ViEWS monthly forecasts, March 2020*

Summary of forecasts

Thursday 12th March, 2020

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

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

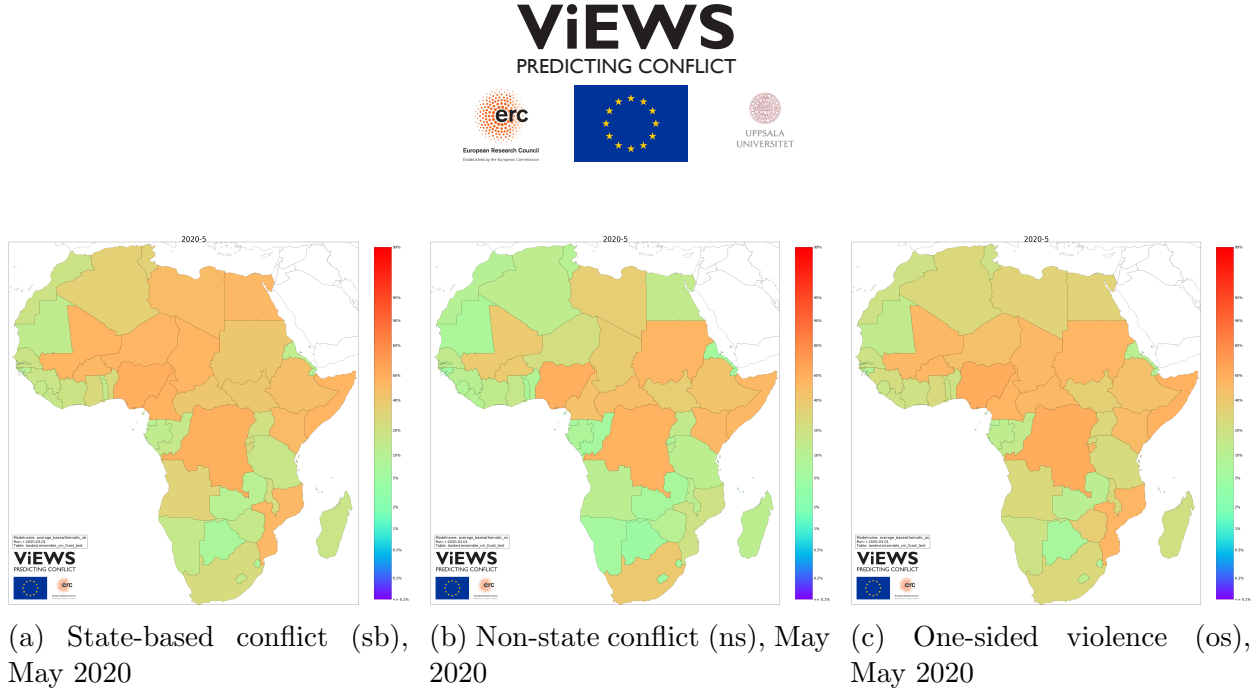(c) One-sided violence (os), May 2020

