contributors, develop a deep knowledge of a nation's political scene, the performance of its economy and the society in general. Scoring follows a strict process to ensure reliability, consistency and comparability:

1. Individual country analysts score qualitative indicators based on a scoring methodology and using a digital platform;

2. Regional directors use the digital platform to check scores across the region; through the platform they can see how individual countries fare against each other and evaluate qualitative assessments behind proposed score revisions;

3. Indicator scores are checked by the EIU's Custom Research team (which has responsibility for the GPI) to ensure global comparability;

4. If an indicator score is found to be questionable, the Custom Research team, and the appropriate regional director and country analyst discuss and make a judgment on the score;

5. Scores are assessed by the external advisory panel before finalising the GPI;

6. If the expert panel finds an indicator score to be questionable, the Custom Research team, and the appropriate regional director and country analyst discuss and make a final judgment on the score, which is then discussed in turn with the advisory panel.

Because of the large scope of the GPI, occasionally data for quantitative indicators do not extend to all nations. In this case, country analysts are asked to suggest an alternative data source or provide an estimate to fill any gap. This score is checked by Regional Directors to ensure reliability and consistency within the region, and by the Custom Research team to ensure global comparability. Again, indicators are assessed by the external advisory panel before finalisation.

APPENDIX B

GPI Indicator Sources, Definitions & Scoring Criteria

The information below details the sources, definitions, and scoring criteria of the 23 indicators that form the Global Peace Index. All scores for each indicator are banded or normalised on a scale of 1-5, whereby qualitative indicators are banded into five groupings and quantitative ones scored continuously from 1 to 5 at the third decimal place. The Economist Intelligence Unit has provided imputed estimates in the rare event there are gaps in the quantitative data.

INTERNAL PEACE INDICATORS

Level of Perceived Criminality in Society

Indicator type	Quantitative
Indicator weight	3
Indicator weight (% of total index)	3.8%
Data source	Gallup World Poll
Measurement period	2024

Definition: This indicator uses a question from the Gallup World Poll as the basis for perceptions of criminality. The exact wording of the question is: "*Do you feel safe walking alone at night in the city or area where you live?*" IEP calculates the indicator score based on the percentage of people who answer 'no' to this question.

Where data is not available, IEP uses multivariate imputation by chained equations to create country-level estimates.

Scoring Bands

1/5	2/5	3/5	4/5	5/5
0–19.9%	20–39.9%	40–59.9%	60–79.9%	> 80%

Number of Internal Security Officers and Police per 100,000 People

Indicator type	Quantitative
Indicator weight	3
Indicator weight (% of total index)	3.8%
Data source	UNODC Survey of Crime Trends and Operations of Criminal Justice Systems
Measurement period	2022

Alternative Source: EIU. Where data is not provided, the EIU's analysts have filled them based on likely scores from the set bands of the actual data.

Definition: This indicator is sourced from the UNODC Survey of Crime Trends and Operations of Criminal Justice Systems and refers to the civil police force. Police refers to personnel in public agencies whose principal functions are the prevention, detection and investigation of crime and the apprehension of alleged offenders. It is distinct from national guards or local militia.

Scoring Bands

1/5	2/5	3/5	4/5	5/5
0–199.8	199.9–399.8	399.9–599.8	599.9–799.8	> 799.9

Number of Homicides per 100,000 People

Indicator type	Quantitative
Indicator weight	4
Indicator weight (% of total index)	5%
Data source	UNODC Survey of Crime Trends and Operations of Criminal Justice Systems
Measurement period	2023

Alternative Source: EIU. Where data is not provided, the EIU's analysts have filled them based on likely scores from the set bands of the actual data.

Definition: This indicator comes from the UNODC Survey of Crime Trends and Operations of Criminal Justice Systems. Intentional homicide refers to death deliberately inflicted on a person by another person, including infanticide. The figures refer to the total number of penal code offences or their equivalent, but exclude minor road traffic and other petty offences, brought to the attention of the police or other law enforcement agencies and recorded by one of those agencies.

Scoring Bands

1/5	2/5	3/5	4/5	5/5
0–1.99	2–5.99	6–9.99	10–19.99	> 20

Number of Jailed Population per 100,000 People

Indicator type	Quantitative
Indicator weight	3
Indicator weight (% of total index)	3.8%
Data source	Institute for Criminal Policy Research at Birkbeck, University of London, World Prison Brief
Measurement period	2024

Definition: Figures are from the Institute for Criminal Policy Research and are compiled from a variety of sources. In almost all cases the original source is the national prison administration of the country concerned, or else the Ministry responsible for the prison administration. Prison population rates per 100,000 people are based on estimates of the national population. In order to compare prison population rates, and to estimate the number of persons held in prison in the countries for which information is not available, median rates have been used by the Institute for Criminal Policy Research to minimise the effect of countries with rates that are untypically high or low. Indeed, comparability can be compromised by different practice in different countries, for example with regard to pre-trial detainees and juveniles, but also psychiatrically ill offenders and offenders being detained for treatment for alcoholism and drug addiction.

