



A Unified Approach to Armed Violence

ARMED VIOLENCE—in both its historical and contemporary manifestations—has directly affected the lives of hundreds of millions of people around the world. In a variety of settings—from the 20th-century world wars to the interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan, from the colonial struggles in Sub-Saharan Africa to contemporary conflicts in Libya or Côte d’Ivoire, and from street violence in Los Angeles and Lagos to the drug war in Mexico—millions have suffered injuries or lost their lives, while countless others have been forced to leave their homes and communities, exposed to sickness, famine, and sexual violence. Many other tragedies—including epidemics and diseases, natural disasters, and accidents—claim people’s lives, yet violence is distinct in that it involves the deliberate killing or harming of fellow human beings. High levels of armed violence—even when they do not result in death or injury—spread fear and insecurity, and corrode the social, political, and economic fabric of communities and societies in ways that are difficult to measure or compare.

This second edition of the *Global Burden of Armed Violence* report takes a unified view of armed violence, its causes, and its consequences. The first edition, published in 2008, sets out a basic framework for estimating the overall global burden of armed violence, and global and sub-regional levels of violent death from conflict and interpersonal violence (homicide). This edition takes two further steps, both of which have

important policy and programming implications. First, it ‘zooms in’ to present comparable national-level estimates for violent victimization. Second, it synthesizes and analyses available data from multiple sources to present the first aggregate overview of violent death from all sources, as opposed to distinguishing between conflict, criminal, and interpersonal forms of armed violence. It thus provides the basis for further refining and deepening our understanding of how violence is manifest in different contexts, and how different forms of violence may interact with each other.

One result of these refinements of data, instruments, and the level of analysis is that the *Global Burden of Armed Violence 2011* revisits estimates of the global death toll to look at a longer time period (2004–09 rather than 2004–07) and to provide a more nuanced estimate. It also allows more fine-grained comparisons of regional and national variations in the scale and distribution of armed violence.

Armed violence takes many forms and appears in a wide range of contexts. Numerous analysts have noted that the changing nature of contemporary armed violence has blurred the line between armed conflict and crime, and between politically motivated and economically motivated violence. Economic dimensions of wars, the growth of regional networks involving transnational organized crime, gangs, and non-state armed groups, and persistently high levels of

interpersonal violence—whether in conflict and post-conflict situations or in settings that have not experienced war—make clear that armed violence is a complex phenomenon to untangle. Drawing sharp boundaries around the organization, nature, and purpose of different violent acts is unhelpful in developing responses to the diverse manifestations of violence around the world. Following the usage in the first *Global Burden of Armed Violence* report, this volume defines armed violence generally as ‘the intentional use of illegitimate force (actual or threatened) with arms or explosives, against a person, group, community, or state, that undermines people-centred security and/or sustainable development’ (Geneva Declaration Secretariat, 2008, p. 2).¹

This chapter presents an overview of the main themes of the *Global Burden of Armed Violence 2011*, focusing in particular on the reasons for—and challenges to—adopting a unified approach to contemporary armed violence. Its key conclusions are that:

- The intensity and location of conflict and non-conflict armed violence has changed significantly over recent decades.
- Conventional typologies of armed violence based on the context, intention, and type of actor have limitations for both research (data collection) and policy-making (prevention and reduction programmes).
- The boundaries between political, criminal, and intimate or gender-based violence have become increasingly blurred, as revealed in the cases of Iraq, Mexico, and Somalia.
- Effective violence prevention and reduction programmes and policies need to start with a unified assessment of the scope, scale, and

sources of violence and insecurity before focusing on specific drivers or manifestations of violence.

The following chapters explore different elements of these general arguments. Chapter Two unpacks national- and regional-level data on rates and levels of armed violence around the world, focusing on the 58 most violence-affected states, all with an overall violent death rate exceeding 10 per 100,000. It shows that violence in non-conflict settings (intentional homicide) is responsible for the vast majority of killings (slightly more than 75 per cent of all deaths), while conflict-related violence accounts for only 10 per cent of all violent deaths. The remaining deaths are attributed to killings during legal interventions (4 per cent) and unintentional homicide (just over 10 per cent).² Chapter Three focuses on violent victimization and the instruments of violence involved in so-called non-conflict settings. It finds that gang- and organized crime-related homicides are highly concentrated in Central and South America, and that deaths related to robbery are higher in countries with pronounced inequalities. It also points towards the critical nexus that may exist between high homicide rates, a high proportion of homicides committed with firearms, and a low proportion of cases solved by law enforcement. Chapter Four examines global patterns of violence against women. The final chapter studies the links between armed violence and development by considering the impact of armed violence on progress towards achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and other development indicators. It finds that countries with high and very high levels of violence are concentrated in the low human development and low-income categories, and that there is a persistent link between poverty, armed violence, and development.

Why a unified perspective?

Armed violence is conventionally treated as a series of distinct types that can be categorized according to such factors as the context or the underlying intentions of the perpetrator. The two most common distinctions are drawn between *organized* (collective) and *interpersonal* (individual) violence, and between *conflict* (politically motivated) and *criminal* (economically motivated) violence. These distinctions capture the level of organization of, and the motivations behind, the violent acts. Conflict violence follows a Clausewitzian logic, according to which ‘war’ (in its various forms) is the continuation of political struggles by other means, is highly organized, and uses force in a calibrated way to achieve particular ends that are subordinate to political considerations.³ Criminal violence is simply the use of armed violence that is not sanctioned by law (Riedel and Welch, 2008), regardless of whether it is motivated by impersonal economic gain (murders during robberies, for example) or interpersonal disputes.

Beyond these general distinctions lies a wide range of typologies and categorizations that attempt to delineate different forms of conflict and criminal violence according to the level of organization or intentions of the violent actor. These range from the large-scale violence associated with war to inter-communal, state, and terrorist violence, organized criminal and economically motivated violence, and interpersonal and gender-based violence.⁴ Each of these categories can be disaggregated into specific violent acts such as terrorism, gang violence, extortion, kidnapping, assault, or rape.

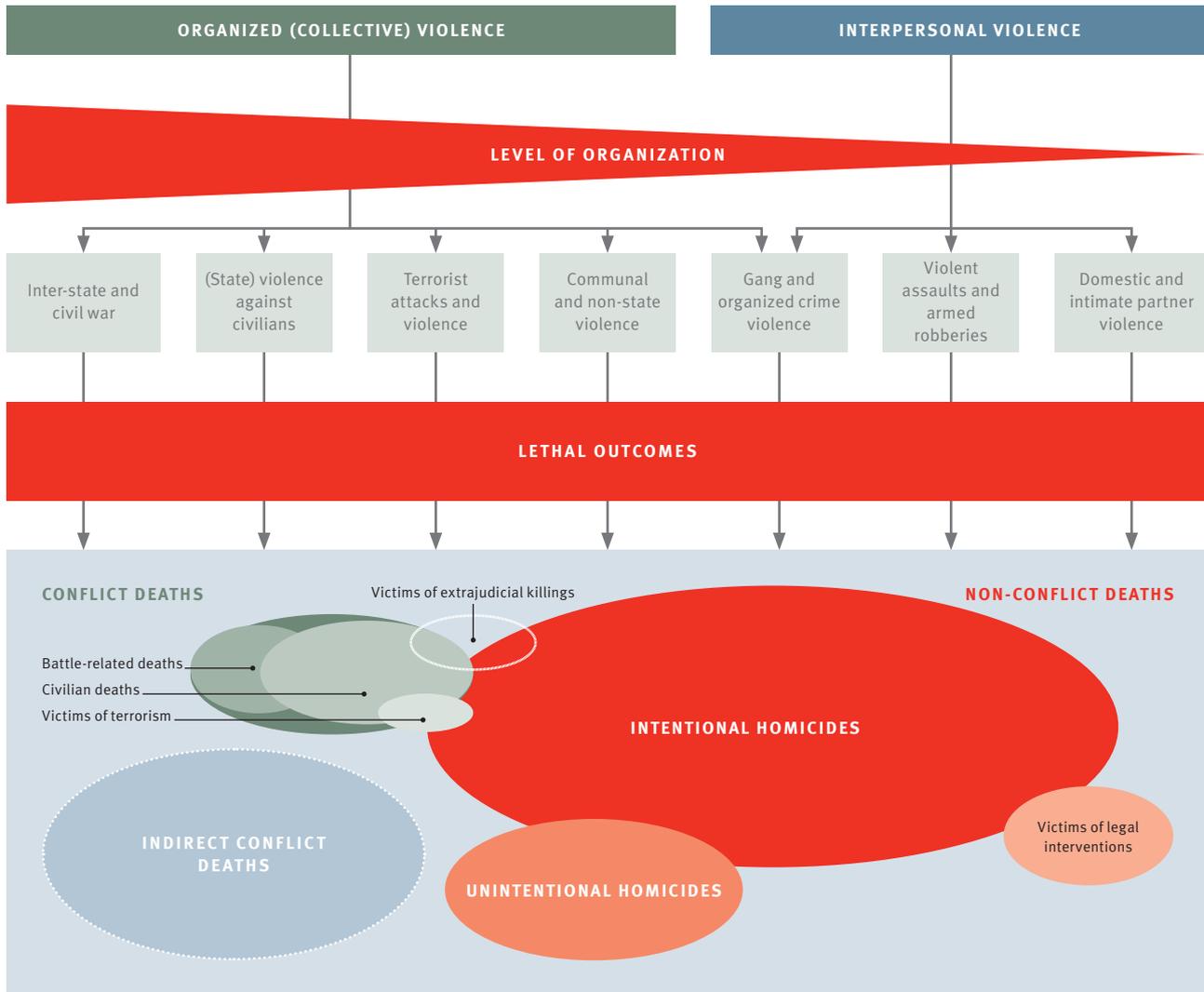
This sort of classification gives rise to the general picture of armed violence presented in Figure 1.1 The ‘macro’ distinction is between

different levels of organization of violence; the second-order distinction captures the different types of actors and motives involved; the last category captures the different ways of counting the lethal consequences.

Conflict violence contributes to the global burden of armed violence through the violent deaths of both combatants and civilians (either trapped in conflict zones, or directly victimized by states and armed groups), as well as the indirect (non-violent) deaths or excess mortality suffered by civilian populations as a consequence of armed conflict.⁵ Civilian non-combatants, who form a significant proportion of victims of contemporary organized violence, are more often killed outside of formal ‘combat’ in massacres by loosely organized groups, as was the case for the more than 1,000 victims⁶ of post-election violence in Kenya in 2008, or in state violence against unarmed demonstrators, as was visible across parts of North Africa and the Middle East in 2011.

