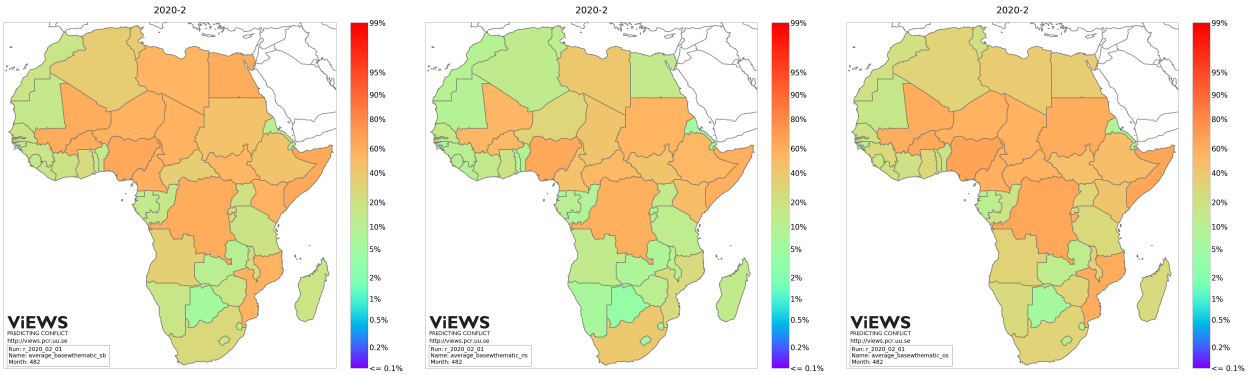
ViEWS monthly forecasts, February 2020*

Summary of forecasts

Monday 24th February, 2020



(a) State-based conflict (sb), February 2020

(b) Non-state conflict (ns), February 2020

(c) One-sided violence (os), February 2020

Figure 1: Ensemble forecasts for February 2020

This report presents ViEWS forecasts for February 2020 as of 1 February 2020, which are based on data that are updated up to and including December 2019. The underlying conflict data were produced by the UCDP (`http://ucdp.uu.se`). The ViEWS compilation of these data and data from other sources are available at `https://www.pcr.uu.se/research/views/data/downloads/`.

We highlight developments in the most recent months. For a discussion of what underlies the forecasts in terms of slowly changing risk factors as well as methodological issues, see the

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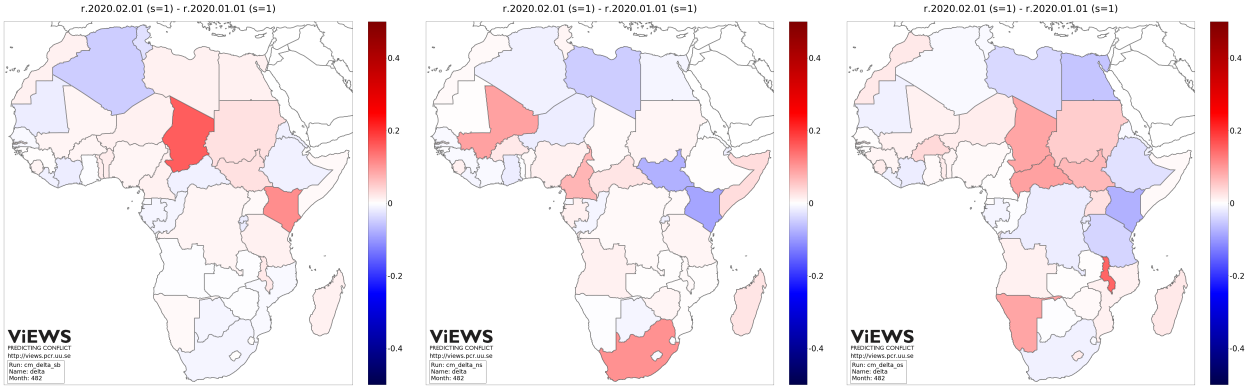


(a) State-based conflict (sb) (b) Non-state conflict (ns) (c) One-sided violence (os)

Figure 2: Change maps for February 2020

ViEWS introductory article.[1] Figure 1 shows our country-level forecasts (**cm**) for February 2020, Figure 3 the corresponding forecasts at detailed geographic locations (PRIO-GRID level, or **pgm**)[2], and Figure 5 shows the most recent observed conflict events. Similar reports for previous months are available at `http://www.pcr.uu.se/research/views/`, along with other information on the ViEWS project.