Scoring Bands

1/5	2/5	3/5	4/5	5/5
0-126.405	126.406-252.811	252.812-379.217	379.218-505.624	>505.625

Additional Notes: The data provided by the Institute for Criminal Policy Research are not annual averages but indicate the number of jailed population per 100,000 inhabitants in a particular month during the year. The year and month may differ from country to country.

Ease of Access to Small Arms and Light Weapons

Indicator type	Qualitative
Indicator weight	3
Indicator weight (% of total index)	3.8%
Data source	EIU
Measurement period	March 2024 to March 2025

Definition: Assessment of the accessibility of small arms and light weapons (SALW), ranked from 1-5 (very limited access to very easy access) by the EIU's Country Analysis team. Country analysts are asked to assess this indicator on an annual basis, for the period from March to March.

Scoring Criteria

1 = **Very limited access:** The country has developed policy instruments and best practices, such as firearm licences, strengthening of export controls, codes of conduct, firearms or ammunition marking.

2 = **Limited access:** The regulation implies that it is difficult, time-consuming and costly to obtain firearms; domestic firearms regulation also reduces the ease with which legal arms are diverted to illicit markets.

3 = **Moderate access:** There are regulations and commitment to ensure controls on civilian possession of firearms, although inadequate controls are not sufficient to stem the flow of illegal weapons.

4 = **Easy access:** There are basic regulations, but they are not effectively enforced; obtaining firearms is straightforward.

5 = **Very easy access:** There is no regulation of civilian possession, ownership, storage, carriage and use of firearms.

Intensity of Organised Internal Conflict

Indicator type	Qualitative
Indicator weight	5
Indicator weight (% of total index)	6.3%
Data source	EIU
Measurement period	March 2024 to March 2025

Definition: Assessment of the intensity of conflicts within the country, ranked from 1-5 (no conflict to severe crisis) by the EIU's Country Analysis team. Country analysts are asked to assess this indicator on an annual basis, for the period March to March.

Scoring Criteria

1 = **No conflict.**

2 = **Latent conflict:** Positional differences over definable values of national importance.

3 = **Manifest conflict:** Explicit threats of violence; imposition of economic sanctions by other countries.

4 = **Crisis:** A tense situation across most of the country; at least one group uses violent force in sporadic incidents.

5 = **Severe crisis:** Civil war; violent force is used with a certain continuity in an organised and systematic way throughout the country.

Violent Demonstrations

Indicator type	Qualitative
Indicator weight	3
Indicator weight (% of total index)	3.8%
Data source	ACLED
Measurement period	2024

Definition: The indicator reflects the number and severity of violent demonstrations in a country for a give year. Scores vary from 1 to 5, with values close to 1 representing infrequent violent demonstrations and scores close to 5 representing frequent demonstrations with high numbers of fatalities. The data includes four types of events as classified by ACLED: "Protest with intervention" (weighted at 1), "Excessive force against protesters" (weight 2), "Violent demonstration" (weight 3), and "Mob violence" (weight 4). Note that this set of event types means that the indicator includes violent protests, riots etc, but also protests that were originally peaceful but were repressed violently by security forces. For each type of event the number of incidents and the number of fatalities are calculated. Fatalities are weighted more heavily than the number of incidents, as a gauge of incident severity. Where ACLED data are not available a transformation was used to adapt raw data from the Cross National Time Series (CNTS) data for imputation.

Score interpretation guidance

1/5	Very rare incidents of violent demonstrations, protests are almost all peaceful.
2/5	A few violent protests, mostly without fatalities.
3/5	A few violent protests or protests repressed violently by security forces. Some fatalities.
4/5	Frequent protests with violence, with a material number of fatalities.
5/5	Large number of protests with large number of fatalities. Number of incidents and fatalities are large by international and historical standards.

Level of Violent Crime

Indicator type	Qualitative
Indicator weight	4
Indicator weight (% of total index)	5%
Data source	EIU
Measurement period	March 2024 to March 2025

Definition: Assessment of the likelihood of violent crime ranked from 1 to 5 (very low to very high) by the EIU's Country Analysis team based on the question, "Is violent crime likely to pose a significant problem for government and/or business over the next two years?" Country analysts assess this question on a quarterly basis.

Scoring Criteria

"Is violent crime likely to pose a significant problem for government and/or business over the next two years?"

1/5	Strongly no
2/5	No
3/5	Somewhat of a problem
4/5	Yes
5/5	Strongly yes

Political Instability

Indicator type	Qualitative
Indicator weight	4
Indicator weight (% of total index)	5%
Data source	EIU
Measurement period	March 2024 to March 2025

Definition: Assessment of political instability ranked from 0 to 100 (very low to very high instability) by the EIU's Country Analysis team, based on five questions. This indicator aggregates five other questions on social unrest, orderly transfers, opposition stance, excessive executive authority and an international tension sub-index. Country analysts assess this question on a quarterly basis.