Criminal or non-conflict violence is commonly captured in terms of intentional homicide or murder, and unintentional killing (manslaughter), as well as extrajudicial or ‘legal’ killings by state security forces. While the various ways of counting lethal violence are more or less likely to provide an adequate picture of the actual incidence of armed violence, there is an imperfect ‘translation’ between different levels. For example, extrajudicial and police killings are not systematically counted in homicide statistics in all countries; in places such as Jamaica or Nigeria, however, they can account for 13–43 per cent of violent deaths (AI, 2009, p. 22; Foglesong and Stone, 2007, p. 18).⁷

Indirect non-violent deaths from conflict—which are dealt with only briefly in this edition of the *Global Burden of Armed Violence*—can account for the majority of victims of conflict and lead to widely different estimates of the burden of conflict

FIGURE 1.1 A framework of armed violence categories

deaths. The Democratic Republic of the Congo is an interesting, yet controversial case. The International Rescue Committee, for example, finds that up to 5.4 million people died between 1998 and 2007, of which only 10 per cent were victims of violence (Coghlan et al., 2006, p. 44; IRC, 2007, p. ii). On the other hand, the *Human Security*

Report 2009/2010 revises these figures and establishes an estimate of up to 2.4 million deaths (HSRP, 2010, part II, p. 38). The first edition of the *Global Burden of Armed Violence* suggests a global average ratio of four indirect deaths for every direct (violent) death due to armed conflict, although this depends heavily on the nature of the

conflict and the humanitarian response (Geneva Declaration Secretariat, 2008, p. 32).

So what is wrong with this picture? There are four reasons why convenient classifications and sharp distinctions hinder our ability to develop effective practical and programmatic responses to armed violence in different settings. The first is that they give the misleading impression that any particular violent incident fits in one (and only one) of the neat boxes. Yet armed violence can have multiple and overlapping motives; different political, economic, identity-based, ideological, and other motives (such as revenge, resources, and respect) can be present in one violent situation. The practice of denunciation provides striking examples of how motives can overlap. During the Guatemalan civil war, for instance, killings were perpetrated based on name lists provided by local villagers; in Afghanistan, local factions informed US forces about alleged Taliban or Al-Qaeda presence so that these targets would be bombed. In both cases, local actors co-opted external parties with their own motivations to use violence to settle local rivalries, family or clan feuds, or disputes over land and resources (Kalyvas, 2003, pp. 480, 483).

Different forms of armed violence can also be present simultaneously, and be perpetrated by the same actors (Stepanova, 2010). In Iraq, for example, a narrow focus on counting ‘conflict deaths’—violent attacks that are claimed by a recognized armed group with a political agenda—leads to low estimates for violent victimization, especially as compared to the ‘everyday violence’ to which Iraqis have been subjected.⁸ The data provided by the Iraq Body Count Project, for example, records 27,000 civilians killed for 2006 alone in Iraq. The combined Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) datasets—covering state-based conflict, non-state conflict, and one-sided

violence—register only 4,261 deaths in total for the same period.⁹

Armed violence can also change from one form to another over time, often following a shifting tempo with peaks and lulls that reflect the fluidity of motives and capabilities of violent actors. In Angola, for example, UNITA first emerged as a revolutionary movement providing a voice to the Ovimbundu, Angola’s largest ethnic group (Malaquias, 2010, p. 296). In the 1970s, the group adopted a clear anti-communist tone, defining itself as struggling ‘against the Russo–Cuban expansion’ in the region; as such, it benefited from US support in the cold war arena (Koloma Beck, 2009, p. 347). Once the civil war resumed after the failed electoral process in 1992, UNITA faced political and strategic constraints that favoured more predatory activity based on diamond mining. In combination with an unprecedented availability of small arms at the end of the cold war, the diamond trade provided a support to the protracted violence (Malaquias, 2010, p. 294). A second, more recent, example—the rise of piracy off the coast of Somalia—is analysed in Box 1.1.

Finally, rigid and exclusive categorizations treat different forms of armed violence as self-contained within a particular system of perpetrators, victims, survivors, and conditions. One result is that it is difficult to see the ways in which different forms of violence may be linked, or may share similar underlying causes. Yet as far back as the US Civil War, analysts note that wartime violence can spill over into non-conflict ‘crime waves’ (Abbott, 1927); similar findings appear throughout the 20th century (Archer and Gartner, 1976). More recently, researchers have begun to recognize that the patterns and levels of violence against women in such places as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo,

Box 1.1 Somali pirates: bandits and soldiers of convenience

Armed violence has been pervasive in Somalia since the 1991 collapse of the state and the ousting of Siad Barre's government. Thousands of people, especially civilians, have suffered directly and indirectly from the armed confrontations among the numerous factions at war in the country. The heavy human toll of the early years of conflict resulted both directly from armed violence and reprisals against civilians, and indirectly from the devastation of farmland, which brought starvation upon thousands of Somalis and displaced tens of thousands of people.

The violent collapse of the Somali state is also linked in complex ways to the increasing acts of piracy in the Gulf of Aden. Initially, with the disappearance of any state surveillance of Somalia's maritime waters, fishermen took up arms to oppose illegal industrial fishing and international waste disposal off the coast. These armed groups rapidly realized that unarmed commercial vessels represented a convenient opportunity for enhanced income generation (Lennox, 2008, p. 9). Initial small-scale attacks quickly grew more sophisticated, peaking with the seizure of the *Sirius Star*, a tanker with an estimated USD 100 million worth of cargo, and the seizure of the *Faina* and its cargo of 33 Russian T-72 tanks, weapons, and ammunition (Balakrishnan, Rice, and Norton-Taylor, 2008; Höges, Klusmann, and Knaup, 2008).

The scope and nature of the attacks are also influenced by the availability of weapons and the environment of pervasive insecurity. The International Maritime Bureau finds that the 213 reported attacks by Somali pirates in 2010 was double the figure for 2008 (and four times higher than the 2007 figure). Furthermore, Somali pirates perpetrated 48 per cent of worldwide reported attacks. Indeed, for the years 2009 and 2010, Somali pirates were responsible for an average of 80 per cent of all attempted attacks, and an average of 25 per cent of successful acts of piracy. Overall, they were responsible for half of the attempted and actual attacks worldwide (IMB, 2010; 2011).¹⁰ The Somali pirates were also more violent than their peers: although they account for only half of the attacks worldwide, Somali pirates accounted for 86 per cent of the hostage-taking, all of the deaths, and 78 per cent of the attacks involving guns in 2010 (IMB, 2010; 2011).

Piracy is by definition a violent act serving private economic interests, but in practice Somali pirates are entangled in local conflict dynamics.¹¹ Though pirates have kept some distance from the ongoing civil conflict, recent reports show that these groups have bolstered their armaments, and that local government officials as well as opposing militias are increasingly relying on the pirates' firepower and strength for carrying out protective and predatory tasks (Gettleman, 2010).

The involvement of piracy—commonly associated with international organized crime—in the Somali conflict illustrates how blurry the distinction between criminally motivated and ideologically motivated violence has become. Though Somali pirates have so far not been directly involved in killings in the ongoing conflict, the fact that they are linked to the warring factions represents a serious threat to safety and security in the region.

PHOTO Armed Somali pirates prepare a skiff in Hobyo for future attacks, Somalia, January 2010. © Mohamed Dahir/AFP Photo





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El Salvador, or Iraq may be conditioned by the experiences of war and deeply entrenched conflict dynamics.¹² And the high suicide rates among members of the US armed forces in the past decade are linked to wartime experiences in complex ways (USDOD, 2010).

These four aspects—the multiple, simultaneous, and shifting motivations of violent actors, and the links between different forms of violence—confound simple classifications and policy responses. Rigid distinctions and categorizations lead to policy stovepipes, in which policies and programmes to deal with one sort of armed violence (gang violence, for example, or conflict prevention strategies) are developed in a narrow fashion that disregards the way in which different forms of armed violence can be closely linked. In Liberia, for example, much of the post-war effort focused on more traditional demobilization, disarmament, and reintegration, as well as security sector reform. Post-war Liberia, however, faces other serious challenges; high unemployment, a large youth population, and severe development needs all represent sources of discontent and risk factors for potential armed violence. To date, post-war security promotion efforts have not tackled these issues as a way of reducing the risk of the more criminalized forms of violence (Small Arms Survey, 2011a, p. 2; 2011b).

Policy stovepipes also result in blind spots, in which the most important types of violence may be neglected due to the policy predispositions or orientations of major donors and stakeholders. For example, strategies to deal with homicidal violence in Central America have focused on violent gangs, neglecting the range of other violent acts and actors in the region. The initial response to violence in the region ‘can be characterized as enforcement-first’ measures, ranging from tougher prison sentences to ‘aggressively

arresting youths suspected of gang membership’ (Rodgers, Muggah, and Stevenson, 2008, p. 16; Bateson 2009, p. 7). Yet data in El Salvador, for example, shows that only around 13 per cent of homicides in 2008 were attributed to gangs (IML, 2009, p. 70). The focus on gangs, however, means that other violent acts are left aside, such as the 93 extrajudicial killings reported in 2006, and the more recent escalation of drug-related violence linked not to gangs, but to organized crime (Aguilera, 2008, p. 134). Facing criticism and lack of effect, heavy-handed approaches have started to be combined with *mano amiga* (Friendly Hand) and *mano extendida* (Extended Hand) interventions, which focus more on incentives for demobilizing gangs and the establishment of stricter controls on small arms (Rodgers, Muggah, and Stevenson, 2008, p. 16). Finally, policy stovepipes can also lead to category errors, in which programmers misunderstand or mistake the form of or motivation behind the violence encountered, leading to inappropriate programmes or responses.

Obstacles to a unified perspective

Achieving a unified perspective on armed violence is difficult. Policy-makers require boundaries within which to structure practical programmes. Public health practitioners, for example, rely upon the World Health Organization’s epidemiological model, which focuses on risk and resilience factors while seeking to identify factors that can be addressed at the individual, community, and societal level (WHO, 2002). The World Bank’s *World Development Report 2011: Conflict, Security, and Development* relies mainly on data relating to conflict, and only to a much lesser extent on data and analysis relating to homicide and organized crime (World Bank, 2011).

The community working on issues of gender-based violence and violence against women generally works in isolation from other violence prevention and reduction programming. And the conflict prevention and peacebuilding community focuses mainly on those few contexts in which a formal ‘armed conflict’ has erupted.

