The State of Conflict and Violence in Asia

The Asia Foundation

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The Asia Foundation is a nonprofit international development organization committed to improving lives across a dynamic and developing Asia. Informed by six decades of experience and deep local expertise, our work across the region addresses five overarching goals—strengthen governance, empower women, expand economic opportunity, increase environmental resilience, and promote regional cooperation. Headquartered in San Francisco, The Asia Foundation works through a network of offices in 18 Asian countries and in Washington, DC.

The State of Conflict and Violence in Asia

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Cover photography: Mural painting in memory of Noor Hossain, a Bangladeshi activist killed during political protests in 1987. He has the words “Let democracy live” painted on his back. Shahidul Alam/Drik Images (1990)

Preface

The forces of economic globalization, technological innovation, and population flow are rapidly transforming Asia. Despite this dynamism, some countries and subnational regions remain caught in protracted cycles of conflict and violence, contributing to underdevelopment, poor governance, and instability. In an increasingly inter-connected and porous region, with the stream of people, guns, legal and illegal trade, and ideologies crossing national borders, conflict and violence in one country can severely impact other countries.

Understanding the historical context and drivers of conflict and violence in Asia is key to developing peacebuilding strategies. However, current violence datasets chronically underreport violence, and solid data on local forms of violence is practically non-existent. Many datasets focus on just one type of violence or aggregate all violence together. Studying patterns of violent conflict in isolation neglects the multiple, intersecting dimensions of this urgent issue.

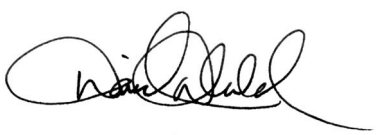
In response to critical gaps, *The State of Conflict and Violence in Asia* presents a concise overview of the diversity and complexity of conflict and violence in Asia today. This evidence-based volume covers 14 countries, including some of the most entrenched and complex places in the world, and reports historical patterns and current trends in conflict and violence. Importantly, this volume contextualizes types of violent conflict, clarifying which predominate in different areas. This analysis can help policymakers, government officials, scholars, development professionals, and security analysts to deeply and effectively understand contemporary conflict and violence in Asia using a political-economy and historical lens.

Drawing on The Asia Foundation's long-standing experience in each country, the chapters combine analysis of published materials with in-depth knowledge and nuanced understanding of local politics and power. Our approach sees profound connections between intercommunal violence, gender-based violence, land and natural resource conflicts, cross-border insurgency and terrorism, and the links between conflict and regime type. The 14 country chapters use a common framework, examining nine types of contestation at the transnational, national, subnational, and local levels.

The Asia Foundation is committed to working with Asian governments and local partners to address these long-running conflicts. Our programs support the efforts of key local actors in governments and conflict-affected populations to address the problems that perpetuate conflict and violence. The Foundation has supported the development of locally-owned violence incident monitoring systems in Thailand, the Philippines, Indonesia, Nepal, and Bangladesh, and that data is cited throughout this volume. Developing similar systems across the region can contribute to a more accurate and comprehensive picture of conflict and violence in Asia.

This book examines emerging patterns that require the world's attention: the region's expanding urbanization will likely increase rather than decrease violence in the coming decade; the politicization of ethnic and religious identities creates major risks for the future; and gender-based violence is widespread in Asia, and its impacts are greater than previously understood. It remains to be seen whether Asia can reach its full potential without sustainable, inclusive solutions to the region's conflicts.

Given the complex dynamics of the region, there are many lessons of intra-Asia cooperation and efforts to reduce conflict across the region. We hope this volume will contribute to the global dialogue on conflict and fragility and help shape policy-oriented research investigating the impacts and drivers of violence in Asia.



David D. Arnold
President, The Asia Foundation
September 2017

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Introduction

The State of Conflict and Violence in Asia

How do conflict and violence affect Asia? What are their roots, and how have they evolved within countries over time? And what countries are particularly prone to different forms of conflict and violence?

The State of Conflict and Violence in Asia contains accessible, up-to-date, data-driven analyses of historical patterns and current trends in conflict and violence in 14 Asian countries. Designed for government officials and diplomats, scholars, aid and development professionals, business leaders, international affairs and security analysts, and activists, this volume presents a concise overview of the diversity and complexity of conflict and violence in Asia today.

