ViEWS monthly forecasts, April 2020*

Summary of forecasts

Thursday 2nd April, 2020

ViEWS
PREDICTING CONFLICT

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

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

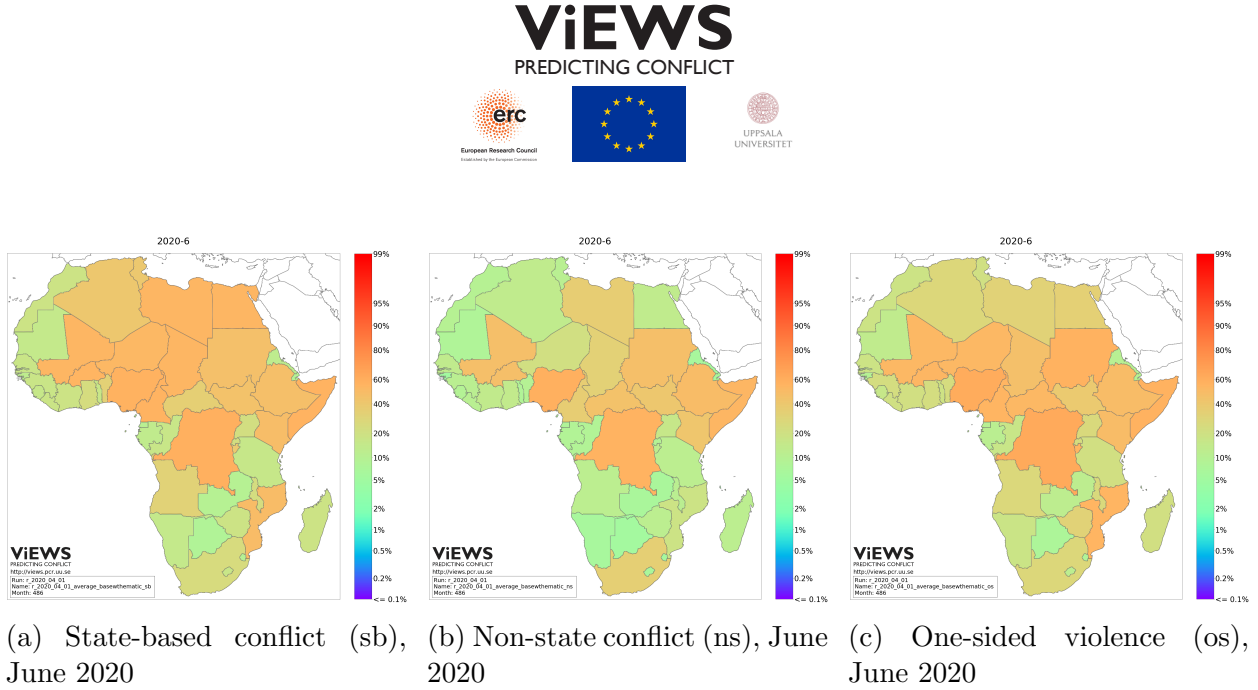(c) One-sided violence (os), June 2020

Figure 1: Ensemble forecasts for June 2020

This report presents ViEWS forecasts at $s = 3$ for June 2020 as of 1 April 2020, which are based on data that are updated up to and including February 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/.