Similarly, researchers and analysts specialize in understanding one or another manifestation of armed violence, with little communication between disciplines. Research on conflict, crime, gang violence, and violence against women is abundant in a wide array of disciplines, ranging from criminology to public health, and from international relations to economics to anthropology. Over the years, these communities have produced a solid literature and statistical base, but each of them collects data on the scope and distribution of armed violence according to different understandings and for different purposes. Research on homicide, for example, is the realm of criminologists and organizations such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime; research on conflict is conducted by a series of academic and civil society research centres, such as UCDP, Project Ploughshares, and the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS).¹⁴

Achieving a unified perspective is thus both a practical and an analytical challenge. It requires different research communities to set aside their predispositions, widen their focus, and gain perspective on where their particular interest fits into larger patterns of violence and insecurity within and between communities. Furthermore, this goal challenges policy-makers to bring together a wide range of actors in ‘multi-stakeholder’ platforms to learn which promising solutions and best practices can be successfully migrated and adapted to specific contexts and conditions. These challenges can be overcome through

effective armed violence monitoring systems or violence observatories, which link research and analysis directly to policy-making processes. The Jamaican Crime Observatory, for example, links data from hospitals with police crime data and data from local sources. It identifies crime and violence hotspots, brings this information into the community, and catalyses discussions on issues and strategies to prevent and reduce violence (Gilgen and Tracey, 2011, pp. 38–39).

Neither war nor peace: armed violence in contemporary conflicts

Shifts in location, scope, and intensity of the most highly organized forms of armed violence have been well documented over the past two decades. Traditional forms of warfare between states have declined over recent decades, while the number of internal armed conflicts and civil wars steadily increased, peaking in the early 1990s. Since then, the number of armed conflicts that involve states and that are ongoing has stabilized, with 36 state-based armed conflicts active in 2009. All of these were *internal* conflicts, and seven of them involved combatants from outside states (Pettersson and Themnér, 2010, p. 16).¹⁵

The past decades have also witnessed a reported decline in the incidence as well as the intensity of armed conflict around the globe, as measured by the overall lethality of conflicts. This has led some analysts to highlight the shrinking human costs of war and even to herald the end of major war (HSRP, 2010; World Bank, 2011; Lacina and Gleditsch, 2005, pp. 148–51). Some observers argue that these declines are linked to the slow but steady success of the peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts of multilateral institutions. Others argue that non-violent means of resolving con-



PHOTO Supporters of the opposition take part in post-election protests in Kibera slum, Nairobi, Kenya, January 2008.

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flicts in democratic states are slowly replacing violent interactions. Whatever the explanation, the drop in lethal conflict-related violence worldwide remains tenuous. The violent Arab Spring of 2011 and the armed clashes after Côte d'Ivoire's contested presidential elections of November 2010 are only two recent examples of the divisive nature of political change, and of how countries can slide into outbreaks of collective violence.

One important feature of contemporary armed conflicts that is not easily captured is the increasing number of more or less formally organized armed groups that confront each other, or that target a specific segment of the population, without the direct involvement of the state. In 2008 in Kenya, for example, the violent clashes that erupted after the disputed elections of 2007 claimed more than 1,000 lives and displaced an estimated 350,000 persons (CIPEV, 2008, p. 272).¹⁶ The violence involved at least eight identified non-state groups (such as ethnic groups, gangs, or militias) as well as the Kenyan security forces.¹⁷ Active (and ethnically aligned) gangs—such as the Luo Taliban and the Kikuyu Mungiki—participated in the violence in an environment where party politics have traditionally been organized in a 'winner-takes-all zero-sum ethnic game' (Mueller, 2008, p. 200). Furthermore, the Kenyan army and police reportedly perpetrated rapes and other sexual abuses during the post-electoral violence in 2007–08 (CIPEV, 2008, p. 237). In addition, firearms or gunshots were identified as the cause of death in 405 cases across Kenya (35.7 per cent of all killings); the numbers of gunshot victims were highest in the Rift Valley (194 victims or 47 per cent of all firearms-related deaths), which also suffered the largest numbers of victims overall (744 persons killed) (CIPEV, 2008, pp. 312, 342).

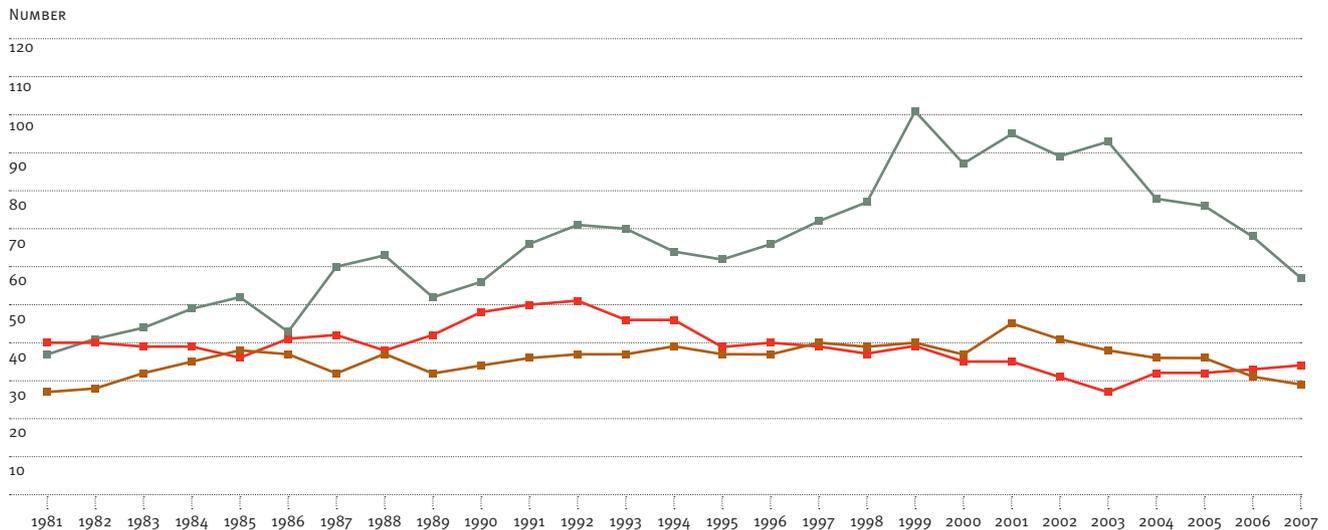
This rise in armed group activity can be illustrated more generally in several ways. One way is to track the number of non-state armed actors around the world, which, according to some estimates, may reach more than 1,000 different groups, large and small, around the globe (Carey and Mitchell, 2011, p. 1; IISS, 2009, pp. 465–74; UCDP, 2011).¹⁸ Figure 1.2 illustrates that while the overall number of international and civil wars has been stable or declining since the mid-1990s, the number of active pro-government militias around the globe increased steadily from the early 1980s through 1990s, only to decline since 2003. The increasingly complex power struggles and the atomization of actors and political configurations have been noted in conflict settings such as Darfur, Iraq, and Pakistan (Stepanova, 2010). Predatory groups, counter-insurgency operations undertaken by states, insurgent actions, and criminal activities linked to war

economies are all indicators of the complex web of violent actors involved in different forms of violence at the local, national, and regional levels.

The heightened activity among organized armed groups can also be illustrated by the number of armed conflicts that do not involve governments. Although the figures fluctuate widely from year to year, the number of non-state armed conflicts reached 35 in 2008—more or less the same as the number of armed conflicts involving states (HSRP, 2010, ch. 11, pp. 5–22).¹⁹ Although mostly small-scale, this form of violence poses significant security and development challenges; the 2008–08 post-election violence and political uncertainty in Kenya, for example, had a direct impact on the economy.²⁰ After several years of high annual GDP growth (more than six per cent per year in 2006 and 2007), growth dropped to 1.6 and 2.6 per cent in 2008 and 2009, respectively (World Bank, n.d.).

FIGURE 1.2 Active pro-government militias and the number of civil wars, 1981–2008

■ Number of pro-government militias (PGM) ■ Number of civil wars ■ Number of countries with at least one active PGM



SOURCE: Carey and Mitchell (2011)

A violent non-state group is less stable and has less easily defined collective goals and strategies, calling into question the idea of an armed group as a unitary, homogeneous actor with a particular ideology and common goal that uses violence as a means to achieve political change or economic gain. Rather, conflicts involving non-state armed groups can be compared to a brush fire characterized by the eruption of pockets of violence; the groups may have different levels of formal organization, but they are linked in one way or another to the overall context of insecurity and conflict. The violence may be opportunistic and loosely organized (as when neighbouring groups fight over land or resources), highly organized and predatory (formal armed groups), or state-led (to suppress opposition). As the type and number of violent actors in a particular context increases, and as the links between them become more complex, it is more difficult to launch narrowly targeted interventions to negotiate cease-fires or peace agreements (Nitzschke and Studdard, 2005, p. 225; UN, 2010, p. 13).

In addition to the changing nature of contemporary armed conflicts, analysts must recognize the transformation of armed violence that can occur in so-called post-conflict settings. The sharp analytic and programmatic divide between conflict and non-conflict violence is generally based on three beliefs: that when conflicts terminate overall levels of violence decline and security and safety improves, that levels of violence and victimization are higher in conflict settings, and that there are no strong links between forms of conflict and non-conflict violence. But in many contexts one or more of these three beliefs are wrong, as illustrated by the case of Iraq (see Box 1.2). It is not uncommon for peacetime violence to reach mortality rates as high or even higher than during a preceding armed conflict, as in

contemporary Guatemala. During the 36-year civil war, an estimated 119,300–200,000 people were killed, which translates into 3,508–5,800 deaths per year. Yet in 2009 alone, 6,498 homicide victims were reported by the Guatemalan police (Restrepo and Tobón, 2011, pp. 37, 46).

Conflict and post-conflict violence can be linked in many ways.²¹ The militarization of the security sector and the formation of paramilitary groups during conflicts in countries such as Colombia, El Salvador, and Mozambique have led to a higher incidence of extrajudicial killings and social cleansing operations in slums or shantytowns. Similarly, the breakdown of state institutions and the lack of effective policing capacities have led to informal policing and rough justice that has included lynching and vigilantism in countries such as Guatemala and Liberia. Most importantly, illegal networks related to war economies contribute not only to the duration of armed conflict itself, but often also to the continuation of criminal violence after the settlement of the conflict.