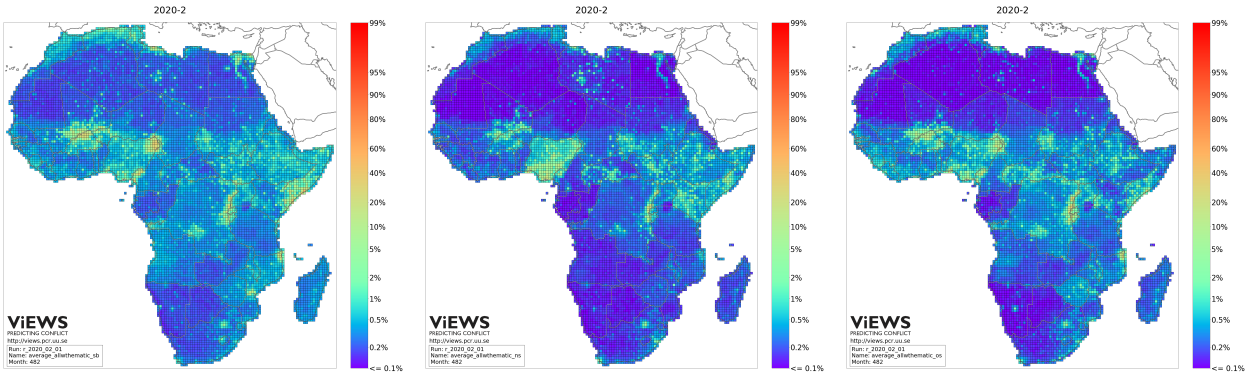
1 Country-month forecasts for February 2020

The plots in Figure 1 show the ViEWS country-level forecasts for the immediate future – what will happen in February 2020 according to our forecasts? We show the probability of at least one event leading to one or more fatalities in each country in February 2020, based on data up to and including December 2019. Countries with a red color have been assigned with a forecast probability close to 1, whereas purple countries have been assigned with a probability of less than 0.1. When the forecasts indicate that no event is as likely as at least one event, countries are drawn with a light orange color.

Our forecasts for February 2020 are mostly similar to last month's forecasts. The February 2020 run is using the same set of models as last month, so only changes to input variables will have affected the forecasts. In the following, we focus on the input of recent violence in particular.

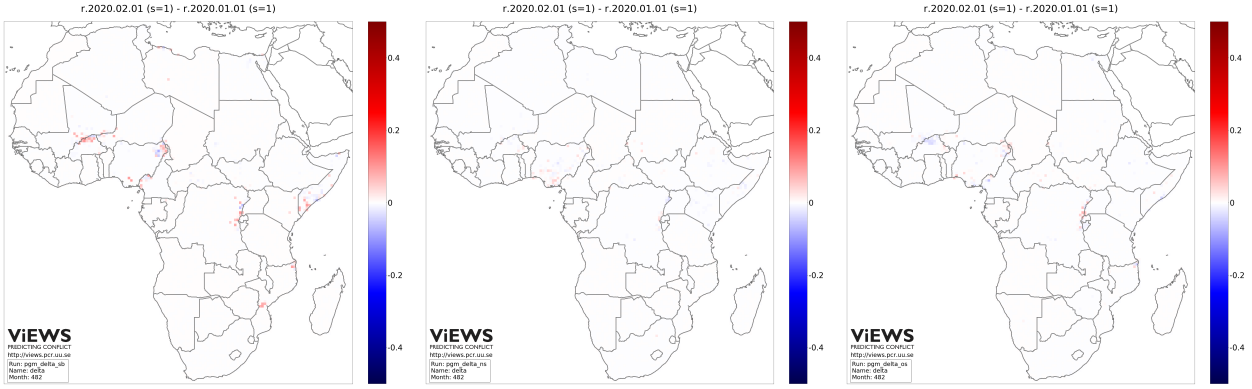
[1] `https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0022343319823860`.