In the following, 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
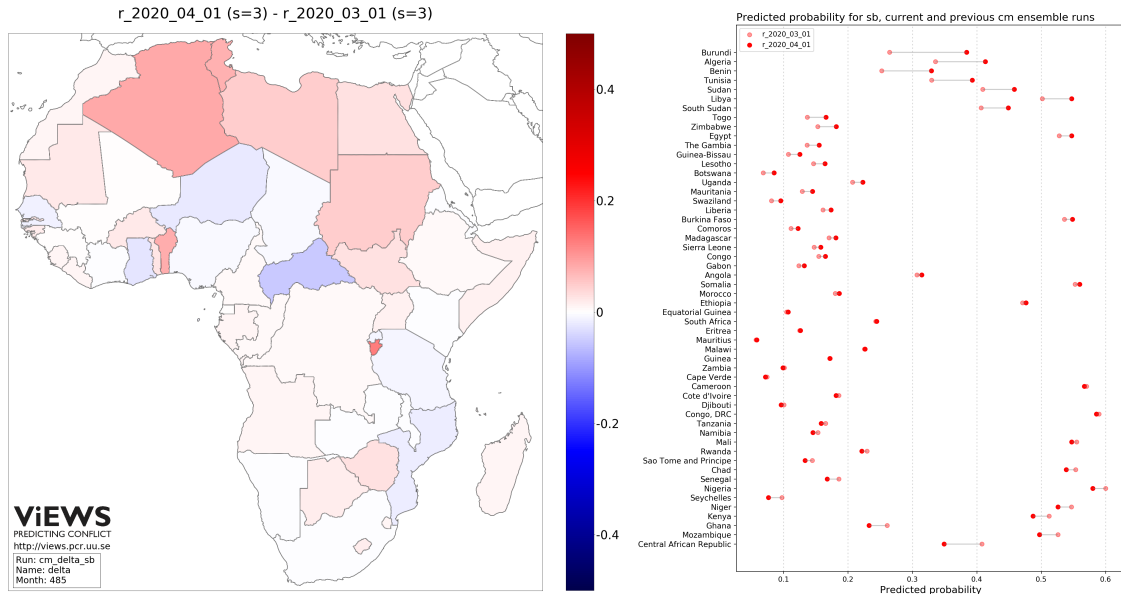
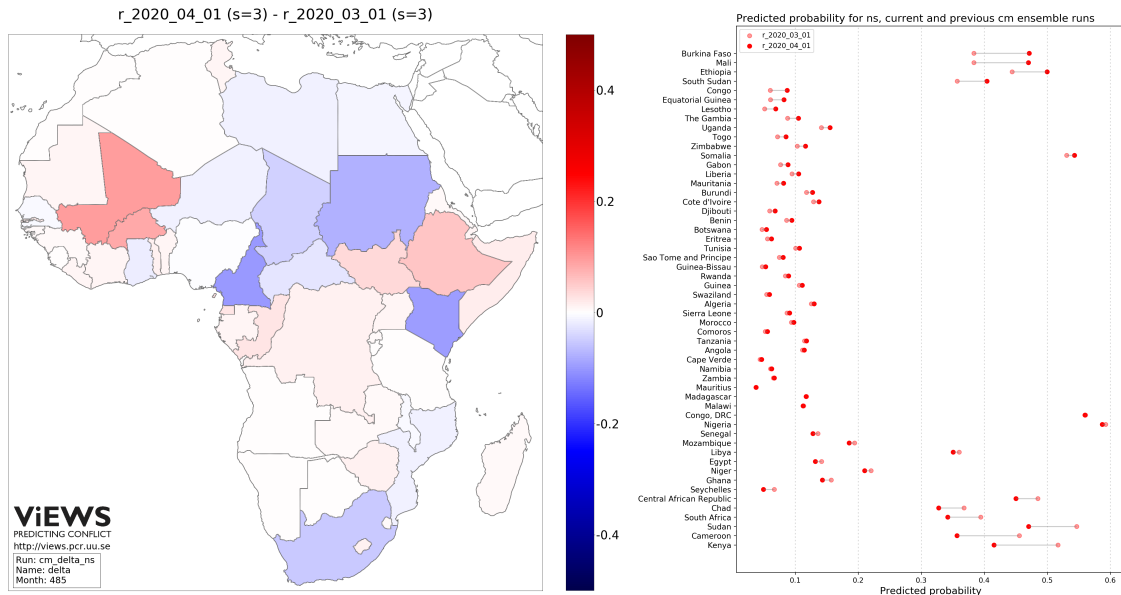Figure 2: Change in predicted state-based conflict (sb) at $s = 3$

Figure 3: Change in predicted non-state conflict (ns) at $s = 3$

issues, see the ViEWS introductory article.[1] Figure 1 shows our country-level forecasts (cm) for June 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.