The return of demobilized former combatants to situations of heightened insecurity and socio-economic uncertainty can also push people to organize themselves into vigilante-like groups to protect themselves or their communities from violence (Geneva Declaration Secretariat, 2008, p. 130). Criminal activities are known to have become an option for income generation at the individual level as well as to sustain these groups' existence over time (Rodgers and Muggah, 2009, p. 308). Easily accessible weaponry in post-war settings can also contribute to an overall aggravation of the security situation (Small Arms Survey, 2010, p. 141). Over time, political and criminal motives may become blurred, and different manifestations of violence can share root causes and interact in complex (and poorly understood) ways.

Box 1.2 How different forms of violence are linked in Iraq

In post-invasion Iraq, the widely reported targeting of non-combatants by insurgents, militias, and sectarian groups may have appeared chaotic or random at first glance. Yet a closer look at underlying patterns and motives of violence suggests that this seemingly arbitrary or criminal violence may also serve 'clear political purposes' aligned with the political goals of these armed groups (Green and Ward, 2009, p. 612).

Such 'dual-purpose violence' in Iraq is characteristic of both the politically motivated violence of insurgents and organized criminality since 2003. Individuals, often with a criminal background, 'pre-financed' future insurgent activities by participating in the generalized looting shortly after the fall of the Ba'ath regime, and impoverished looters targeted the homes of the political elite 'in acts of political revenge but also to satisfy long accumulated material needs' (Green and Ward, 2009, p. 618). Notorious organized crime figures have reportedly helped insurgent cells to fund their activities through kidnappings, bribery, and highway robberies (p. 619).

Violence against women has also been used to serve sectarian or political ends, demonstrating how common criminality, individual motives, and collective violence interact in Iraq. Under the Ba'ath regime the *hijab* (women's traditional dress code) was forbidden and women's rights were a 'bargaining chip' for the political elite. While advancing a rather progressive position in terms of women's rights and participation in society and the workforce, the Ba'ath regime 'accepted tribal practices' in return for loyalty from local leaders (Green and Ward, 2009, p. 614).

Since 2003, traditional or sectarian practices against women have been used as part of political struggles. When a faction takes control of a territory, the imposition of the veil or a strict dress code for women is usually among the first measures announced as part of a wider 'campaign of



PHOTO A woman stands next to the grave of her daughter, a Sunni who was killed by Shia militiamen, Baghdad, March 2008.

© Ghaith Abdul-Ahad/Getty Images



terror' in militia-controlled areas (Green and Ward, 2009, p. 615).

'Honour' killings are also increasingly perpetrated by armed groups that define 'dishonour' in sectarian terms. The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq reports that many female students are pressed to adopt conservative dress codes by their families in order to avoid attracting the attention of university guards who are affiliated with different militias (UNAMI, 2008, p. 15).

Family members often denounce women who have brought shame upon their kin, but it has also been reported that members of families in conflict have used malicious denunciation to intimidate and inflict harm upon their opponents (Green and Ward, 2009, p. 615). In 2008, the UK-based *Guardian* reported that 'honour' killings in the southern city of Basra were on the rise. From January to November 2008, 81 women had been murdered, versus 47 in 2007. In some cases, an Iraqi lawyer reported, family members had hired professional gunmen to carry out killings and make them appear like sectarian murders (Sarhan, 2008). 'Honour' killings have been of particular concern in Basra and the northern region of Iraqi Kurdistan. In 2007, 57 women were killed and their bodies dumped for their allegedly un-Islamic behaviour; meanwhile, the Kurdistan Regional Government reported 56 women killed and 150 women burnt in 'honour'-related incidents, including self-immolation (USDoS, 2007; UNAMI, 2008, p. 16).

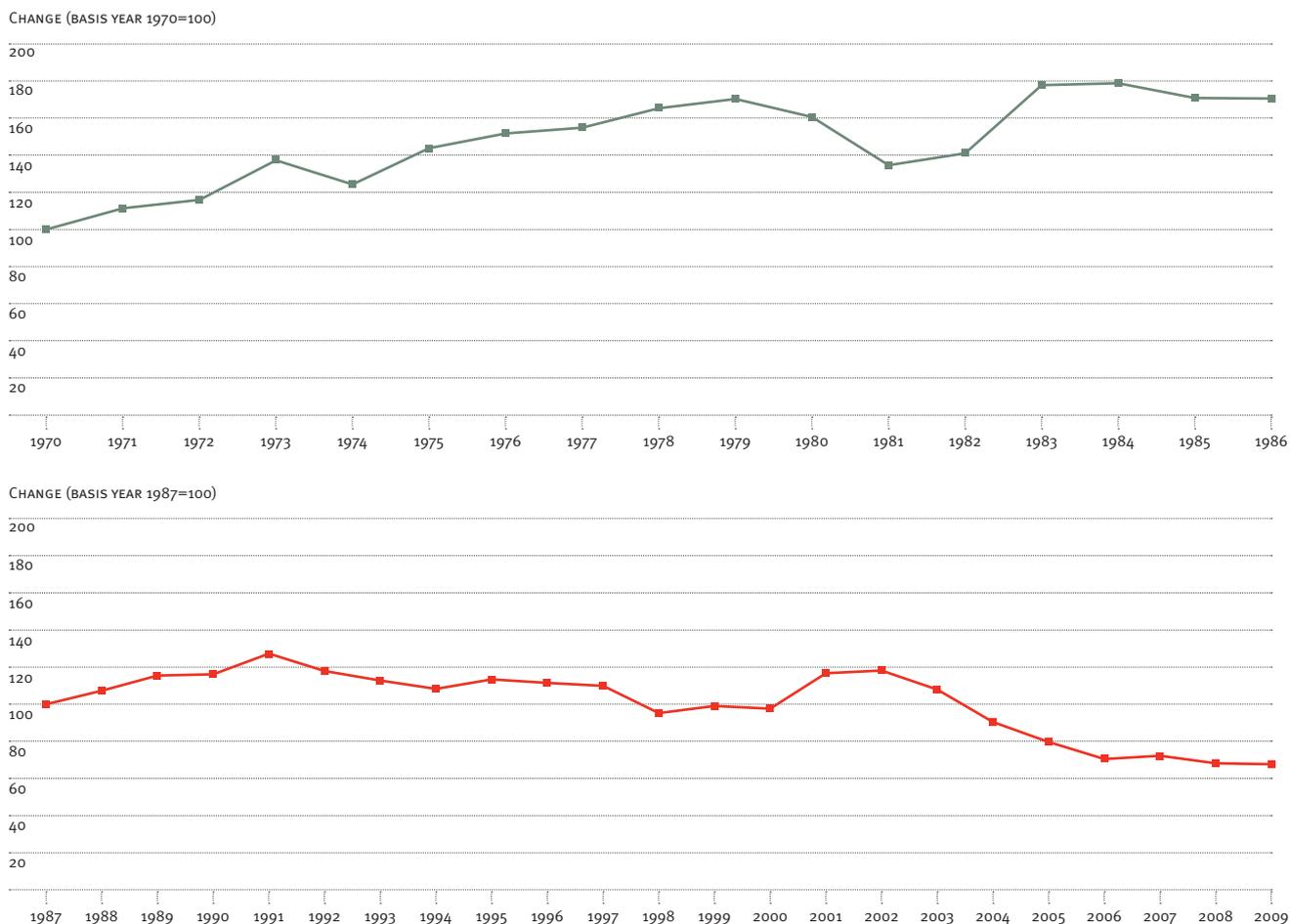
These various forms of violence against women demonstrate how individual violent acts accommodate political as well as personal and private motives for violence. The conflict in Iraq has increased opportunities for various actors to engage in violence against women under the umbrella of the overall ongoing conflict. In the Iraqi case, women are both victims and instruments of increased polarization among different groups and suffer high levels of violence, especially through 'honour' killings and rape.

Neither peace nor war: violence in post- and non-conflict settings

The incidence and severity of lethal violence in non-conflict settings has also undergone significant changes over the past few decades, yet the picture is more complex than that presented for armed conflict. The limited empirical data on historical homicide rates reveals a regular down-

ward trend in Western Europe since the beginning of the early modern period. Homicide rates across Western Europe—in what are today Belgium, England, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Scandinavia, and Switzerland—declined by roughly half from the early 17th to the early 18th century, and by the 19th century, they had dropped three to five times further (Eisner, 2001; Gurr, 1981; Monkkonen, 2001).²² Although the exact timing

FIGURE 1.3 Aggregated homicide rates in 13 selected Western European countries, 1970–2009 (base year=100)



NOTE: The rate for the initial year is indexed at 100 to facilitate trend comparison.

SOURCE: Small Arms Survey elaboration based on UNODC (n.d.b.)

and scope of the decline varies from place to place, there is little doubt about the long-term decline in lethal violence within European states.

In the medium term, however, homicide rates do fluctuate significantly. Figure 1.3 illustrates the evolution of the aggregated homicide rates in 13 European states, based on data collected by the *United Nations Survey of Crime Trends and the Operations of Criminal Justice Systems* (CTS). The data is divided into two periods, 1970–86 and 1987–2009, due to an apparent change in the statistical recording of homicide in 1987, which is visible in a significant fluctuation of rates throughout the countries observed and renders analysis of trends and rates very difficult. All country rates are set to 100 for the first year to ensure the comparability of trends.

The figures reveal that homicide rates gradually increased by close to 80 per cent between 1970 and 1986, reaching a rate of around three homicides per 100,000. The highest increases are seen in Norway and Switzerland, although these figures have to be considered with some caution since the very low homicide rates in Europe mean that small changes in how data is recorded or homicide defined can have a major impact on trends. Rates continue to increase until the early 1990s, then stabilize, and eventually begin to decline in the early 2000s.²³ Between 2003 and 2009, homicide rates decreased 40 per cent in just six years. At the country level, trends are also noteworthy. Between 1970 and 1986, several countries suffer severe increases in the recorded homicide rates; only Austria, Finland, and Spain have a lower rate in 1986 than in 1970. By 2009, the majority of the 13 countries under review (with the exception of Spain) exhibit rates below the initial homicide rate of 1987. For 2009, the average rate for all 13 countries is a low level of around one homicide per 100,000 persons.