[2] PRIO-GRID is a grid structure that divides the terrestrial world into squares of approximately 55 by 55 kilometers. See `http://grid.prio.org/`



(a) State-based conflict (sb), February 2020 (b) Non-state conflict (ns), February 2020 (c) One-sided violence (os), February 2020

Figure 3: Ensemble forecasts for February 2020



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

Figure 4: Change maps for February 2020

1.1 State-based conflict (sb)

We continue to forecast a high probability of state-based conflict in countries that have a recent history of conflict or protest events. Particularly in Egypt, Mali, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Cameroon, DR Congo, Somalia and Mozambique, the risk of at least one state-based conflict event is high and over 50%.

Figure 2a shows that compared to last month's forecast, the risk of state-based conflict has elevated especially for Chad, where on the night of 1-2 December, IS (Boko Haram) attacked a military outpost between the villages of Ngouboua and Bagassoula in the Lake Chad area, leading to four Chadian troops and at least thirteen militants killed. In Kenya's northeast, security forces faced Al-Shabaab militants on separate occasions during December, resulting in at least eleven people killed.

The risk of state-based violence went down most significantly for Algeria and Tunisia, where for December 2019, the UCDP recorded no candidate events in any of the violence

categories. This is despite continued mass protests in Algeria against the results of a 12 December presidential poll.

1.2 Non-state conflict (ns)

The risk of non-state continues to be less pronounced across the African continent compared to the risk of state-based or one-sided violence. Mali, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, DR Congo, Sudan, and Somalia remain at particularly high risk of non-state violence this month.

Compared to last month, the predicted probability of non-state violence has gone up most for South Africa, given fatal gang violence with unclear perpetrators in Cape Town and Johannesburg that was included in the UCDP candidate data for December 2019.[3] In Mali, Fulani gunmen executed three Dogon marketgoers some time between 23 and 25 December between Madougou and Kondou (Koro-Bandiagara), Mopti Region. Risk finally also went up for Cameroon, where Anglophone separatists and ethnic Fulani reportedly clashed in Bua Bua and Kimbi, leading to at least one death.

Conversely, the risk of non-state violence most significantly went down for Kenya, despite Pokot-Turkana violence in Baringo county that led to three casualties on 2 December. South Sudan and Libya also reduced in risk, where for December 2019 no non-state UCDP candidate events were recorded.

1.3 One-sided violence (os)

The probability of one-sided violence events remains especially pronounced in Mali and Burkina Faso, Nigeria (predominantly given Boko Haram/IS), DR Congo, Sudan, Mozambique, and Somalia (predominantly given Al-Shabaab).

Compared to our January forecast, the risk of one-sided violence erroneously increased most in Malawi this month. This is due to a one-sided violence event in the December 2019 UCDP candidate data that has since been corrected. The probability of one-sided violence also shows an increase for the Central African Republic, where one civilian was killed by security forces amid tensions in Bouar town on 1 December. In Chad, IS (Boko Haram) attacked and killed civilians on multiple occasions during December in Lake Chad province, leading to at least 14 and probably tens of civilian deaths. The increased risk for Namibia, finally, is caused by a single event in Windhoek on 1 December in which police allegedly manhandled and killed a young man.

[3]Given that these events have since been corrected to the 'unclear' status, they will no longer affect the results of any future forecasts.

2 PRIO-GRID-month forecasts for February 2020

Figure 3 presents forecasts at fine-grained sub-national geographical locations for February 2020, for each of the three outcomes. The color mapping is the same as for the country-month forecasts.

2.1 State-based conflict (sb)

The densest risk clusters at **pgm** level for state-based conflict are found in north-eastern Nigeria, the Anglophone region of Cameroon, the Ituri and Kivu provinces of DRC, southern Somalia, the Niger delta and Sinai in Egypt, in Tripoli in Libya, the Cabo Delgado province of Mozambique, and in the border areas between central Mali and northern Burkina Faso.