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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/`
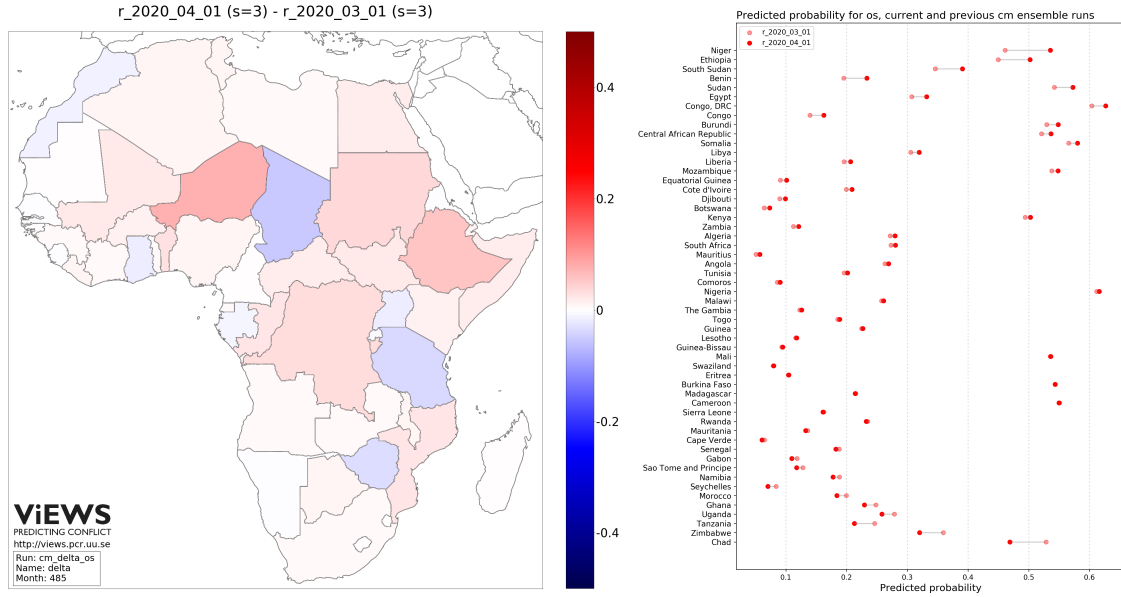
Figure 4: Change in predicted one-sided violence (os) at $s = 3$

1 Country-month forecasts for June 2020

The plots in Figure 1 show the ViEWS country-level forecasts for the immediate future – what will happen in June 2020 according to our forecasts? We show the probability of at least one event leading to one or more fatalities in each country in June 2020, based on data up to and including February 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 0.01. When the forecasts indicate that no event is as likely as at least one event, countries are drawn with a light orange color.
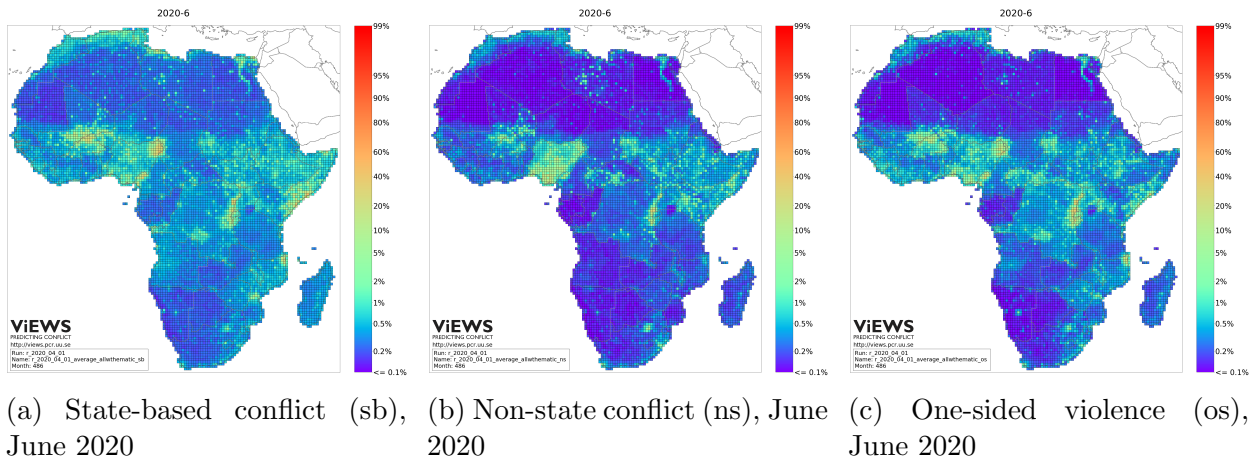