Each chapter considers conflict and violence and their impacts in one Asian country. Each assesses the post-World War II roots of contestation and how current political, economic, and social conditions shape patterns of conflict and violence today. The chapters use a common framework, examining nine types of contestation at the transnational, national, subnational, and local levels: national civil war, national political conflict, transnational terrorism, separatism and autonomy, communal and ideological conflict, local political and electoral violence, local resource conflict, urban crime and violence, and domestic and gender-based violence. Countries are ranked for each type of conflict and violence, allowing for easy comparison. Five thematic, expert essays—focusing on the links between conflict and regime type, intercommunal violence, cross-border insurgency and terrorism, gender-based violence, and land and natural resource conflicts—draw out broader findings and implications.

The *State of Conflict and Violence in Asia* fills critical gaps in the understanding of conflict in Asia. International violence datasets are unreliable and often massively underreport levels of violence. Solid data on local forms of violence is often non-existent. Many reports provide data and comparative analysis of violence, in Asia and beyond, but these reports tend to focus on just one type of violence, such as civil war violence, political violence, or terrorism.[1] Looking in isolation at civil war violence—or at electoral violence, urban crime, or domestic violence—means that the links to other forms cannot be untangled, and little is understood about how they relate, i.e. whether countries that experience one type of violence (say, transnational terrorism) are also prone to other types (such as national political contestation). On the other hand, homicide datasets that aggregate all forms into one measure can obscure the causes of conflict and violence.[2] Are most of the homicides a result of interpersonal violence, or are they the result of larger outbursts of collective violence, such as ethnic riots? *The State of Conflict and Violence in Asia* considers a wide range of types of conflict and violence, clarifying which predominate in different locales, and allowing for a finer-grained analysis of what drives each type. This can help policymakers and others in planning and prioritizing how to address conflict and violence most effectively.

Each chapter draws on a broad range of sources, including official data, survey evidence, and academic studies and policy analyses, weaving them together to provide an accurate picture of

conflict and violence in Asia today. Drawing on The Asia Foundation's own long-standing experience in each country, the chapters combine analysis of published materials with in-depth knowledge and nuanced understanding of local politics and power, including in some of the most entrenched conflict zones and challenging geographic locales in the world.

Five emerging patterns

#1. Conflict and violence affect every country in Asia, not just those often thought of as conflict-ridden.

This volume highlights just how widespread and serious conflict and violence are in Asia, a region typically thought of as a rare bastion of peace in a troubled world. Large-scale violence is not confined to Afghanistan; many other countries are deeply affected by subnational conflicts and large-scale intercommunal violence. Localized violence is present everywhere—often with dramatic cumulative impacts. In Indonesia, almost 2,500 people were killed from 2005 to 2014 in violence related to local issues, including land conflicts and vigilante justice attacks. Table 1 provides a comparative overview of the different forms of conflict and violence occurring in each country in the last 15 years. It shows that all countries are significantly affected by at least one type of conflict or violence. Mongolia, for example, has low levels of most types of conflict, but it has particularly high levels of violent crime. There has been relatively little conflict or violence in Cambodia in recent years, but land and natural-resource conflict is a significant problem, and there is the potential for electoral violence to increase. Across the spectrum, it becomes clear that conflict and violence are an issue everywhere, not just in countries typically thought of as being affected by conflict.

#2. Asian countries have been relatively successful at managing national contestation, but often at the price of significant subnational and local violence.

Since the end of Nepal's war in 2006, nationwide civil war has been absent from Asia, with the exception of Afghanistan. In Bangladesh, Thailand, and Pakistan, national political conflicts have been particularly bloody, but have not led to large-scale, sustained civil war in recent decades. Yet the strategies used to achieve such relative national stability have often inadvertently led to other forms of conflict and violence. Subnational conflicts in the peripheries of many Asian states, highlighted throughout the volume, are a consequence of national statebuilding strategies that consolidate central power and maintain territorial integrity at the expense of recognizing the immense local diversity within Asian countries and the desire of borderland areas for sufficient autonomy to protect their customs and local values. The use of patronage to bind competing national elites to the prevailing political settlement undermines the rule of law, providing space for violence to be used as a political and economic strategy. These conflicts, such as those in Myanmar and Thailand's borderlands, have been more frequent and enduring in Asia than anywhere else in the world.[3]

#3. The politicization of ethnic and religious identities has frequently led to violence and creates major risks for the future.