Specific Questions:

- What is the risk of significant social unrest during the next two years?
- How clear, established and accepted are constitutional mechanisms for the orderly transfer of power from one government to another?
- How likely is it that an opposition party or group will come to power and cause a significant deterioration in business operating conditions?
- Is excessive power concentrated or likely to be concentrated in the executive so that executive authority lacks accountability and possesses excessive discretion?
- Is there a risk that international disputes/tensions will negatively affect the economy and/or polity?

Scoring Bands

1/5	2/5	3/5	4/5	5/5
0–20.4	20.5–40.4	40.5–60.4	60.5–80.4	80.5–100

Political Terror Scale

Indicator type Qualitative	
Indicator weight	4
Indicator weight (% of total index)	5%
Data source	Gibney, Mark, Linda Cornett, Reed Wood, Peter Haschke, Daniel Arnon, and Attilio Pisanò. 2018. The Political Terror Scale 2022. Date Retrieved, from the Political Terror Scale website: http://www.politicalterrorscale.org.
Measurement period	2023

Definition: The Political Terror Scale (PTS) measures levels of political violence and terror that a country experiences in a given year based on a 5-level "terror scale" originally developed by Freedom House. The data used in compiling this index comes from two different sources: the yearly country reports of Amnesty International and the US Department of State's Country Reports on Human Rights Practices. The average of the two scores is taken.

Scoring Criteria

1 = Countries under a secure rule of law, people are not imprisoned for their view, and torture is rare or exceptional. Political murders are extremely rare.

2 = There is a limited amount of imprisonment for nonviolent political activity. However, few persons are affected, torture and beatings are exceptional. Political murder is rare.

3 = There is extensive political imprisonment, or a recent history of such imprisonment. Execution or other political murders and brutality may be common. Unlimited detention, with or without a trial, for political views is accepted.

4 = Civil and political rights violations have expanded to large numbers of the population. Murders, disappearances, and torture are a common part of life. In spite of its generality, on this level terror affects those who interest themselves in politics or ideas.

5 = Terror has expanded to the whole population. The leaders of these societies place no limits on the means or thoroughness with which they pursue personal or ideological goals.

Volume of Transfers of Major Conventional Weapons, as Recipient (Imports) per 100,000 people

Indicator type Quantitative	
Indicator weight	2
Indicator weight (% of total index)	2.5%
Data source	SIPRI Arms Transfers
Database	
Measurement period	2020–2024

Definition: Measures the total volume of major conventional weapons imported by a country between 2019 and 2023, divided by the average population in this time period at the 100,000 people level (population data supplied by the EIU). The SIPRI Arms Transfers Database covers all international sales and gifts of major conventional weapons and the technology necessary for their production. The transfer equipment or technology is from one country, rebel force or international organisation to another country, rebel force or international organisation. Major conventional weapons include: aircraft, armoured vehicles, artillery, radar systems, missiles, ships, engines. SIPRI uses a unique pricing system, the Trend Indicator Value (TIV) that measures military capability. The indicator raw value is measured as TIV per 100,000 population.

Scoring Bands

1/5	2/5	3/5	4/5	5/5
0-7.233	7.234-14.468	14.469-21.702	21.703-28.936	>28.937

Impact of Terrorism

Indicator type	Quantitative
Indicator weight	2
Indicator weight (% of total index)	2.5%
Data source	IEP Global Terrorism Index (GTI)
Measurement period	2020–2024

Definition: Terrorist incidents are defined as “intentional acts of violence or threat of violence by a non-state actor.” This means an incident has to meet three criteria in order for it to be counted as a terrorist act:

A The incident must be intentional – the result of a conscious calculation on the part of a perpetrator.

B The incident must entail some level of violence or threat of violence, including property violence as well as violence against people.

C The perpetrators of the incidents must be sub-national actors. This database does not include acts of state terrorism.

For all incidents listed, at least two of the following three criteria must be present:

1. The act must be aimed at attaining a political, economic, religious or social goal.
2. There must be evidence of an intention to coerce, intimidate or convey some other message to a larger audience (or audiences) than the immediate victims.
3. The action must be outside the context of legitimate warfare activities.

Methodology: Using the comprehensive, event-based Terrorism Tracker, the GTI combines four variables to develop a composite score: the number of terrorist incidents in a given year, the total number of fatalities in a given year, the total number of injuries caused in a given year and the approximate level of property damage in a given year. The composite score captures the direct effects of terrorist-related violence, in terms of its physical effect, but also attempts to reflect the residual effects of terrorism in terms of emotional wounds and fear by attributing a weighted average to the damage inflicted in previous years.

Scoring Bands

1/5	2/5	3/5	4/5	5/5
0-13.479	13.48-181.699	181.7-2,449.309	2,449.31-33,015.949	>33,015.95

Number of Deaths From Organised Internal Conflict

Indicator type	Quantitative
Indicator weight	5
Indicator weight (% of total index)	6.3%
Data source	UCDP Georeferenced Event Dataset and Candidate Dataset
Measurement period	2024

Definition: This indicator uses the UCDP's definition of conflict. UCDP defines conflict as: “a contested incompatibility that concerns government and/or territory where the use of armed force between two parties, results in at least 25 battle-related deaths in a year.”