The risk cluster in Mali is focused around the Mopti and Ségou regions, mostly informed by the government's ongoing counter-insurgency against the umbrella coalition of al-Qaeda-affiliated groups known as JNIM. The central regions are also characterised by violence from a multilayered issue that weaves together the Islamic movements in the north with the ethnic and inter-communal violence between Fulani herders and local farmer/hunter communities. Linked to the Islamist violence, the risk cluster also extends into Gao and Kidal. Most of these regions have been facing violence for years as shown in Figure 5, reflecting that countries' recent conflict history is the strongest predictor of future violence.

Also in Burkina Faso we can see dense risk clusters in the regions bordering central Mali, namely in Boude du Mouhoun, Norde, and Sahel regions, as well as in the Centre-Nord region. All of these regions have been subjected to attacks from Islamist militants (predominantly JNIM), and clashes between the militias and the country's security forces over recent months. This conflict history is illustrated by the decay map in Figure 5. Most recently, a communal transport bus in Boude du Mouhoun was struck last month by an IED that killed 14 civilians, mostly school children. These are also the regions in which we see the country's strongest increases in risks of state-based violence since last month, as illustrated by Figure 4a.

While the Egyptian Nile Delta and Sinai remain dense risk clusters, we do find a slight decrease in the risk of violence in a small number of PRIO-GRID cells here, as depicted in Figure 4a. In terms of changes since last month, we find both grid cells with increased and decreased risks since last month in both north-estern Nigeria, the Anglophone region in Cameroon, and the Ituri and Kivu provinces of DRC. In Somalia, we see some increased risks in the southern-most regions, whereas a positive development is expected around the capital in the form of a decreased conflict risk.

The relatively new risk clusters in the Sofala and Manica provinces of central Mozambique face an increased risk from last month, following new incidences of violence which the

government has attributed to RENAMO rebels.

2.2 Non-state conflict (ns) and one-sided violence (os)

The forecasts for non-state conflict and one-sided violence depend on the same factors although with somewhat different implications. Nigeria remains a hotbed for non-state conflict, the highest risks of which are found in the southern and central regions, underpinned by continued inter-communal violence of various forms, coupled with criminality and cultist violence. Other dense risk clusters include the Ituri and Kivu provinces of DRC. The Horn of Africa remains a larger uniform risk cluster, whereas Libya offers an interesting geographic distribution with higher risks predicted in individual and often separated PRIO-GRID cells.

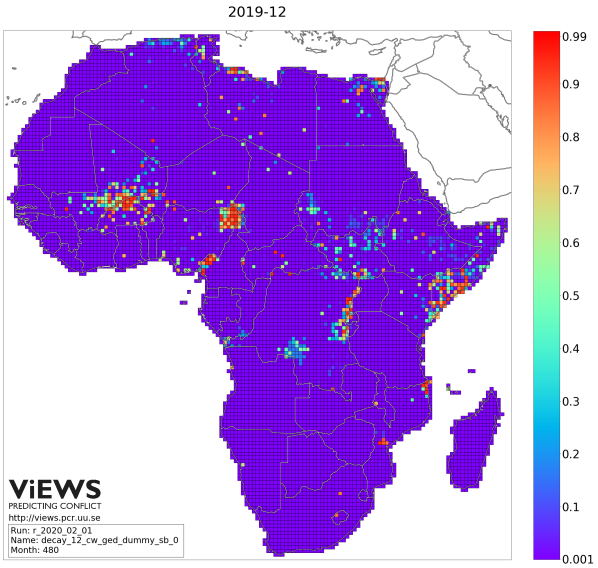
Notable is a slight decrease in the risk of non-state violence in the Ituri province in DRC, whereas Nigeria faces an increased risk around the Lake Chad Basin with regards to both non-state and one-sided violence.

For one-sided violence, the patters are similar and not much change is detected. Most visible is the combination of increases and decreases in the risks along the Ituri and Kivu provinces of DRC, coupled with spill-over effects into the bordering areas of Uganda and Rwanda. Burundi, on the other hand, sees a decreased risks of one-sided violence across most of the country, barring an increase in the southern-most region of Makamba. Johannesburg, Pretoria, Cape Town and Durban in South Africa remains at risk without change from last month. Moreover, a single PRIO-GRID cell spanning Windhoek, Namibia, suffers an increased risk this month following the noted fatality from police violence in December 2019.