Powerful political elites across Asia have increasingly emphasized exclusive ethnic or religious identities as they bid to win or maintain power. This trend has become more marked

as nations in the region have democratized and politics have become more competitive. The Malaysia chapter, for example, shows how politicians have increasingly utilized the Malay-Muslim card to fend off allegations of corruption. In Indonesia, local elites in a range of outlying, religiously balanced provinces emphasized threats to confessional identities as a way to rally voters; recent elections in the capital, Jakarta, have seen the same tactics at play. Identity politics have often led to violence, which has sometimes spun out of control. In India, for example, instigating religious riots has been a strategy for politicians to win elections, but these riots have led to thousands of deaths. Violence in turn has deepened the cleavages between ethnic and religious groups.

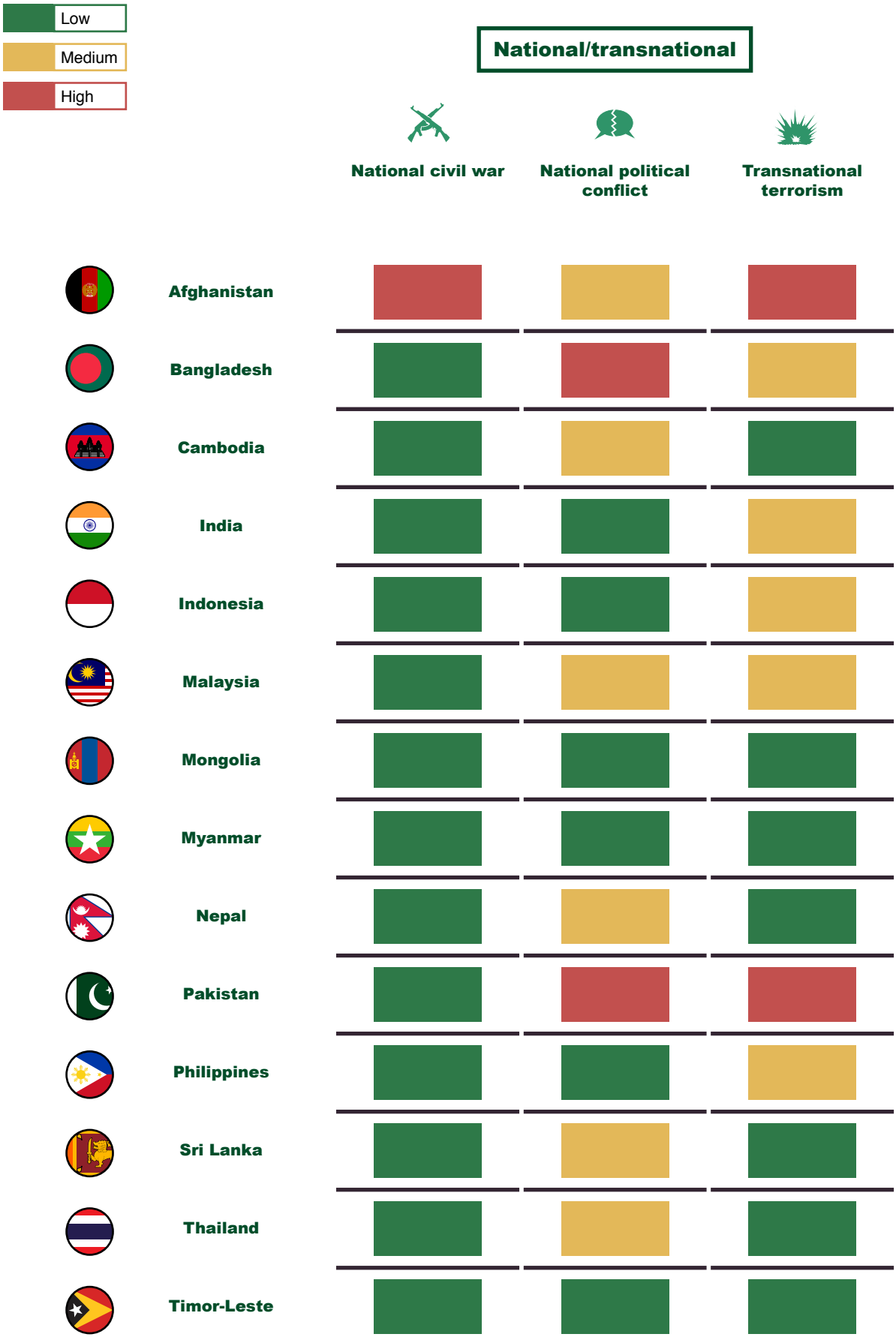
#4. Development and urbanization will likely increase rather than decrease violence in the coming decade.