Figure 1: Ensemble forecasts for May 2020

This report presents ViEWS forecasts at $s = 3$ for May 2020 as of 1 March 2020, which are based on data that are updated up to and including January 2020. 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
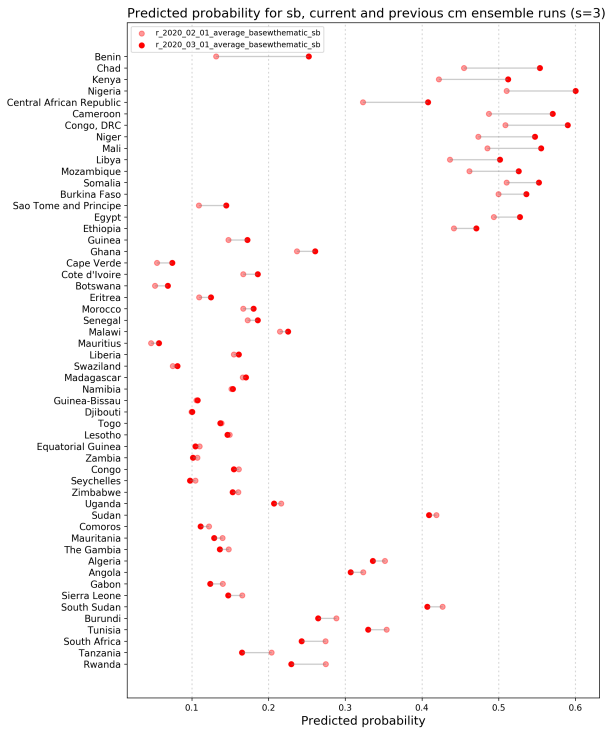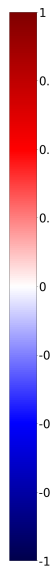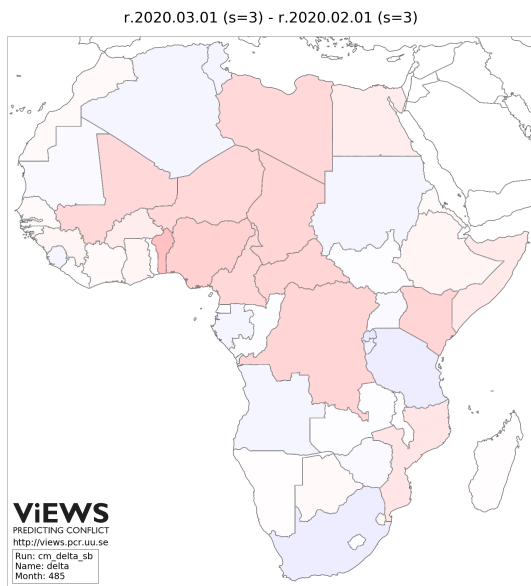
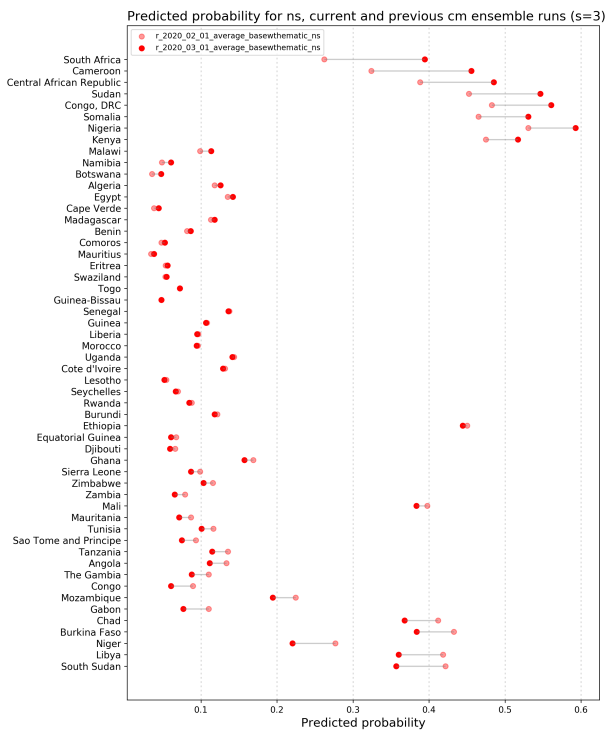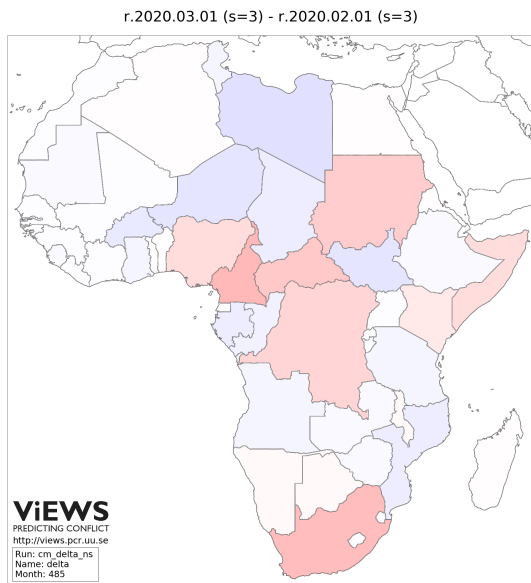Figure 2: State-based conflict (sb)
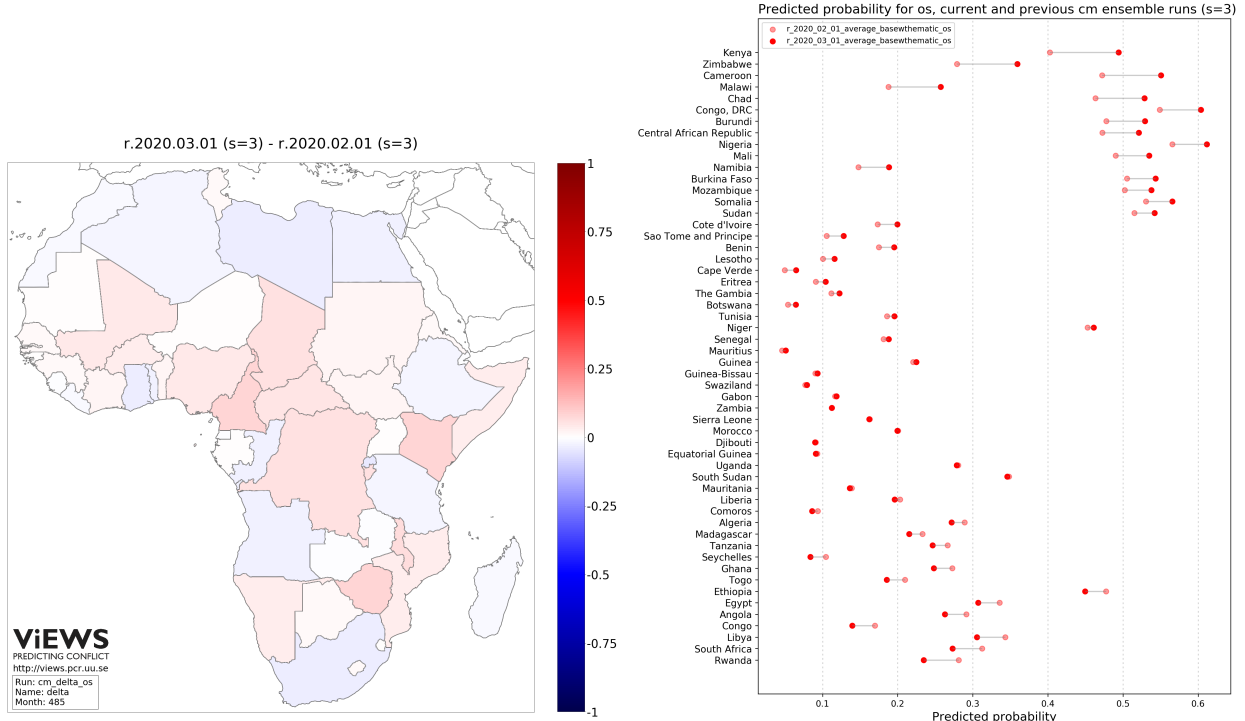