(a) State-based conflict (sb), June 2020

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

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

Figure 5: Ensemble forecasts for June 2020

(a) State-based conflict (sb)　　(b) Non-state conflict (ns)　　(c) One-sided violence (os)
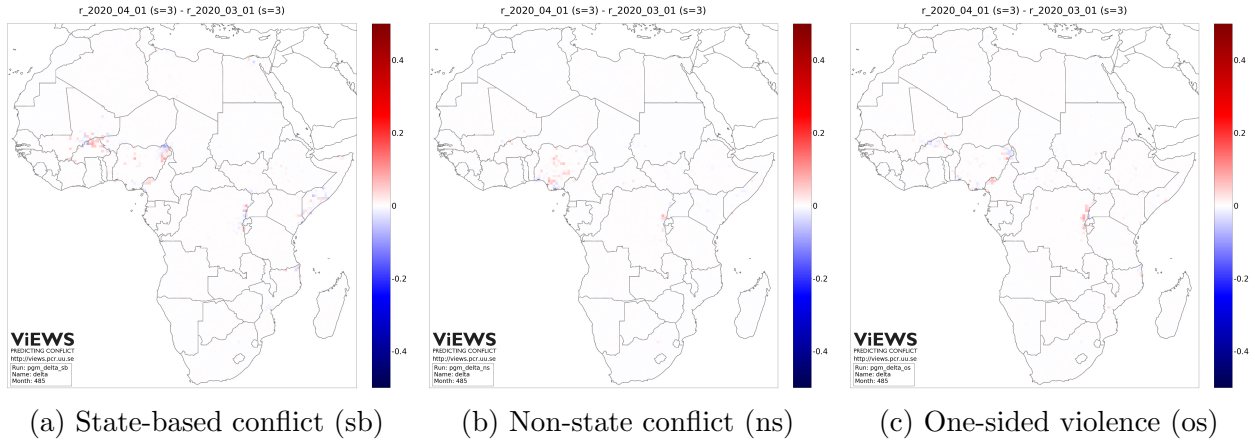
Figure 6: Change in *pgm* predictions at $s = 3$ compared to last month

Our forecasts for June 2020 are mostly similar to last month's forecasts. The April 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.

1.1   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 Burundi by more than 0.1. This is due to clashes between the police and unknown armed men during the week of 18 and 25 February, leading to 22 gunmen and 2 members of the police killed. Officials have described the violence to be related to the upcoming presidential election in May, with local civil society claiming that most of the unknown armed men were members of the opposition party CNL. Additionally, elsewhere in Bujumbura-Rural, 13 unknown "armed bandits" and one police officer were killed in clashes on 24 February. The second biggest increase this month concerns Algeria, where on 29 February IS claimed an attack on an Algerian military barrack in Adrar province bordering Mali, killing one solder and its suicide bomber. Third this month is Benin, which on the ninth of February had around ten gunmen attack a police post near the border with Burkina Faso, killing at least one police officer. Expected to have been perpetrated by jihadist insurgents in the area, this would be the first such attack on security forces in Benin. Do note that the risk of state-based violence in Benin remains relatively low, at around 0.3. Tunisia also shows a relevant increase at $s = 3$ this month, given an operation of the armed forces on 25 February

that killed two IS-members. The biggest decrease for **sb**, finally, is in the Central African Republic. Despite continued non-state and one-sided violence, no state-based violence was recorded in February in the UCDP candidate event data.