Asia's economic rise has been momentous. Since the early 1960s, it has grown richer faster than any other region in the world. In 1990, 60 percent of people in East Asia and 45 percent in South Asia lived on less than USD 1.90 a day (PPP).[4] By 2013, these rates had fallen to under 4 percent and 15 percent, respectively. In 2013, East Asia grew by 7.1 percent and South Asia by 5.2 percent, far outpacing any other region.[5] This rapid development has improved the lives of many, but the chapters in this volume show that the forces it has unleashed have also commonly led to violence. One of those forces has been the rise of inequality and regional disparities. In places like Thailand and the Philippines, subnational conflicts have intensified even as growth has accelerated. In Cambodia, rapid economic expansion has reduced the security of land tenure for many, and protests have been met with violent crackdowns. In India, large-scale development schemes have contributed to the rise of the Naxalite movement. In Mongolia, where two-thirds of the population now live in Ulaanbaatar, rapid urbanization has helped push the capital to the highest homicide rate of any Asian city—11.9 deaths per 100,000 people.

#5. Gender-based violence is widespread in Asia, and its impacts are greater than previously understood.

The chapters in this volume point to the overwhelming pervasiveness of gender-based violence in most Asian countries. In Timor-Leste, for example, 14 percent of all women between the ages of 15 and 49 report being raped. In India, there were 8,342 rapes reported per year between 2009 and 2013, which averages out to roughly 23 women raped every day. Nepal has seen a sharp increase in reported violence against women. Yet the full range and impact of such violence is still unexplored and little understood. Survey data is inconsistent within and between countries,[6] and cultural factors lead to widespread underreporting. As a result, the country chapters do not classify countries by their levels of gender-based violence, although they do suggest countries that deserve particular attention. Better research and data are clearly needed.

Table 1. Levels of violence and conflict in Asia



** Rankings are based on the last 15 years and are relative to other Asian countries.*

Five critical implications

#1. Target hot spots with conflict programming, but remain alert to risks elsewhere.

There are conflict hot spots in Asia, as elsewhere: most of Afghanistan; zones of active subnational conflict in the Philippines, Myanmar, Thailand, and Indonesia; border zones between Bangladesh and Myanmar and between Pakistan and Afghanistan. These areas require the continuing attention of policymakers and peacebuilders. Yet, looking back over time, conflict and violence have ebbed and flowed in most Asian countries. Twenty years ago, Timor-Leste was in the midst of violent resistance to an illegal occupation. Fifteen years ago, Nepal was wracked by a bloody civil war. Less than a decade ago, horrific violence affected Sri Lanka's northern and eastern provinces. Each is now firmly "postconflict": current levels of most types of violence are lower than in many other countries in the region. Yet old conflicts have a habit of resurfacing, and peace should never be taken for granted. Other relatively peaceful countries in Asia, such as Malaysia and Cambodia, exhibit strong risk factors.

#2. Understand the history and the politics.

Today's conflicts and violence are often the product of historical trends and events that have defined relations between groups, between society and the state, and between neighboring countries, and that have shaped the way that institutions function. The legacy of the South Asian subcontinent's two great Partitions still greatly impacts internal politics in India, Pakistan, and especially Bangladesh. Choices made by colonial powers and the first generation of postcolonial leaders in the Philippines, Indonesia, and Myanmar have directly determined the conflict cleavages that drive violence today. These cleavages are often exploited, and further solidified, by elites. Understanding this political-economy, and how history has shaped it, is key to developing effective strategies.

#3. Focus on building the rule of law.