Scoring Bands

1/5	2/5	3/5	4/5	5/5
0–23 deaths	24–998 deaths	999–4,998 deaths	4,999–9,998 deaths	> 9,999 deaths

Internal Conflicts Fought

Indicator type	Quantitative
Indicator weight	2.56
Indicator weight (% of total index)	3.2%
Data sources	IEP; UCDP Battle-UCDP Georeferenced Events Dataset
Measurement period	2020–2024

Definition: This indicator measures the number and duration of conflicts that occur within a specific country's legal boundaries. Information for this indicator is sourced from three datasets from Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP): the Battle-Related Deaths Dataset, Non-State Conflict Dataset and One-sided Violence Dataset. The score for a country is determined by adding the scores for all individual conflicts which have occurred within that country's legal boundaries over the last five years.

Each individual conflict score is based on the following factors:

Number:

- The number of interstate armed conflicts, internal armed conflict (civil conflicts), internationalised internal armed conflicts, one-sided conflict and non-state conflict located within a country's legal boundaries.
- If a conflict is a war (1,000+ battle-related deaths) it receives a score of one; if it is an armed conflict (25-999 battle-related deaths) it receives a score of 0.25.

Duration:

- A score is assigned based on the number of years out of the last five that conflict has occurred. For example, if a conflict last occurred five years ago that conflict will receive a score of one out of five.

The cumulative conflict scores are then added and banded to establish a country's score. This indicator is two years lagging due to when the UCDP data is released.

Scoring Bands

1/5	2/5	3/5	4/5	5/5
No internal conflict	Combined conflict score of up to 4.75	Combined conflict score of up to 9.5	Combined conflict score of up to 14.25	A combined conflict score of 19 or above. This shows very high levels of internal conflict.

EXTERNAL PEACE INDICATORS

Military Expenditure as a Percentage of GDP

Indicator type	Quantitative
Indicator weight	2
Indicator weight (% of total index)	2.8%
Data source	International Institute for Strategic Studies, Military Balance+
Measurement period	2024

Alternative Source: When no data was provided, several alternative sources were used: National Public Expenditure Accounts, SIPRI information and the Military Balance.

Definition: Cash outlays of central or federal government to meet the costs of national armed forces—including strategic, land, naval, air, command, administration and support forces as well as paramilitary forces, customs forces and border guards if these are trained and equipped as a military force. Published EIU data on nominal GDP (or the World Bank when unavailable) was used to arrive at the value of military expenditure as a percentage of GDP.

Scoring Criteria: This indicator is scored using a min-max normalisation. Applying this method, a country's score is based on the distance of its military expenditure as a share of GDP from the benchmarks of 0% (for a score of 1) and 8.37% or above (for a score of 5). The bands, while linear, approximately conform as follows:

1/5	2/5	3/5	4/5	5/5
0-2.092	2.093-4.184	4.185-6.277	6.278-8.37	>8.371

Number of Armed Services Personnel per 100,000 people

Indicator type	Quantitative
Indicator weight	2
Indicator weight (% of total index)	2.8%
Data source	International Institute for Strategic Studies, Military Balance+
Measurement period	2024

Alternative Source: World Bank population data used if unavailable from the EIU.

Definition: Active armed services personnel comprise all service men and women on full-time duty in the army, navy, air force and joint forces (including conscripts and long-term assignments from the reserves). Population data provided by the EIU.

Scoring Bands

1/5	2/5	3/5	4/5	5/5
0-657.744	657.745-1,315.489	1,315.49-1,973.234	1,973.235-2,630.98	>2,630.981

Additional Notes: The Israeli reservist force is used to calculate Israel's number of armed services personnel.

Financial Contribution to UN Peacekeeping Missions

Indicator type	Quantitative
Indicator weight	2
Indicator weight (% of total index)	2.8%
Data source	IEP; United Nations Committee on Contributions
Measurement period	2021–2023

Methodology: The UNFU indicator measures whether UN member countries meet their UN peacekeeping funding commitments. Although countries may fund other programs in development or peacebuilding, the records on peacekeeping are easy to obtain and understand and provide an instructive measure of a country's commitment to peace. The indicator calculates the percentage of countries' "outstanding payments versus their annual assessment to the budget of the current peacekeeping missions" over an average of three years. This ratio is derived from data provided by the United Nations Committee on Contributions Status reports. The indicator is compiled as follows:

1. The status of contributions by UN member states is obtained.
2. For the relevant peacekeeping missions, the assessments (for that year only) and the collections (for that year only) are

recorded. From this, the outstanding amount is calculated for that year.
3. The ratio of outstanding payments to assessments is calculated. By doing so a score between 0 and 1 is obtained. Zero indicates no money is owed; a country has met their funding commitments. A score of 1 indicates that a country has not paid any of their assessed contributions. Given that the scores already fall between 0 and 1, they are easily banded into a score between 1 and 5. The final banded score is a weighted sum of the current year and the previous two years. The weightings are 0.5 for the current year, 0.3 for the previous year and 0.2 for two years prior. Hence it is a three-year weighted average.
4. Outstanding payments from previous years and credits are not included. The scoring is linear to one decimal place.