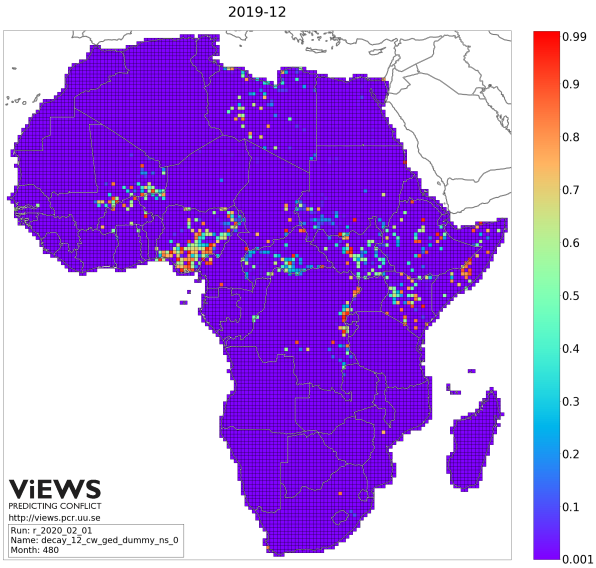
3 History of UCDP organized violence

Figure 5 presents the the recent history of violence in each PRIO-GRID cell. Red cells experienced violence in December 2019, and purple ones have not seen armed conflict in many years.

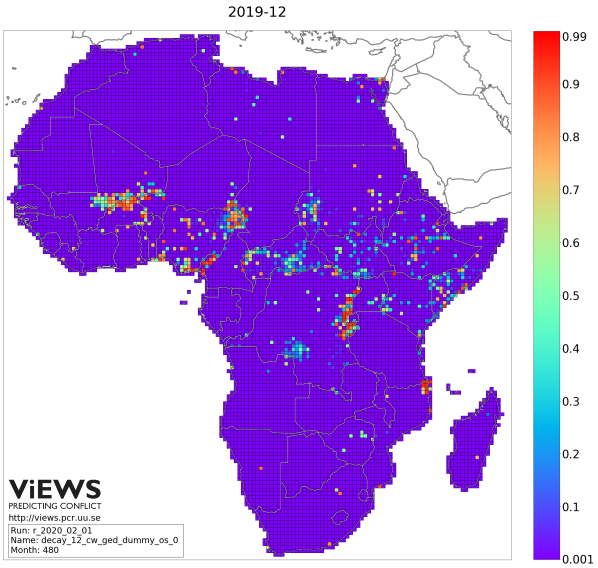
Figures 5a, 5b, 5c show state-based, non-state, and one-sided violence respectively from the UCDP. Figure 5d shows data on protests from ACLED (`https://www.acleddata.com`).



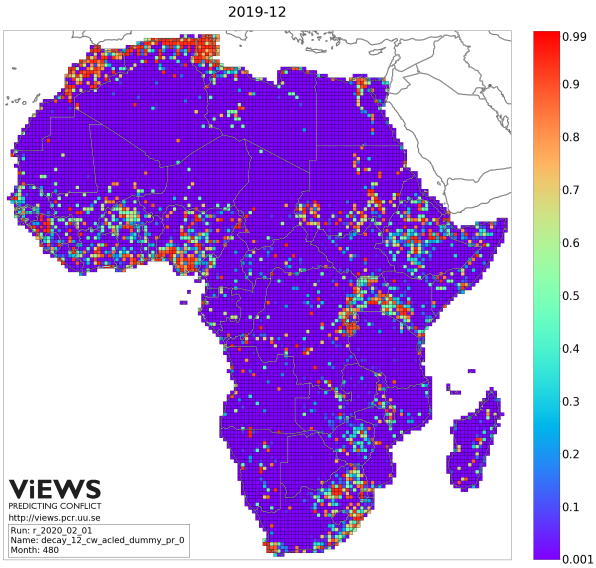
(a) State-based conflict (sb), December 2019



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



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



(d) Protests (pr), December 2019

Figure 5: Decay function maps of observed conflict for December 2019