Figure 3: Non-state conflict (ns)

Figure 4: One-sided violence (os)

the ViEWS introductory article.[1] Figure 1 shows our country-level forecasts (**cm**) for May 2020, Figure 5 the corresponding forecasts at detailed geographic locations (PRIO-GRID level, or **pgm**)[2], and Figure 7 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 May 2020

The plots in Figure 1 show the ViEWS country-level forecasts for the immediate future – what will happen in May 2020 according to our forecasts? We show the probability of at least one event leading to one or more fatalities in each country in May 2020, based on data up to and including January 2020. 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 May 2020 are mostly similar to last month's forecasts. The March 2020

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[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), May 2020

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

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

Figure 5: Ensemble forecasts for May 2020
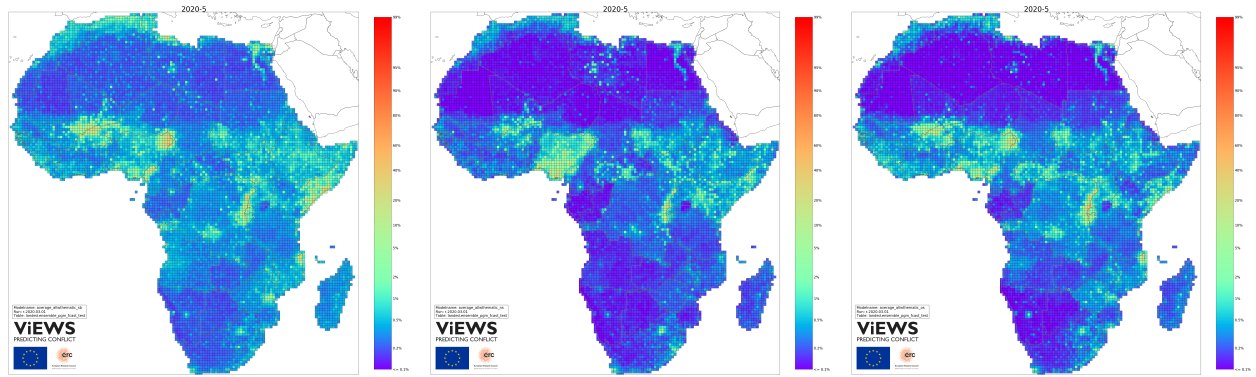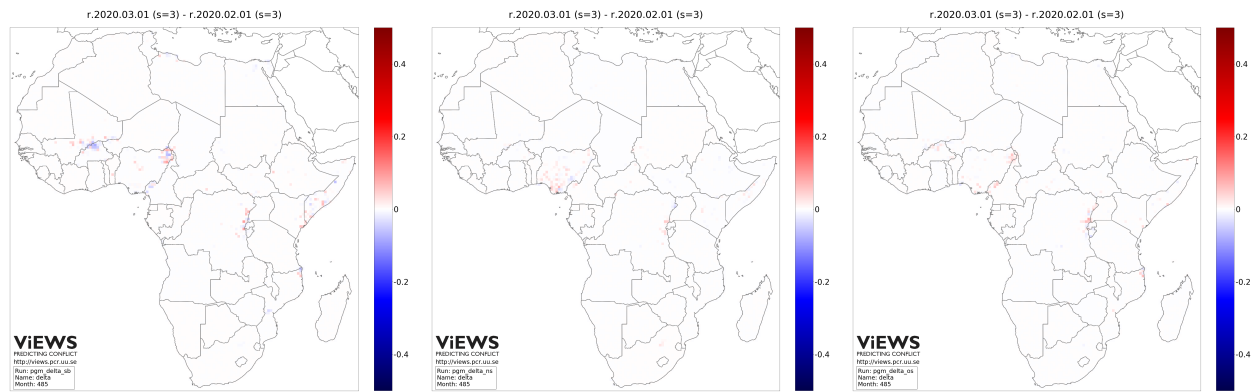

(a) State-based conflict (sb)

(b) Non-state conflict (ns)

(c) One-sided violence (os)

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.

1.1 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 2 shows that compared to last month's forecast at $s = 3$, the risk of state-based conflict has elevated especially for Benin by more than 0.1, where on 16 January two people were killed in clashes between the police and an unknown group of actors in Save town. Note that the risk remains remains relatively low however, at about 0.25. Risk also elevated again for Chad, where at least nine Chadian soldiers and 21 members of IS were killed in the Lake Chad region during January 2020. In Kenya, clashes between security forces and Al-Shabaab

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killed three Kenyan soldiers and at least 12 militants during January 2020. Four civilians were additionally killed in the crossfire in clashes between security forces and Al-Shabaab in Garissa county on 7 January. Nigeria's risk continues to increase at $s = 3$ this month given the fight with IS, and remains the country at highest risk of state-based violence on the African continent.

1.2 Non-state conflict (ns)

Mali, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, DR Congo, Sudan, and Somalia remain at particularly high risk of non-state violence at $s = 3$. The risk of non-state violence however continues to be less pronounced across the African continent compared to the risk of state-based or one-sided violence.