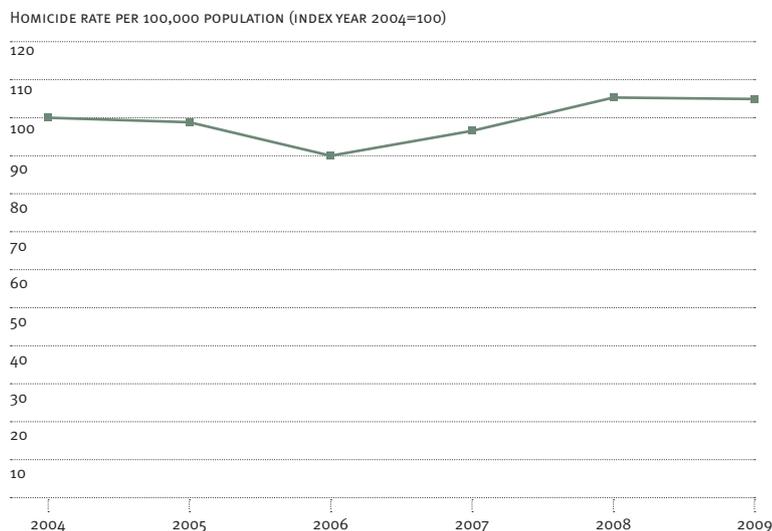
Although European rates remain low over the longer term, these fluctuations raise questions about what factors influence lethal violence in the medium and short term. The upward trend in the 1970s and early 1980s has been attributed variously to rapid modernization and social change in Europe, or considered a ‘normal’ manifestation of increasing wealth and the resulting opportunities to commit crimes (LaFree and Drass, 2002). The downward trend of homicide rates since the mid-1980s and again in the mid-2000s has also been largely recognized in literature on violent crime (Aeby, 2004; Tseloni et al., 2010; Zimring, 2007); several explanations for the drop have emerged, including such factors as improved emergency medical interventions that reduce mortality from gunshot and other wounds (Spierenburg, 2008, p. 210).

At the global level, there is a lack of reliable historical data that could serve as the basis for trend analysis. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime has published data covering 163 countries for the period 1970–2008 from its series of 11 Crime Trends Surveys. Yet this data cannot be used to generate global trends since almost no states report in every survey, and since the entry (and exit) of states and groups of states radically changes the global rates. In the early 1970s, for example, only around 50 states reported; most were from Europe, though samples were provided from all other regions except Sub-Saharan Africa, which was especially under-represented in this period. By the 1990s, about 67 states were reporting consistently; the progressive inclusion of more data from states with relatively high or very high homicide rates (such as Colombia, Estonia, and Ukraine) made it seem as though global rates were increasing, when in fact reporting was simply improving. In the beginning of the 2000s, reporting decreased first but then stabi-

lized at a higher level, with around 95 countries reporting homicide data by 2005–06.

It is thus difficult to derive long-term trends from global averages based on partial and shifting data alone. Coverage has been comprehensive enough to present trend data since 2004, revealing an upward trend in global homicides in the second half of the 2000s (see Figure 1.4). As noted above, Western European countries have a decreasing homicide rate over this period, but in other parts of the world, entire regions were suffering from generally increasing rates in homicidal violence. Despite the rather small magnitude of the increase since 2004 (about 5 per cent), the global impact in terms of human lives lost is significant. The difference between the low point of 2006 and the figure for 2009, drawing on data from the *Global Burden of Armed Violence* database, represents more than 54,000 additional homicide deaths (and an increase of 24,000 since 2004).

FIGURE 1.4 Global homicide trends, 2004–09



SOURCE: GBAV 2011 database

There are several possible explanations for these different—and fluctuating—trends at the European and global level. Most analysts point to the progressive development of modern state institutions, and the expansion of the state’s practical monopoly over the legitimate use of force through security institutions such as law enforcement and national defence as one explanation for declining homicide (and overall crime) levels. Not only has the state been able to intensify its presence over its territory, but scientific progress and institutional reorganization of police forces have also improved its capacity to contain crime and apprehend perpetrators (Spierenburg, 2008, pp. 169–70). The low levels of violence in Europe also seem to reflect changing normative understandings of the legitimate use of violence and the importance of personal security.²⁷ Violent practices that were commonplace a century or so ago—such as public executions, torture, and lynchings—have today been stigmatized to the point of near extinction in the West, although there are notable exceptions. Similarly, the everyday use of violence to resolve conflicts has been condemned, even in what was hitherto considered the ‘private sphere’, where intimate partner violence existed beyond the reach of the state.

Behind these figures lies a more complex reality, one in which lethal non-conflict violence unfolds with different levels of organization. Although non-conflict lethal violence is generally counted as ‘homicide’, it is often linked to highly organized criminal activity or to different forms of ‘political violence’ that either target political opponents or civil servants such as mayors, teachers, or police officers, or that seek to modify government policies. In these contexts, the term ‘homicide’ is a slightly misleading term since it conjures up images of individual inter-personal acts of violence.

One result is that the distinction between the activities of politically motivated armed groups

and criminal organizations has blurred from both ends of the spectrum. Traditionally, politically and economically motivated armed groups have been seen as ‘opposing ideal types’, the first pursuing ‘self-defined higher causes’ and the latter pursuing ‘monetary profit’ (Cornell, 2007, p. 210). Although both require money to operate, the main difference lies in the planned use of the profit arising from these activities. Rebels use criminal activities to mobilize resources (to buy weapons and care for their troops) to achieve political and social change; criminal organizations, on the other hand, focus on the expansion of their business and often use profits for unproductive ends such as luxury goods (Stepanova, 2010, p. 42).

Criminal activities, such as trafficking in goods, have been used to finance the war effort in places such as Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Colombia, and Liberia (UNODC, 2010, p. 234; Wennmann, 2007; see Box 1.3). The production and distribution of narcotics are classic examples of how armed groups generate income to sustain their war efforts. One result is a ‘close-knit relationship between criminal and political actors as political protagonists on all sides engage in criminal activity to raise funds’ (Steenkamp, 2009, p. 17). Yet when ostensibly politically motivated groups such as the FARC in Colombia turn towards criminal activities because of increased opportunities and the need for self-financing, or the Ugandan Lord’s Resistance Army maintains its predatory violence without apparent political purpose, ideological goals fade and their activities resemble the self-perpetuating business model of organized criminal groups. This shift has important policy implications: in circumstances where armed groups have become criminalized, political compromises such as power-sharing offers may be less effective as

some groups find it more interesting to remain ‘violence entrepreneurs’ that profit from their established criminal operations (Goodhand, 2008). These developments also imply that the interactions between criminal and political groups are best thought of as a continuum rather than separate phenomena.

Seen from another angle, the violent activities of organized criminal groups can have political implications and consequences, even if the main motive remains profit-seeking. Different forms of trafficking—in drugs, humans, small arms, counterfeit goods, environmental resources—are increasingly recognized as a threat to international, regional, or national security (UNODC, 2010; Kemp, 2003, p. 303). Organized crime, and especially the trafficking of illicit narcotics, is accompanied by high levels of violence and has shown a marked capacity for blurring the boundaries between criminal and political types of violence, as evidenced by the drug war in Mexico (see Box 1.4). Drug cartels are locked in a battle for control over the flow of narcotics to the north, while the Mexican state has mobilized the army to wage a war on drugs in its territory. Killings of politicians and civil servants such as mayors and police officers are frequent, and the cause is both criminal and political, since one goal is to weaken local institutions and to coerce the authorities into abandoning the struggle against the drug traffickers.

Box 1.3 Defining illicit trafficking

The term ‘trafficking’ covers illicit goods, such as narcotics; goods processed or obtained in illicit ways, such as conflict diamonds or stolen goods; and goods that are legal and obtained legally but destined to illicit activities, such as terrorist financing (Jojarth, 2009, p. 8).

Box 1.4 Mexico's drug war

Violence and insecurity in the wake of President Felipe Calderón's war on drugs have reached extremely high levels in several regions of Mexico. Official estimates set the human cost of Mexico's drug war at around 35,000 dead from 2006 to 2010 (Booth, 2010; Turbiville, 2010, p. 124; Mexico, n.d.a).²⁸

Mexico's overall levels of violence have long been steady—with an average violent death rate of 11.5 per 100,000 persons in 2004–09 (ICESI, n.d.). But this national rate, while demonstrating that most parts of the country are generally safe, masks the bitter reality that some cities and regions suffer from extraordinarily high levels of violence, higher than found in many war zones (see Figure 2.9, TRENDS AND PATTERNS).

At the state level, Chihuahua—home of Ciudad Juárez—had a rate of organized crime-related deaths of 98.6 per 100,000 in 2009 (with an *overall* homicide rate of 108.0); it is followed by Durango, which has a rate of 43.5 per 100,000 (Mexico, n.d.a).²⁹ By contrast, Mexico City had an *overall* murder rate of 8 per 100,000, and a drug-related homicide rate of 1.5 per 100,000. Yucatán and Puebla are among the states witnessing the lowest incidence of drug-related violence and *overall* homicide rates, with rates below 1 per 100,000 for drug-related violence and ranging from 2 to 7 for *overall* homicide rates. See Maps 1.1–1.3 for the distribution of organized crime-related violence in Mexico (ICESI, n.d.; Mexico, n.d.a).³⁰

Not surprisingly, the violence is concentrated where the drug cartels are most active. Four groups reportedly control most of the drug trade and other illicit activities in Mexico, with their influence reaching far into the United States. Several splinter groups and factions have also become central players in Mexico's drug war; these are the Sinaloa cartel, the Gulf cartel, the Juárez cartel, and the Tijuana cartel, but also the Zetas, the Beltrán-Leyva organization, and the cartel Pacifico Sur, among others (Bunker, 2010, p. 11; Stratfor Global Intelligence, 2010).³¹ As Maps 1.1–1.3 illustrate, violence in Mexico is highly concentrated, although it also fluctuates and spreads. Thus states not affected by drug-related violence in one year can have very high figures the next. For example, Tamaulipas recorded a total of 90 drug-related deaths in 2009, yet one year later this figure climbed to 1,209.