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 increased most for countries that have already been at high risk. It particularly increased for Burkina Faso this month, where on 7 January civilian volunteers organized an attack on suspected jihadists in Gargaboulé village, killing 22 of them. In Mali, a senior officer of the Arab Movement of Azawad (MAA) was killed on 9 January by two unidentified assailants in Tamkoutat town, Gao region. In a separate incident, unknown armed assailants killed at least four members of the Yoro self-defense militia in Yoro village, Mopti region, on 14 January. Finally, the risk of non-state violence declined most for Kenya and Cameroon this month, given that no non-state violence event was recorded during February in the UCDP candidate event data.

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 March forecast the risk of one-sided violence at $s = 3$ increased most for Niger this month. In February, IS (Boko Haram) killed at least 15 civilians in Niger's Diffa and Tillabéri regions, causing the risk of one-sided violence in Niger to now surpass 0.5. The second biggest increase, though relatively slight, concerns Ethiopia. Ethiopian police raided an office of the opposition Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) on 15 February using live fire, killing one person. Finally, we see the biggest reduction for Chad, which did not have a one-sided violence event recorded for February in the UCDP candidate event data, despite the continued presence of IS (Boko Haram) in the Lake Chad area.

2 PRIO-GRID-month forecasts for June 2020

Figure 5 presents forecasts at fine-grained sub-national geographical locations for June 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.

Compared to our March 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 and northern Burkina Faso, 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.

Of special note are two events in the southern Sikasso region of Mali and the southwestern Cascades region of Burkina Faso being picked up on in the *pgm* predictions (see figure 7a). With regard to the prior, JNIM claimed an attack on a military outpost in Diou village on 10 February, which allegedly killed four Malian soldiers. In Burkina Faso, a border outpost close to Cote d'Ivoire at Yendéré village was attacked on 27 February by militants that are assumed to be JNIM as well.

Of note for Nigeria is the increased risk of state-based violence in Kaduna State, where on 5 February a camp of the Islamist group Ansaru was reportedly assaulted by Nigerian security forces, leading to unconfirmed though possible scores of fatalities. Also in Niger State, at least six unknown "bandits" possibly with Ansaru were killed in clashes with local police forces during February.

Compared to our forecasts of last month, we find both grid cells with increased and decreased risks this month in north-eastern Nigeria (with a particular increase in southern Borno State), the Anglophone region in Cameroon, and the Ituri and Kivu provinces of DRC, as well as Somalia's southern-most regions.

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.
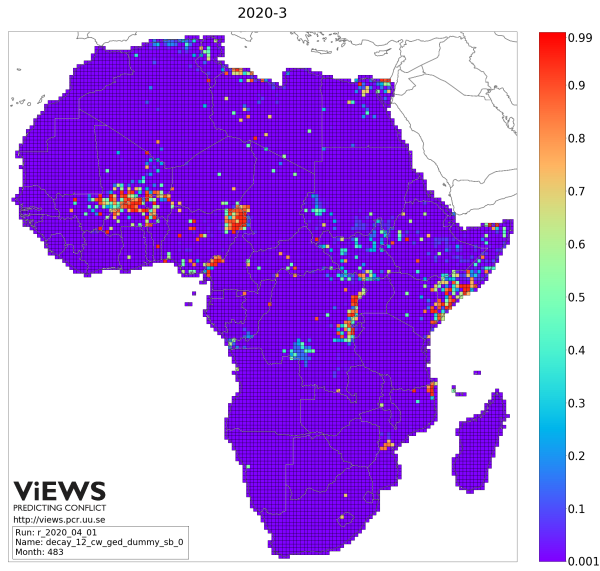
Compared to our forecasts at $s = 3$ last month, we see a widespread increase in the risk of non-state violence in Nigeria, strongest in Delta/Edo State. The Kivus also show a relevant increase, given widespread inter-militia fighting that led to at least 55 deaths in February 2020.