Scoring Criteria

1/5	0–25% of stated contributions owed
2/5	26–50% of stated contributions owed
3/5	51–75% of stated contributions owed
4/5	75–99% of stated contributions owed
5/5	100% of stated contributions owed (no contributions made in past three years)

Additional Notes: All United Nations member states share the costs of United Nations peacekeeping operations. The General Assembly apportions these expenses based on a special scale of assessments applicable to peacekeeping. This scale takes into account the relative economic wealth of member states, with the permanent members of the Security Council required to pay a larger share because of their special responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.

Nuclear and Heavy Weapons Capabilities

Indicator type	Quantitative
Indicator weight	3
Indicator weight (% of total index)	4.2%
Data source	IISS Military Balance+
Measurement period	2024

Methodology: This indicator is based on a categorised system for rating the destructive capability of a country's stock of heavy weapons. Holdings are those of government forces and do not include holdings of armed opposition groups.

The scoring system incorporates armoured vehicles, artillery, tanks, combat aircraft and combat helicopters, warships, aircraft carriers and nuclear submarines. It takes into account military sophistication, weapons technology, and combat readiness.

Countries with nuclear capabilities automatically receive the maximum score of five. Other scores are expressed to the second decimal point, adopting a min-max normalisation that sets the max at two standard deviations above the average raw score.

1/5	Nil–18,185
2/5	18,185–36,368
3/5	36,368–54,553
4/5	54,553–72,737
5/5	States with nuclear capability receive a 5, or states with heavy weapons capability of 72,738 or in the top 2% of heavy weapons receive a 5.

Volume of Transfers of Major Conventional Weapons as Supplier (Exports) per 100,000 people

Indicator type	Quantitative
Indicator weight	3
Indicator weight (% of total index)	4.2%
Data source	SIPRI Arms Transfers Database
Measurement period	2020–2024

Definition: Measures the total volume of major conventional weapons exported by a country between 2019 and 2023 divided by the average population during this time period (population data supplied by the EIU). The SIPRI Arms Transfers Database covers all international sales and gifts of major conventional weapons and the technology necessary for the production of them. The transfer equipment or technology is from one country, rebel force or international organisation to another country, rebel force or international organisation. Major conventional weapons include: aircraft, armoured vehicles, artillery, radar systems, missiles, ships and engines. SIPRI uses a unique pricing system, the Trend Indicator Value (TIV) that measures military capability. The indicator raw value is measured as TIV per 100,000 population.

Scoring Bands

1/5	2/5	3/5	4/5	5/5
0-3.681	3.682-7.364	7.365-11.046	11.047-14.729	>14.73

Number of Refugees and Internally Displaced People as a Percentage of the Population

Indicator type	Quantitative
Indicator weight	4
Indicator weight (% of total index)	5.7%
Data source	UNHCR Mid-Year Trends 2024; International Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC)
Measurement period	2024

Definition: Refugee population by country or territory of origin plus the number of a country's internally displaced people (IDPs), as a percentage of the country's total population.

Scoring Bands

1/5	2/5	3/5	4/5	5/5
0-3.034	3.035-6.069	6.07-9.104	9.105-12.139	>12.14

Relations with Neighbouring Countries

Indicator type Qualitative	
Indicator weight	5
Indicator weight (% of total index)	7.1%
Data source	EIU
Measurement period	March 2024 to March 2025

Definition: Assessment of the intensity of contentiousness of neighbours, ranked from 1-5 (peaceful to very aggressive) by the EIU's Country Analysis team. Country analysts are asked to assess this indicator on an annual basis, for the period March to March.

Scoring Criteria

1 = **Peaceful:** None of the neighbours has attacked the country since 1950.
2 = **Low:** The relationship with neighbours is generally good, but aggressiveness is manifest in politicians' speeches or in protectionist measures.
3 = **Moderate:** There are serious tensions and consequent economic and diplomatic restrictions from other countries.
4 = **Aggressive:** Open conflicts with violence and protests.
5 = **Very aggressive:** Frequent invasions by neighbouring countries.

External Conflicts Fought

Indicator type	Quantitative
Indicator weight	2.28
Indicator weight (% of total index)	3.2%
Data source	IEP; UCDP Battle-Related Deaths Dataset
Measurement period	2019–2023

Definition: This indicator measures the number and duration of extraterritorial conflicts a country is involved in. Information for this indicator is sourced from the UCDP Battle-Related Deaths Dataset. The score for a country is determined by adding all individual conflict scores where that country is involved as an actor in a conflict outside its legal boundaries. Conflicts are not counted against a country if they have already been counted against that country in the number and duration of internal conflicts indicator.