A war on two fronts is taking place in the regions where the cartels are active. On the one hand, they are in violent confrontation with each other over the control of the lucrative trafficking routes between the Andean regions and the United States, as well as other forms of revenue generation such as extortion, kidnapping, and human trafficking (Bunker, 2010, p. 11). On the other hand, the Mexican government has openly declared war upon drug traffickers, with

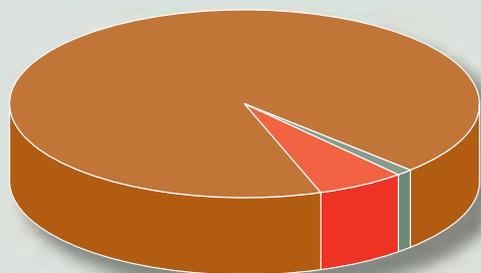


PHOTO Mexican soldiers burn marijuana seized during a clash with drug traffickers in Tijuana, Mexico, October 2010.
© Francisco Vega/AFP Photo

FIGURE 1.5 Distribution of victims of organized crime-related killings by type of violence, Mexico, 2009

LEGEND:

- Aggressions (111; 1%)
- Confrontations (596; 6%)
- Executions (8,906; 93%)

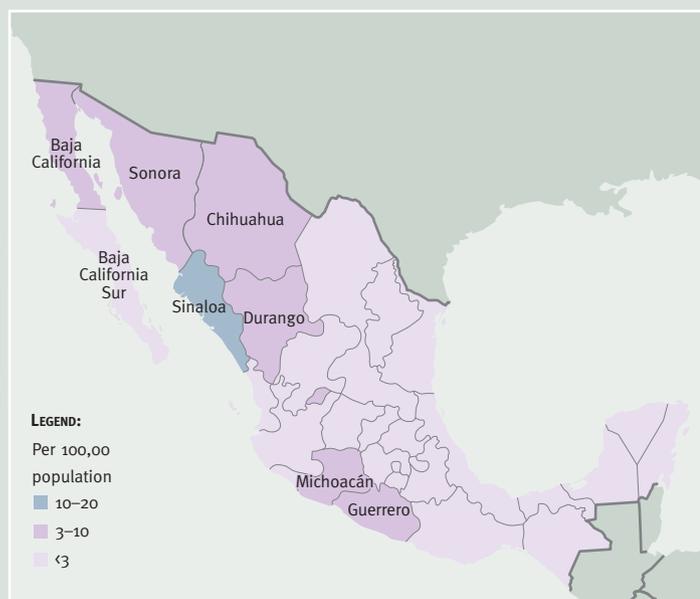


SOURCE: Mexico (n.d.a)

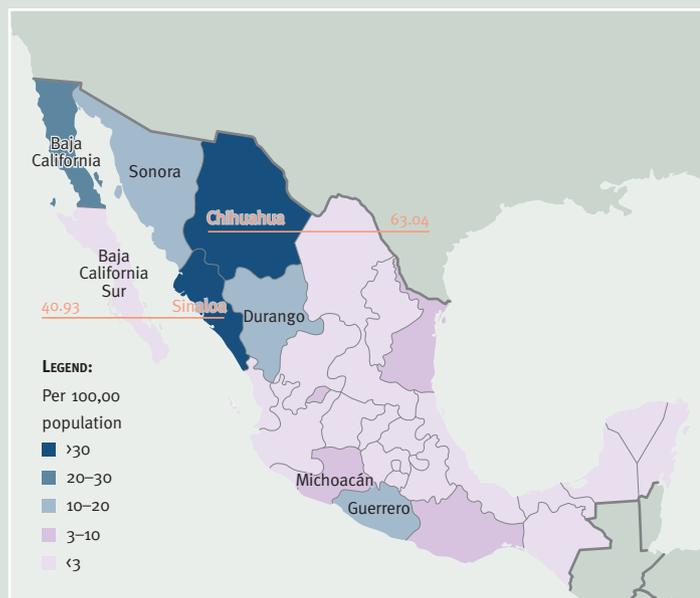
ambiguous results. While the drug cartels have been weakened and divided, the resulting struggles and readjustments of power have given way to even more episodes of overt violence (Stratfor Global Intelligence, 2009, p. 12). Figure 1.5 shows this distribution by disaggregating the drug-related deaths in 2009 by types of violence.

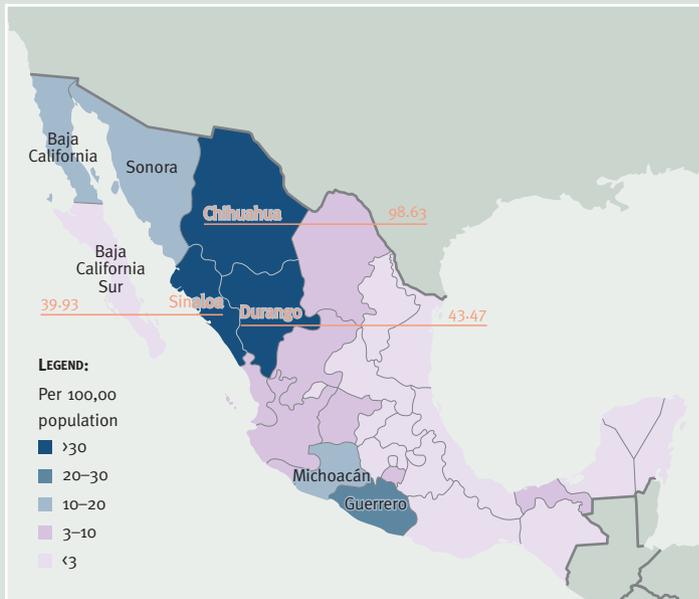
The figure reveals that the vast majority of recorded violence is categorized as ‘executions’, which captures intentional killings involving high levels of violence, such as multiple gunshots, traces of torture, and mutilation of the body. These events are typically directed at drug cartel members, but they are also coded as drug-related violence when the known or suspected perpetrator is a member of a drug cartel (for example, when a message is left with the body). Confrontations and aggressions, on the other hand, account only for a lesser level of drug-related deaths. Confrontations register both gun battles between criminal groups as well as violent confrontations with law enforcement and security forces. Aggressions, on the other hand, record specifically targeted violence against state

MAP 1.1 Organized crime-related homicide rates, Mexico, 2007



MAP 1.2 Organized crime-related homicide rates, Mexico, 2008



MAP 1.3 Organized crime-related homicide rates, Mexico, 2009

SOURCE FOR MAPS 1.1–1.3: Mexico (n.d.a)

authorities, law enforcement agents, and security forces by drug cartel members, resulting in the death of the targeted person (Mexico, n.d.b).

In response to the war on drug traffickers, cartels have implemented bolder and more professionalized violent tactics. Over the past decade, drug-related violence has ‘acquired an increasingly organized and paramilitary character’, making a ‘transition from the gangsterism of traditional narco hit men to paramilitary terrorism with guerrilla tactics’ (Turbiville, 2010, p. 124). Occasional large-scale firefights, targeted assassinations, and military-style raids are common manifestations of the improved tactical competence and effectiveness of the drug cartels. These strategic improvements in the cartels’ capacities are reportedly linked to the sweeping Mexican military reforms of the 1990s. In response to low-intensity guerrilla activities and growing drug trafficking violence at that time, the Mexican state trained new elite commando units and assault troops, which were deployed in Chiapas, Guerrero, Puebla, and other regions of the country. A lack of careful recruitment, low salaries, and continuous efforts by criminal organization to recruit security officers led to a substantial number of defections by military personnel, who brought their skills and capacities to their new employers (Turbiville, 2010, pp. 128–32). An example is the

Zetas, a non-family-based group that originated with defectors from the military elite forces. First active as the Gulf cartel’s enforcement arm, the unit became increasingly independent, sub-contracting to other groups, until it broke its relations with the Gulf cartel and became an independent and fully established actor among the other cartels in Mexico (Killebrew and Bernal, 2010, p. 21).³²

Reports on several carefully planned and executed raids requiring high levels of intelligence, resources, and weaponry have appeared over the past few years. These attacks are frequently accompanied by unusual and gruesome displays of violence, regularly including decapitations, mutilations, mass executions, and extreme torture (Quinones, 2009; González, 2009).

Politicians, law enforcement agents, civil society members, and their families and friends suffer the consequences of criminal violence. For example, Carlos Reyes López, a policeman of the state of Tabasco, was shot with ten members of his family in February 2009 (Wilkinson, 2009). In another case in Michoacán, the public safety minister, Minerva Bautista, escaped death in an attack that killed four of her colleagues and bodyguards in April 2010 (Wilkinson, 2010). In April 2011, the Mexican poet Javier Sicilia lost his son, who was killed together with six of his friends in what seemed to be ‘collateral damage’ of the drug war (Miglierini, 2011).

Low incomes and the ready availability of money from drug cartels are important contributing factors to Mexico’s spiral of violence. Members of the state or federal police may earn between USD 350 and USD 1,000 per month. Yet when 93 police officers were arrested in June 2009 for charges of corruption in the Mexican state of Hidalgo, some officers had revenues reaching as high as USD 225,000 per month (Nagle, 2010, p. 100).

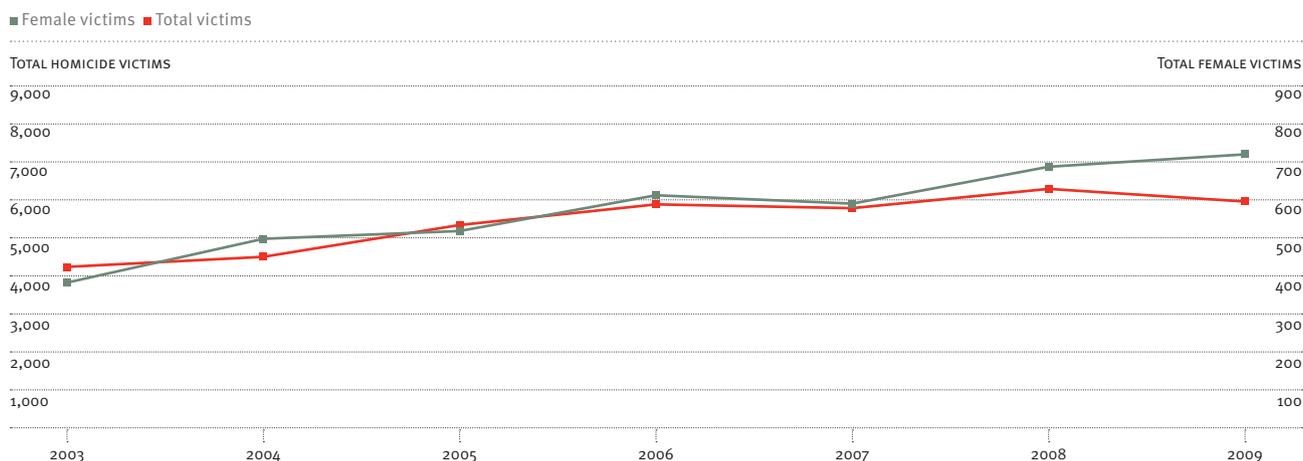
Drugs have a high ‘value-to-size ratio’ and are commonly linked to recurring conflict in Afghanistan, Colombia, and Myanmar (Cornell, 2007, p. 209; Feldab-Brown, 2010). The violent consequences of drug trafficking are not limited to conflict zones, however, as the case of Mexico reveals. The shift of drug trafficking routes towards Central America and Mexico strengthened the position of Mexican drug cartels during the 1990s, following the dismantling and fragmentation of the Colombian drug cartels (UNODC, 2010, p. 87). Facing the challenges of increased corruption and drug-related violence, President Felipe Calderón chose to crack down on organized crime and declared war on drug traffickers in December 2006. The fight against drug cartels in Mexico involved the deployment of about 40,000 soldiers and an additional 5,000 federal police officers, and resulted in a surge of violence that resembles the scale and intensity of a major armed conflict (Ellingwood, 2008; Stepanova, 2010, p. 56).