Compared to last month, the predicted probability of non-state violence at $s = 3$ has again gone up most for South Africa with an increase of over 0.1. This is given fatal violence between rival illegal miners of unclear organization in Roodepoort township, Gauteng province, that was included in the UCDP candidate data for January 2020. In Cameroon, novel clashes between separatist groups in Meluf, North-West region, killed at least six. The third biggest increase in the risk of non-state violence at $s = 3$ this month is found in Central African Republic, where five events of non-state violence between ethnic factions of former armed group Séléka were recorded by the UCDP for January 2020, leading to at least 66 deaths in total.

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 February forecast, the risk of one-sided violence at $s = 3$ increased most for Kenya this month. At least six civilians were killed by Al-Shabaab in January as a result of an attack in Lamu county on 2 January and another in Garissa county on 13 January. The second biggest increase found in month's run is in Zimbabwe, where on 27 January members from the MaShurugwi gang raided a mining operation, killing one person. In Cameroon the armed forces conducted numerous raids in the Anglophone regions of the country, leading to more than 30 civilian deaths (See figure 7c). Ambazonian insurgents also killed at least one civilian in January. In Cameroon's Far North, moreover, IS continued its attacks on civilians leading to at least 11 civilian fatalities. Of note is also the increase in Malawi. Large-scale anti-government protests occurred there during the month of January 2020 (See figure 7d,

following a call for nationwide demonstrations from the Human Rights Defenders Coalition (HRDC) opposition group.

2 PRIO-GRID-month forecasts for May 2020

Figure 5 presents forecasts at fine-grained sub-national geographical locations for May 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, around Tripoli in Libya, the Cabo Delgado province of Mozambique, and in the border areas between central Mali, northern Burkina Faso, and south-western Niger.

Nevertheless, we find a continued slight decrease in the risk of violence in a small number of PRIO-GRID cells in northern Africa, Libya, and in Egypt's Nile Delta and Sinai, as depicted in Figure 6a.

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 7, reflecting that countries' recent conflict history is the strongest predictor of future violence. Compared to our February forecast at $s = 3$ (see figure 6a), we see a spread-out increase in the risk of state-based violence along the center regions of Mali.

Also in Burkina Faso can we 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. Nonetheless, our forecasts at $s = 3$ this month indicate a slight reduction in the risk of state-based violence for a number of regions in northern Burkina Faso, though the risk will remain at a high level.

Turning to Benin, we see a cell of increased risk due to the noted clashes between the police and an unknown group of actors on 16 January in Save town, in which two people were killed. In Nigeria's central Kaduna state, four Nigerian Air Force personnel and three unknown assailants were shot and killed on 9 January. On 14 January, the long-dormant Jihadist group Ansaru claimed an attack on a traditional ruler's convoy that killed at least six people.

Compared to our forecasts of last month, we find both grid cells with increased and decreased risks since last month in north-eastern 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, with the strongest increase of risk around the capital Mogadishu. Western Ethiopia's Oromiya state saw counter-insurgency operations against suspected members of Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), leading to at least one fatality.

The Cabo Delgado province in Mozambique continues to see an increased risk of state-based violence, while the relatively new risk clusters in the Sofala and Manica provinces of central Mozambique see a decreased risk at $s = 3$ from last month.

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.

Compared to our forecasts at $s = 3$ last month, we see a widespread increase in the risk of non-state violence in Nigeria, strongest in Imo/Anambra state. The Kivus also show a relevant increase, given widespread inter-militia fighting that led to at least 35 deaths in January 2020.

For one-sided violence, the patterns are similar and not much change is detected. Most visible is the increase in the DRC's north Kivu province, where various militias massacred scores of civilians throughout January 2020.

3 History of UCDP organized violence

Figure 7 presents the the recent history of violence in each PRIO-GRID cell. Red cells experienced violence in January 2020, and purple ones have not seen armed conflict in many years.