Each individual conflict score is based on the following factors:

Number:
- Number of internationalised internal armed conflicts and interstate armed conflicts.
- If a conflict is a war (1,000+ battle-related deaths) it receives a score of one; if it is an armed conflict (25-999 battle-related deaths) it receives a score of 0.25.

Duration:
- A score is assigned based on the number of years out of the last five that conflict has occurred. For example, if a conflict last occurred five years ago that conflict will receive a score of one out of five.

Role:
- If the country is a primary party to the conflict, that conflict receives a score of one; if it is a secondary party (supporting the primary party), that conflict receives a score of 0.25.
- If a country is a party to a force covered by a relevant United Nations Security Council Resolution, then the entire conflict score is multiplied by a quarter; if not, it receives a full score.

The different conflict scores are then added and banded to establish a country's score.

Scoring Bands

1/5	2/5	3/5	4/5	5/5
No external conflict	Combined conflict score of up to 1.5	Combined conflict score of up to 3	Combined conflict score of up to 4.5	A combined conflict score of 6 or above. This shows very high levels of external conflict.

Number of Deaths from Organised External Conflict

Indicator type	Quantitative
Indicator weight	5
Indicator weight (% of total index)	7.1%
Data source	UCDP Georeferenced Event Dataset and Candidate Dataset
Measurement period	2024

Alternate Source: Where applicable, IEP also uses several other open-source datasets to construct this indicator.

Definition: This indicator uses the UCDP's definition of conflict as "a contested incompatibility that concerns government and/or territory where the use of armed force between two parties, results in at least 25 battle-related deaths in a year".

Scoring Bands

1/5	2/5	3/5	4/5	5/5
0–24 deaths	25–998 deaths	999–4,998 deaths	4,999–9,998 deaths	> 9,999 deaths

APPENDIX C

GPI Domain Scores

TABLE C.1

Ongoing Domestic and International Conflict domain, most peaceful to least

COUNTRY	SCORE
Iceland	1
Mauritius	1
New Zealand	1
Singapore	1
Uruguay	1
Malaysia	1.008
Ireland	1.028
Switzerland	1.053
Italy	1.053
Botswana	1.055
Belgium	1.07
United Kingdom	1.071
Austria	1.075
Netherlands	1.076
Germany	1.099
Portugal	1.163
Spain	1.168
Bulgaria	1.201
Croatia	1.201
Mongolia	1.201
Namibia	1.201
Costa Rica	1.209
Argentina	1.22
Australia	1.245
Trinidad and Tobago	1.25
Canada	1.254
Denmark	1.254
Jamaica	1.258
Czechia	1.272
Albania	1.403
Chile	1.403
Hungary	1.403
Japan	1.403
Kuwait	1.403
Laos	1.403
North Macedonia	1.403
Qatar	1.403
Slovenia	1.403
Timor-Leste	1.403
Panama	1.411
Greece	1.412
France	1.418
Vietnam	1.421
United Arab Emirates	1.425
Bolivia	1.432
Montenegro	1.443
Latvia	1.446
Paraguay	1.453
Estonia	1.455
Finland	1.455
Lithuania	1.455
Norway	1.455
El Salvador	1.461
Liberia	1.463
Oman	1.475
Madagascar	1.476
Saudi Arabia	1.497
Bhutan	1.51
Peru	1.518
The Gambia	1.565
Romania	1.565
Angola	1.567
Senegal	1.582
Sweden	1.589
Cyprus	1.604
Dominican Republic	1.604
Guinea-Bissau	1.604
Equatorial Guinea	1.604
Guyana	1.604
Slovakia	1.604
Turkmenistan	1.604
Taiwan	1.62
Kazakhstan	1.622
Eswatini	1.625
Poland	1.626
Azerbaijan	1.642
Zambia	1.652
Armenia	1.669
Nepal	1.676
Eritrea	1.717
Ghana	1.722
Republic of the Congo	1.725
Sierra Leone	1.748
Cambodia	1.767
Sri Lanka	1.767
Tunisia	1.775
Côte d'Ivoire	1.785
Cuba	1.805
South Korea	1.805
Kosovo	1.805
Uzbekistan	1.805
Malawi	1.806
Mauritania	1.81
Jordan	1.821
Bosnia and Herzegovina	1.833
Uganda	1.834
Thailand	1.835
Honduras	1.836
Algeria	1.859
Lesotho	1.86
Tanzania	1.861
Papua New Guinea	1.867
Gabon	1.879
Indonesia	1.879
Guatemala	1.883
Serbia	1.915
China	1.946
Serbia	1.915
China	1.946
Djibouti	1.989
Morocco	2.004
Bahrain	2.007
Georgia	2.012
Kyrgyz Republic	2.017
Tajikistan	2.017
Moldova	2.025
United States of America	2.025
Zimbabwe	2.025
Nicaragua	2.031
Egypt	2.049
Benin	2.064
Mozambique	2.081
India	2.097
South Africa	2.106
Ecuador	2.129
Brazil	2.135
Rwanda	2.145
Guinea	2.175
Philippines	2.182
Belarus	2.208
Venezuela	2.237
Togo	2.308
Libya	2.329
Colombia	2.369
Kenya	2.384
Bangladesh	2.554
Chad	2.581
North Korea	2.61
Central African Republic	2.619
Haiti	2.675
Mexico	2.675
Iraq	2.683
Afghanistan	2.767
Burundi	2.811
Cameroon	2.896
Myanmar	2.917
Pakistan	2.927
South Sudan	2.958
Lebanon	3.051
Israel	3.063
Niger	3.112
Somalia	3.134
Turkiye	3.166
Yemen	3.182
Iran	3.183
Nigeria	3.183
Ethiopia	3.193
Mali	3.251
Burkina Faso	3.311
Palestine	3.344
Syria	3.536
Democratic Republic of the Congo	3.647
Sudan	3.691
Ukraine	4.005
Russia	4.195