In view of the many different violent actors and motives involved, it is nearly impossible to draw clear distinctions between various types of vio-

lence in Mexico. As the Mexican state attempts to counter the expansion of drug cartels and their challenge to its authority and monopoly over coercive means, it is directly involved through the deployment of military personnel and the armed forces. While most of the deaths may be gang-on-gang killings, police officers, soldiers, and government officials are not immune, nor are innocent civilians spared the bloodshed.

The intersections between organized criminal and political violence also highlight the possible interactions and transmission mechanisms between other forms of violence. One such linkage—that between organized (political or criminal) violence and violence against women—is beginning to be explored in such places as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guatemala, and Rwanda (World Bank, 2011, pp. 60–61). In Guatemala, for example, an estimated 720 women were killed in 2009, many after having been tortured or sexually assaulted; that figure is almost double the 383 women reportedly killed in 2003 (PDH, 2011, p. 79). The nature and causes of these killings are poorly understood, but as Figure 1.6 shows, the increase

FIGURE 1.6 Overall homicide and femicide levels in Guatemala, 2003–09



SOURCES: PDH (2011); UNDP (2007)

appears to track the overall rise in criminal and gang-related violence in the country, which implies some connection between these different forms of violence (PDH, 2011).³³

In Rwanda, an estimated 350,000 women were raped during the genocide, translating to about 8,972 rapes per 100,000 women for the whole adult female population; the risk of being raped for a Tutsi woman during this period was around 80 per cent (Bijleveld, Morssinkhof, and Smeulers, 2009, p. 219). No comparable or reliable figures are available for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, but the incidence of rape—as well as other forms of sexual and gender-based violence—is widespread (HHL, 2009, pp. 7–9). The prevalence of rape is also anecdotally linked to the dynamics of the conflict, including the exploitation of mineral resources (Mukengere Mukwege and Nangini, 2009, p. 3). Although poorly understood, the linkages are important in policy terms. As Eriksson Baaz and Stern point out:

the specific, often exclusive, focus on sexual violence [. . .] hampers our understanding of the relationship between sexual violence and other (supposedly) ‘ungendered’ violence. . . . These forms of violence are, to a large extent, manifestations of the same systemic failures and mechanisms as those contributing to [sexual and gender-based violence] (Eriksson Baaz and Stern, 2010, p. 12).

These linkages—between organized political and organized criminal violence and between conflict and sexual violence—highlight the ways in which armed violence can assume multiple, simultaneous, and shifting forms that vary from place to place. Understanding how different forms of violence are linked is crucial to assessing the global burden of armed violence, and to developing effective armed violence prevention and reduction strategies and policies.

Conclusion: a unified approach to armed violence

Different forms of armed violence interact in ways that go well beyond the simple dichotomy between political and criminal violence, or between conflict and non-conflict violence. As noted in this chapter, the boundaries between violence categories are blurry and overlap, and they can reinforce each other in a vicious circle in multiple ways. Violence can be ‘dual-purpose’, as highlighted in the Iraqi and Somali examples; moreover, it can serve both ‘individual and organizational goals’ (Green and Ward, 2009, p. 611). The concept of dual-purpose violence seems to apply to many settings in which large-scale acts of organized political violence coexist with individual and criminal forms of violence, and where rape, looting, trafficking, personal revenge, and other forms of opportunistic and criminal violence can be observed.

Recognizing the multiple, simultaneous, linked, and changing forms that armed violence takes is one step towards a unified approach to armed violence prevention and reduction. An additional step is captured by the idea of a ‘system of violence’, in which high levels of violence and crime in post- and non-conflict settings can be attributed to a series of intersecting factors present in any given setting (Richani, 2007, p. 45). These factors include:

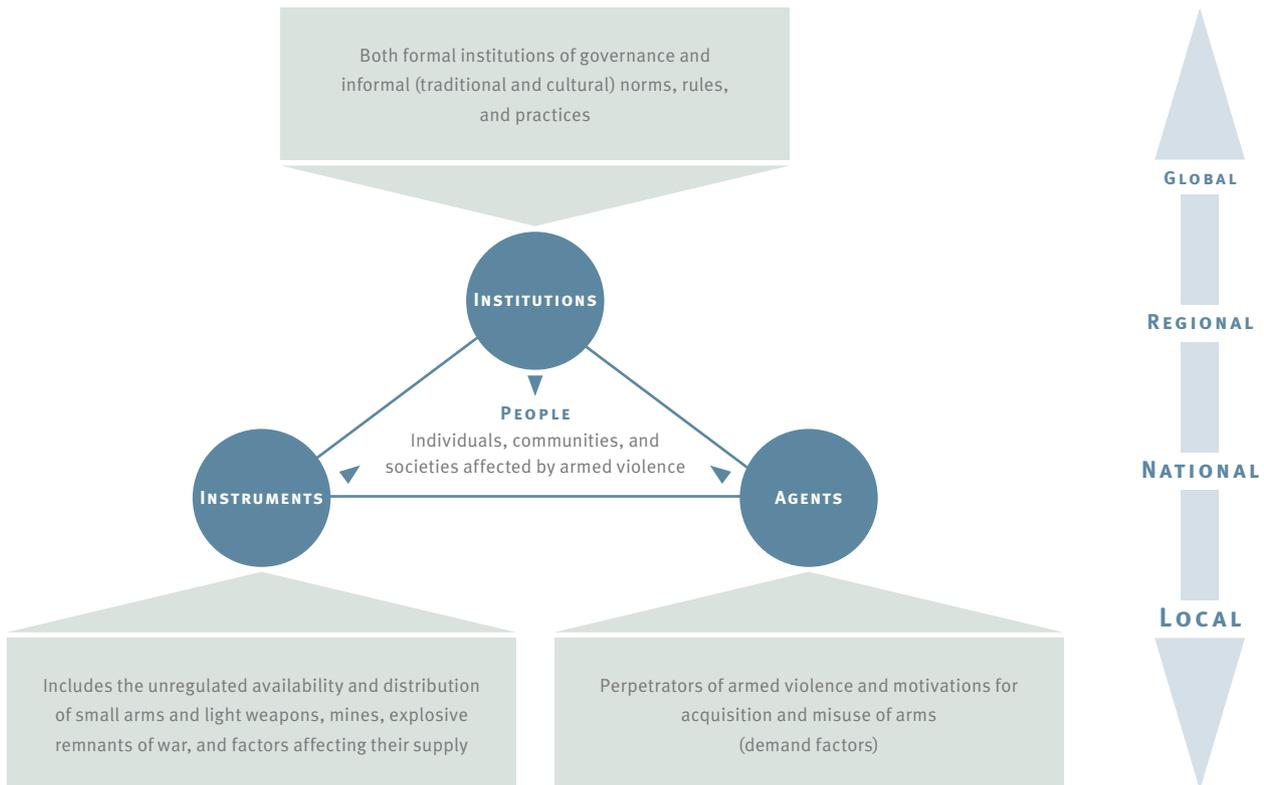
- low coercive and distributive state capacities, measured in terms of law enforcement capacities (impunity and attrition rate) and the government’s social expenditures;
- low opportunity costs of crime derived from a lack of law enforcement and a lack of revenue-generating activities (such as education and job opportunities);

- particular contingencies, such as the repatriation of illegal immigrants from the United States to Central America, and the shift of drug trafficking routes from the Caribbean to Central America and Mexico, or international interventions such as in Iraq and Afghanistan (Richani, 2007, pp. 4–5).

A ‘system of violence’ can emerge when these factors come together. This occurs when the lack of state capacities for law enforcement, weak economic opportunities, and low opportunity costs for committing a crime provide the context in which specific catalysts—such as new opportu-

nities for illicit income generation linked to drug trafficking, or easily exploitable ‘conflict goods’ such as diamonds—provide the spark (Richani, 2002). In such a situation, a system of violence can emerge in which ‘the main interacting units are the specialists of violence’, such as the security sector, criminal groups (gangs and organized crime), and political entrepreneurs, which form a dynamic relationship ‘that institutionalizes and perpetuates violence’ (Richani, 2007, p. 5). These underlying and contingent factors are all highlighted in the World Bank’s *World Development Report 2011* as playing an important role in repeated cycles of violence (World Bank, 2011).

FIGURE 1.7 The armed violence ‘lens’



SOURCE: OECD (2009, p. 50)

Seeing different forms of armed violence as dual-purpose, or as part of a broader system, opens new opportunities for evidence-based research and policy-making in various settings, ranging from Jamaica to Afghanistan, Kenya to Haiti, and Venezuela to Nepal. Piracy and warlordism amid civil war and state collapse (Somalia and Afghanistan), drug-related violence and its political implications (Central America), shadow networks in war economies (West Africa), as well as sexual and gender-based violence during conflict (Democratic Republic of the Congo) can all be better understood by taking into account the complex interactions between different forms of violence.

One potentially useful framework for designing policies and programmes is the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's armed violence 'lens' (OECD, 2009, p. 50). The lens provides a flexible and unified framework for apprehending the contexts, motives, and risk factors associated with armed violence (see Figure 1.7). Its three legs provide different entry points for armed violence prevention and reduction policies, focusing on the perpetrators of armed violence and their motives, the instruments of armed violence, and the wider institutional environment that enables or protects against armed violence. Although the lens is not in itself a policy or programmatic tool, it does highlight that a variety of factors can or do come together in different situations to create an enabling environment in which violence can occur and escalate, in both conflict and non-conflict contexts. It also avoids debates about the specific categories or types of armed violence; what counts, in the end, is to be able to assemble evidence regarding the various enabling factors of armed violence in order to design policies and interventions that effectively address the serious challenges posed by armed violence to the safety and well-being of individuals and communities.