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

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

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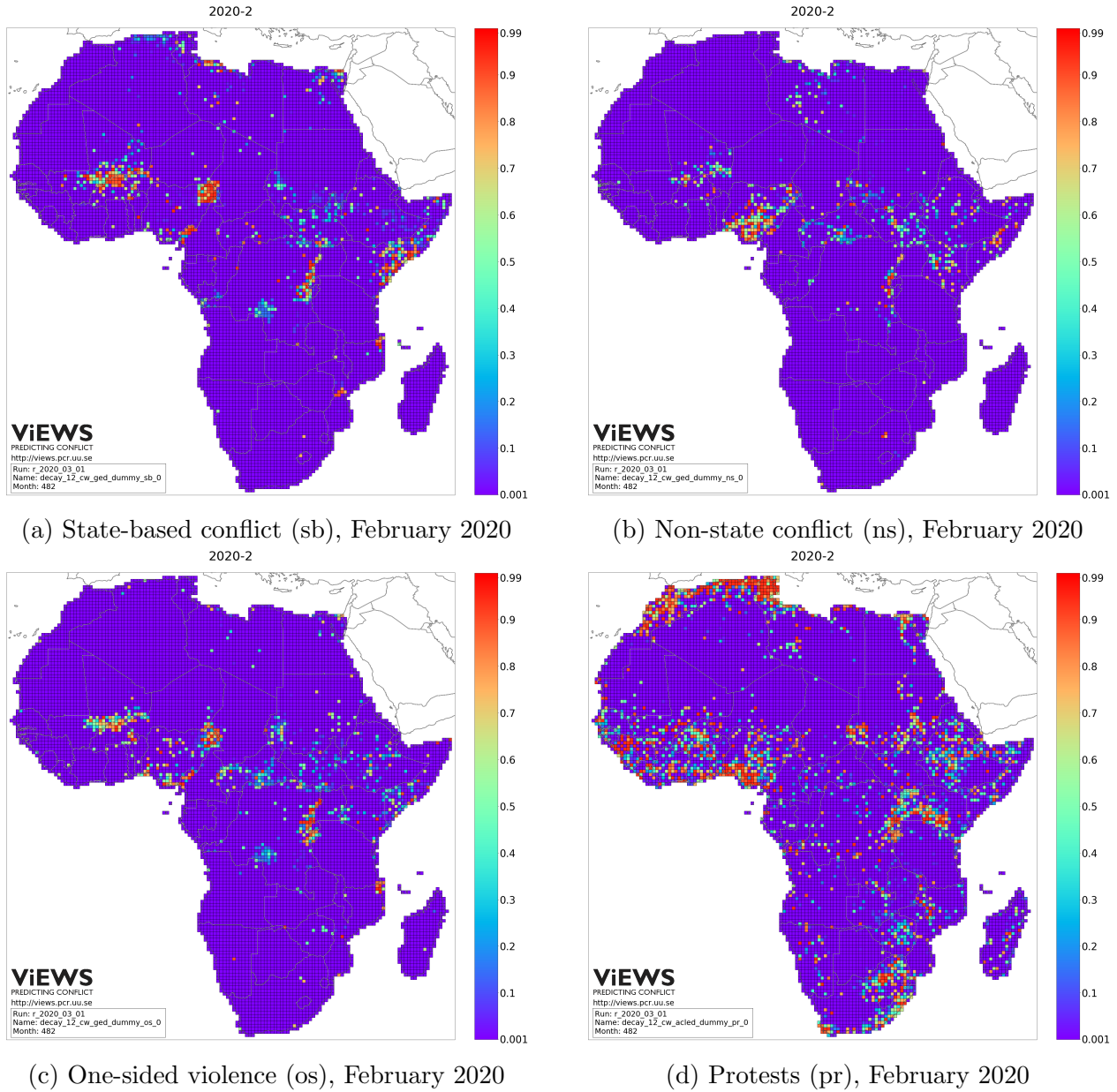

(d) Protests (pr), February 2020

Figure 7: Decay function maps of observed conflict up to and including January 2020

Figures 7a, 7b, 7c show state-based, non-state, and one-sided violence respectively from the UCDP. Figure 7d shows data on protests from ACLED (https://www.acleddata.com).