TABLE C.2

Societal Safety and Security domain, most to least peaceful

COUNTRY	SCORE
Iceland	1.212
Norway	1.261
Finland	1.269
Japan	1.292
Singapore	1.294
Denmark	1.296
Switzerland	1.332
Qatar	1.4
New Zealand	1.421
Ireland	1.427
Austria	1.454
South Korea	1.454
Slovenia	1.472
Lithuania	1.494
Estonia	1.504
Netherlands	1.508
Australia	1.547
Czechia	1.56
Sweden	1.584
United Kingdom	1.599
Germany	1.621
Portugal	1.625
Latvia	1.633
Croatia	1.643
Kuwait	1.645
Hungary	1.646
Canada	1.654
Belgium	1.678
Slovakia	1.678
Bhutan	1.697
Poland	1.723
Spain	1.724
Greece	1.769
Taiwan	1.77
Oman	1.786
Italy	1.787
Romania	1.801
United Arab Emirates	1.816
Bulgaria	1.914
Serbia	1.923
France	1.934
Indonesia	1.958
Montenegro	1.962
North Macedonia	1.967
Malaysia	1.974
Vietnam	2.014
Armenia	2.033
Albania	2.038
Saudi Arabia	2.041
Ghana	2.135
Jordan	2.138
Kosovo	2.144
Laos	2.155
Timor-Leste	2.158
Bosnia and Herzegovina	2.162
Tanzania	2.163
Moldova	2.171
Mauritius	2.173
Kyrgyz Republic	2.176
Kazakhstan	2.182
Uzbekistan	2.183
Algeria	2.209
The Gambia	2.215
Morocco	2.216
China	2.219
Cyprus	2.22
Malawi	2.224
Tajikistan	2.226
Rwanda	2.243
Bahrain	2.254
Cambodia	2.263
India	2.277
Sierra Leone	2.28
Mongolia	2.282
Chile	2.315
Botswana	2.343
Madagascar	2.355
Namibia	2.363
Sri Lanka	2.369
United States of America	2.369
Zambia	2.383
Côte d'Ivoire	2.392
Argentina	2.399
Tunisia	2.406
Nepal	2.412
Thailand	2.413
Azerbaijan	2.414
Costa Rica	2.419
Liberia	2.421
Angola	2.425
Turkmenistan	2.428
Philippines	2.429
Bolivia	2.442
Egypt	2.446
Belarus	2.47
Senegal	2.478
Equatorial Guinea	2.496
Bangladesh	2.504
Guinea-Bissau	2.515
Paraguay	2.528
Dominican Republic	2.538
Georgia	2.54
Uruguay	2.545
Djibouti	2.55
Guinea	2.556
Mauritania	2.59
Republic of the Congo	2.63
Benin	2.649
Papua New Guinea	2.671
El Salvador	2.684
Gabon	2.691
Zimbabwe	2.693
Cuba	2.697
Togo	2.7
Guatemala	2.701
Eswatini	2.703
Israel	2.706
Lesotho	2.718
Nicaragua	2.723
Kenya	2.73
Panama	2.74
Palestine	2.756
Peru	2.767
Lebanon	2.779
Jamaica	2.787
Trinidad and Tobago	2.798
Uganda	2.811
Iran	2.814
Mozambique	2.821
Burundi	2.828
Pakistan	2.871
Ethiopia	2.919
Guyana	2.928
South Africa	2.949
Niger	2.961
Cameroon	2.97
Chad	2.971
Libya	3.021
Honduras	3.023
North Korea	3.033
Ecuador	3.041
Russia	3.062
Turkiye	3.114
Mexico	3.151
Ukraine	3.197
Nigeria	3.218
Brazil	3.231
Burkina Faso	3.288
Haiti	3.359
Iraq	3.393
Venezuela	3.409
Mali	3.478
Colombia	3.481
Eritrea	3.512
Somalia	3.542
Syria	3.568
Central African Republic	3.575
Myanmar	3.582
Sudan	3.647
Democratic Republic of the Congo	3.713
South Sudan	3.833
Yemen	3.861
Afghanistan	3.929