This chapter has highlighted the way in which the many different contemporary manifestations of armed violence blur the line between conflict and non-conflict contexts. These various manifestations call out for a unified approach to measuring and monitoring armed violence that captures the wide variety of actors, contexts, motivations, and consequences. The next chapter takes up this challenge by taking a broader perspective and presenting comprehensive national-level data that reflects how these different forms of lethal violence are distributed around the world. It highlights not only that conflict deaths are a relatively small part of the global burden of armed violence, but also that the majority of the most violent places on earth are *not* found in conflict zones. Subsequent chapters focus on how the armed violence lens can be employed to map global and regional differences in patterns of homicidal non-conflict violence (CHARACTERISTICS OF ARMED VIOLENCE), on the state of knowledge about violence against women (WHEN THE VICTIM IS A WOMAN), and on the negative links between armed violence and development outcomes (MORE VIOLENCE, LESS DEVELOPMENT). 

Abbreviations

| | |
|--------------|---|
| IISS | International Institute for Strategic Studies |
| FARC | Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia |
| UCDP | Uppsala Conflict Data Program |
| UNITA | União Nacional Para a Independência Total de Angola |

Endnotes

- 1 The definition also focuses on the physical use of force and violence, and deliberately excludes such concepts as structural, cultural, and psychological violence, however important they may be in other contexts.

- 2 These figures do not include the global burden of indirect conflict-related deaths. The estimated burden of indirect conflict deaths stemming from preventable disease, malnourishment, and a general lack of access to health facilities, food, and clean water due to violence probably hovers around roughly four times the number of direct conflict deaths, although this rate varies widely from conflict to conflict, depending on the severity of population displacement, the baseline health and nutrition status of the affected population, and the rapidity of the humanitarian response; see Box 2.6 (TRENDS AND PATTERNS). For a detailed discussion on unintentional homicide counts and deaths due to legal interventions and extrajudicial killings, see Tables 2.3 and 2.4 (TRENDS AND PATTERNS).
- 3 According to von Clausewitz's dictum, 'war is the continuation of politics by other (i.e. violent) means' (von Clausewitz, 1976). On the implications and limitations of the 'conflict' lens as way to assess organized political armed violence, see Brzoska (2007, app. 2C), Kaldor (1999), and Münkler (2003).
- 4 These types of violence, though by no means exhaustive, draw on the typologies of violence published by several sources, including Hazen and Horner (2007, pp. 56–61), Moser and Rodgers (2005, p. 5), and WHO (2002, pp. 6–7). For the purpose of this research, 'armed violence' does not include self-directed violence (suicide), whose global burden is estimated at 782,000 victims worldwide for 2008 (WHO, 2011).
- 5 See the *Global Burden of Armed Violence* for definitions of direct and indirect conflict deaths and methodologies for measuring the different impacts of armed conflicts (Geneva Declaration Secretariat, 2008, pp. viii–ix).
- 6 The report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Post Election Violence finds that the violence caused 1,133 victims, of which 11 were children and 78 were women (CIPEV, 2008, pp. 308–09).
- 7 Countries such as Argentina, Colombia, and Costa Rica include extrajudicial and police killings, while others, such as France and Nigeria, do not count civilians killed by police during confrontations or commitment of an offence. Nor does the United States include them, since they are classified as 'justifiable homicide', as is self-defence. See Table 2.4 (TRENDS AND PATTERNS).
- 8 According to the Uppsala Conflict Data Program, in the case of *state-based conflicts*, battle-related deaths are counted only if they result from use of armed force directly related to the overarching incompatibility (government or territory). In *non-state conflict*, the deaths are *not* linked to an incompatibility, but must result from use of armed force between *warring factions* (such as in Mexico, where 751 deaths that were due to inter-cartel warfare were registered between 1993 and 2008). In the category of *one-sided violence*, killings are recorded in cases of use of armed force by the government of a state or by a formally organized group against civilians (such as the al-Qaeda attack of September 11th or victims of the Sendero Luminoso in Peru). See the codebooks for each dataset at UCDP (n.d.); data examples here stem from Non-state Conflict Database version 2.3 and One-sided Violence version 1.3 (Eck and Hultman, 2007; Eck, Kreutz, and Sundberg, 2010).
- 9 The data was retrieved from the UCDP and the Iraq Body Count Project websites, respectively (UCDP, n.d.; IBC, n.d.). For 2006, UCDP counts 3,656 battle-related deaths and 605 victims of non-state armed violence (best estimates).
- 10 In 2010, Somali pirates perpetrated 148 attempts and 65 successful attacks, while in 2009, these numbers amounted to 169 attempts and 48 actual attacks. Since January 2009, Somali pirates have perpetrated 430 attacks, representing 50 per cent of all piracy attacks in the world (IMB, 2010; 2011).
- 11 Piracy is defined as 'any illegal acts of violence or detention, or any act of depredation, committed for private ends by the crew or the passengers of a private ship or a private aircraft' (Anyu and Moki, 2009, p. 95).
- 12 Eriksson Baaz and Stern (2009); Green and Ward (2009); Hume (2008); Sanchez et al. (2011); Wood (2003; 2006).
- 13 In 2008, 2,831 homicides were registered by the Instituto de Medicina Legal—the Institute for Forensic Medicine—in El Salvador. Of these cases, 354 were attributed to *maras*, or gang-related violence. It should be noted that for 1,910 cases in 2008, the motive was 'unknown'; a significant share of these cases may be gang-related (IML, 2009, p. 70).
- 14 See, for example, UNODC (n.d.a) and the sources for the direct conflict deaths database in the online Methodological Annexe.
- 15 These seven—called 'internationalized intrastate conflicts'—were Afghanistan, Algeria, Iraq, Rwanda, Somalia, Uganda, and the United States. Names reflect the governments involved, not the location of the fighting.
- 16 The report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Post Election Violence lists 1,133 deaths, while the UCDP database only records 445 deaths (187 from one-sided violence; 258 from non-state violence), illustrating the degree of under-counting to which global incident reporting systems are prone; meanwhile, IISS lists 1,500 deaths. Regarding the figures for displaced persons, the Commission report indicates 350,000 whereas the United Nations reports 600,000 (CIPEV, 2008, p. 293; UNGA, 2010, p. 14).

- 17 For data on identified state and non-state actors involved in Kenya's post-election violence, see the datasets on non-state conflict and on one-sided violence at UCDP (n.d.).
- 18 These databases count 283 pro-government armed groups (Carey and Mitchell, 2011) and anywhere from 500 to more than 900 non-state armed groups (IISS, 2009; UCDP, n.d.).
- 19 See data at HSRP (n.d.).
- 20 The report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Post Election Violence lists 1,133 deaths, while the UCDP database only records 445 deaths (187 from one-sided violence; 258 from non-state violence), illustrating the degree of undercounting to which global incident reporting systems are prone; meanwhile, IISS lists 1,500 deaths. Regarding the figures for displaced persons, the Commission report indicates 350,000 whereas the United Nations reports 600,000 (CIPEV, 2008, p. 293; UNGA, 2010, p. 14).
- 21 On the complexity and multiplicity of links between conflict and post-conflict violence, see Aguilera (2008), Cornell (2007), Restrepo and Tobón (2011), Jojarth (2009), Killebrew and Bernal (2010), Nitzschke and Studdard (2005), Rodgers and Muggah (2009), Small Arms Survey (2011), and Steenkamp (2009).
- 22 The homicide rate in England dropped from about 23.0 per 100,000 in the 13th and 14th centuries to 4.3 per 100,000 by the end of the 17th, and 0.8 per 100,000 by the first half of the 20th century. In the Netherlands and Belgium, contemporaneous figures are 47.0, 9.2, and 1.7 per 100,000; in Germany and Switzerland, rates fell from 43.0 per 100,000 to below 2.0 for the 20th century (Eisner, 2001, pp. 618–38; Gurr, 1981, pp. 295–353; Monkonen, 2001, pp. 5–26).
- 23 Trends in homicide rates can be considered in the light of the findings of LaFree and Drass (2002), who identify 'crime booms' between the late 1950s and the late 1990s in more than one-third of their sample, which includes 21 European nations. They define 'crime booms' as taking place in countries with (i) increasing homicide rates, (ii) individual average annual growth in these rates of at least 10 per cent for any three successive years, and (iii) sustained changes in the direction of the homicide trends (LaFree and Drass, 2002, pp. 780–81). By eliminating countries that show some increase at some point, and by including reverse trends to evaluate crime booms, the authors still find that the period in question witnessed significant crime booms, though these were more pronounced in industrializing countries than in industrialized ones.
- 24 Recent improvements in data collection for violent crime have reduced the statistical errors that may be responsible for some previously unclear or fluctuating patterns in homicide trends.
- 25 See UNODC (n.d.b) for criminal justice data from 1970 to 2008.
- 26 On the early efforts to compile global data on crime, see UNCJIN (n.d.).
- 27 This point is explored in Norbert Elias' thesis of 'civilizing processes', which links the general decline of lethal violence to increasing degrees of 'self-control', based on individuals' more detached and rational understanding of the world around them (Elias, 1994).
- 28 Estimates of the numbers have been rising significantly as well. In 2009, Felipe Calderón estimated that around 9,000 narco-linked murders occurred between 2006 and April 2009, while other estimates place the figure at around 11,000 people killed by early 2010 (Turbiville, 2010, p. 124). In April 2010, the *Washington Post* cited a confidential report that estimates the human cost of drug-related violence at 22,000 victims since 2006 (Booth, 2010). By early 2011, official government data counted 35,000 deaths, of which more than 15,000 occurred in 2010 alone. See Mexico (n.d.a) for the dataset on organized crime-related homicide victims. The *Washington Post* subsequently indicated that Mexican news media counts had surpassed the 40,000 threshold during the first half of 2011 (*Washington Post*, 2011).
- 29 Drug-related violence is fluid and spreads easily. In 2010, Chihuahua state exhibited the worst concentration of violence, with a rate of 129 per 100,000, whereas Sinaloa followed in second place with a rate of 68 per 100,000.
- 30 These numbers stem from two different datasets. One covers organized crime-related deaths (Mexico, n.d.a); the second reflects overall homicide deaths in Mexico (ICESI, n.d.).
- 31 The Sinaloa and Gulf cartels alone count an estimated 100,000 foot soldiers throughout the region, including their enforcers or gang contractors (Bunker, 2010, p. 13).
- 32 Increasing violence in Tamaulipas state, for example, is linked to the battles opposing the Zetas to their former ally, the Gulf cartel. The Zetas are also known to have expanded operations into Guatemala, forming alliances with local gangs (Beittel, 2011, p. 10).
- 33 See also Chapter Four on patterns and the extent of female victimization and resulting policy implications (WHEN THE VICTIM IS A WOMAN).

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