For one-sided violence, Mali and Burkina Faso, northeastern Nigeria, the Anglophone regions of Cameroon, and the Kivu provinces of the Democratic Republic of Congo continue to feature the strongest risk clusters. Compared to last month's forecasts at $s = 3$, most visible is an increase in the DRC's north Kivu province, where various militias again massacred scores of civilians throughout February 2020. The Anglophone regions of Cameroon also see a continued increase of risk, where both government security forces as well as Ambazonian insurgents have killed civilians. Most prominently, the Cameroonian government on 22 February killed at least 20 civilians in Fungom village, reportedly burning their houses to the ground.
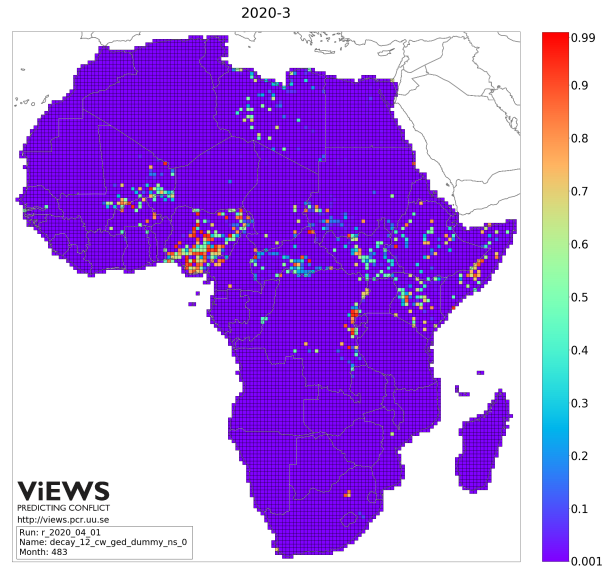
3   History of UCDP organized violence

Figure 7 presents the the recent history of violence in each PRIO-GRID cell. Red cells experienced violence in February 2020, and purple ones have not seen armed conflict in many years.
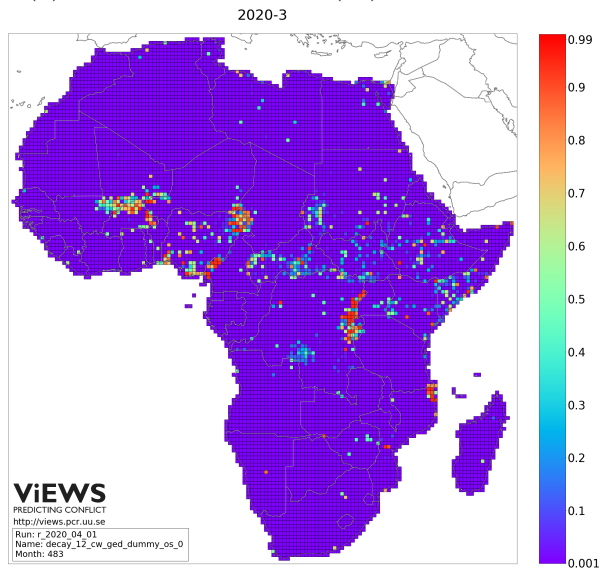
Figures 7a, 7b, 7c show state-based, non-state, and one-sided violence respectively from the UCDP. Figure 7d shows data on protests from ACLED (`https://www.acleddata.com`).
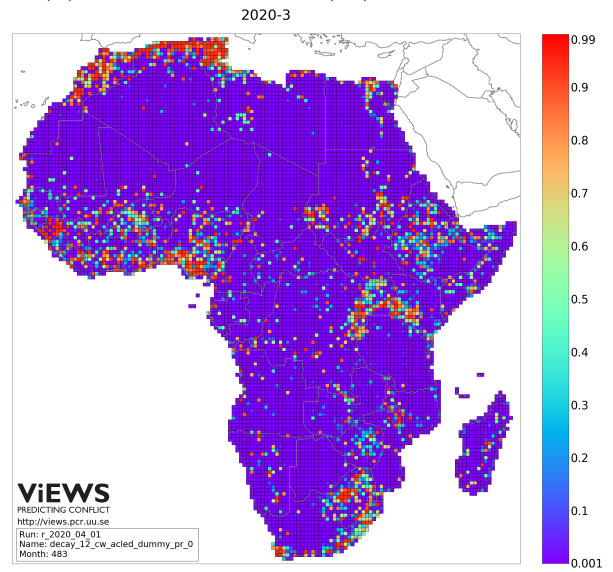
(a) State-based conflict (sb), February 2020

(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 for February 2020