TABLE C.3

Militarisation domain, most peaceful to least

COUNTRY	SCORE
Iceland	1.019
Portugal	1.194
Malaysia	1.202
Bhutan	1.285
Ireland	1.301
Slovenia	1.305
Moldova	1.312
Austria	1.328
Mauritius	1.365
Indonesia	1.366
Hungary	1.388
Sierra Leone	1.417
Czechia	1.418
Mongolia	1.429
Argentina	1.45
Zambia	1.452
New Zealand	1.453
Rwanda	1.477
Senegal	1.483
Slovakia	1.483
Bosnia and Herzegovina	1.507
Canada	1.529
Guyana	1.531
Uruguay	1.543
Cuba	1.55
Panama	1.552
Montenegro	1.563
Latvia	1.567
Timor-Leste	1.567
Switzerland	1.575
Dominican Republic	1.588
Nicaragua	1.591
Thailand	1.611
Tunisia	1.613
Vietnam	1.613
Peru	1.622
Tajikistan	1.622
The Gambia	1.628
Namibia	1.629
Finland	1.63
Mozambique	1.647
Bulgaria	1.651
Botswana	1.659
South Africa	1.665
Nepal	1.668
Kosovo	1.67
Morocco	1.672
Ethiopia	1.673
Laos	1.679
Madagascar	1.679
Kyrgyz Republic	1.683
Uzbekistan	1.685
Uganda	1.694
Equatorial Guinea	1.695
Eswatini	1.701
Benin	1.704
Brazil	1.706
Guatemala	1.709
Philippines	1.709
Bangladesh	1.715
Zimbabwe	1.722
Costa Rica	1.726
Japan	1.728
Malawi	1.731
Haiti	1.751
Kazakhstan	1.756
Ghana	1.758
Croatia	1.759
Colombia	1.762
Tanzania	1.763
Mexico	1.764
Burundi	1.766
Trinidad and Tobago	1.77
Denmark	1.774
Libya	1.781
Liberia	1.782
Georgia	1.786
Taiwan	1.787
Belgium	1.79
Cyprus	1.79
Romania	1.791
Australia	1.799
Estonia	1.801
Somalia	1.811
Eritrea	1.815
Jordan	1.817
Paraguay	1.819
Angola	1.82
Egypt	1.821
Lithuania	1.822
Poland	1.829
Kenya	1.855
Republic of the Congo	1.863
Spain	1.889
Guinea	1.89
Jamaica	1.891
Honduras	1.904
Chile	1.912
Cameroon	1.917
Nigeria	1.917
Côte d'Ivoire	1.923
Serbia	1.939
Turkmenistan	1.939
Turkiye	1.941
Gabon	1.953
Togo	1.96
Ecuador	1.961
Armenia	1.972
Cambodia	1.987
Niger	1.989
Germany	1.994
Bahrain	1.995
Azerbaijan	2.007
Singapore	2.011
Albania	2.021
Papua New Guinea	2.022
Sri Lanka	2.026
Chad	2.026
Belarus	2.029
Kuwait	2.034
Iran	2.037
Algeria	2.039
China	2.041
Syria	2.047
Lebanon	2.049
Bolivia	2.068
Lesotho	2.069
South Sudan	2.069
Netherlands	2.07
Oman	2.076
Sweden	2.079
North Macedonia	2.1
Venezuela	2.111
Mauritania	2.115
Democratic Republic of the Congo	2.117
South Korea	2.119
El Salvador	2.119
Central African Republic	2.162
Mali	2.162
Guinea-Bissau	2.18
Burkina Faso	2.19
Djibouti	2.229
Iraq	2.236
Qatar	2.237
Palestine	2.265
Sudan	2.268
Greece	2.303
Yemen	2.313
Italy	2.315
Myanmar	2.326
United Arab Emirates	2.374
India	2.399
United Kingdom	2.491
Pakistan	2.593
Norway	2.619
Afghanistan	2.622
France	2.775
Saudi Arabia	2.816
Russia	3.061
Ukraine	3.11
North Korea	3.132
United States of America	3.145
Israel	3.917

Endnotes

SECTION 1

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SECTION 5

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Notes

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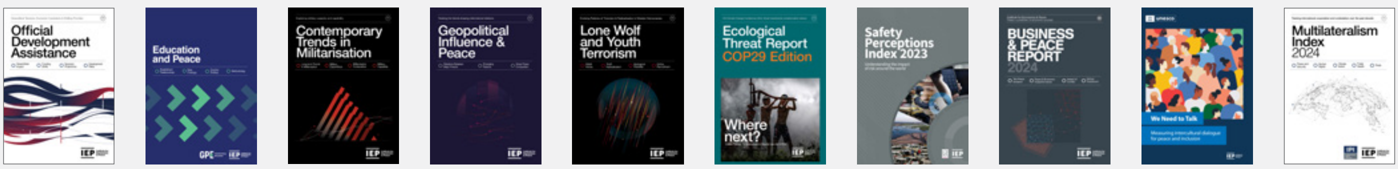

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