Peacebuilding work—facilitating and supporting peace processes, building local conflict-resolution mechanisms, promoting intercommunal tolerance—is vital in many areas of Asia. Yet it is just as crucial to develop effective and legitimate institutions to manage political and economic competition in nonviolent ways. In many of the countries considered in this volume, conflict and violence occur because institutions do not uphold the rule of law. Elite impunity leads to local grievances and sometimes violent resistance. Crimes go unpunished, fostering resentments. Weak institutions create space for elites to use violence as a political strategy. Promoting good governance is not just important for improving service delivery or enhancing growth; it is also a key preemptive strategy to ensure that human rights are respected and security is provided for all.

#4. Deal with cross-border drivers of conflict and violence, and promote country-to-country learning.

The chapters in this volume show that conflict and violence in one country often affect other countries in the region. Guns, people, goods, and ideologies cross national borders, spawning transnational jihadi networks and strengthening insurgent movements. Governments and development agencies have often coped less effectively with these cross-border dynamics than with the

local drivers of violence. Multi-country approaches are needed to bolster security in the region. Increased cooperation in sharing lessons learned could also be fruitful. India has reduced the violence in its Northeast. Indonesia managed to negotiate a peace settlement that has stuck in Aceh Province. At the local level in many countries, civil society organizations have developed effective strategies to reduce ethnic or religious tensions and detect emerging problems. Finding ways to share positive lessons such as these can help other governments and civil society organizations promote peace at home.

#5. Support locally owned violence monitoring systems to generate better data.

It was clear when producing this volume that available data on the impact and incidence of conflict and violence is still of limited quality. International violence datasets often massively underreport levels of violence.[7] It is extremely hard to find reliable data for many forms of conflict and violence for many countries. As noted above, global datasets tend to focus on just a few types of violence or to aggregate all violence together. Solid data on localized forms of violence, and especially gender-based violence, is often missing. The Asia Foundation has been promoting the development of locally owned violent incident monitoring systems in Thailand, the Philippines, Indonesia, Nepal, and Bangladesh, and data from these is cited throughout this volume. Developing similar systems across the region would contribute to a more accurate and comprehensive picture of the conflict and violence issues discussed here.

Notes

1 See, for example, the data produced by ACLED (http://www.acleddata.com/), Uppsala University (http://ucdp.uu.se/), and the Institute for Economics and Peace's Global Terrorism Index (http://visionofhumanity.org/indexes/terrorism-index/).

2 World Health Organization (WHO), *Global Status Report on Violence Prevention 2014* (Geneva: WHO, 2014), http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/status_report/2014/en/; and United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), *Global Study on Homicide 2013: Trends, Contexts, Data* (Vienna: UNODC, 2014), http://www.unodc.org/gsh/.

3 Thomas Parks, Nat Colletta, and Ben Oppenheim, *The Contested Corners of Asia: Subnational Conflict and International Development Assistance* (Bangkok and San Francisco: The Asia Foundation, 2013).

4 "Poverty headcount ratio at $1.90 a day," World Bank website, accessed August 21, 2017, http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.DDAY

5 "Poverty & Equity Regional Dashboard: East Asia & Pacific," World Bank website, accessed August 17, 2017, http://povertydata.worldbank.org/poverty/region/EAP

6 A major World Health Organization study from 2013 used a more rigorous methodology; however, it only uses information on seven Asian countries, and reports results at the regional rather than the country level. World Health Organization (WHO), *Global and regional estimates of violence against women: prevalence and health effects of intimate partner violence and non-partner sexual violence* (Geneva: WHO, 2013), http://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/publications/violence/9789241564625/en/.

7 Patrick Barron, Anders Engvall, and Adrian Morel, *Understanding Violence in Southeast Asia* (San Francisco: The Asia Foundation, 2016).

Patterns and Trends in Conflict and Violence

1970

1973
Coup ends monarchical rule—socialist-oriented republican government formed.

1978
Saur Revolution—as government moves to right, communist PDPA takes power in coup.

1979
Mujahedeen form amid conservative unrest in countryside, Soviet Union intervenes.

1988
Geneva Accord paves the way for Soviet withdrawal.

1989
Soviet Union withdraws. More than one million Soviet and Afghan troops killed during decade-long occupation.

1992
Communist government of President Mohammad Najibullah collapses.

1996
Taliban seize Kabul, former mujahedeen form Northern Alliance.

1992
Peshawar Accord creates mujahedeen-led government under President Burhanuddin Rabbani.

1996
Osama Bin Laden moves al-Qaeda base to Afghanistan.

2001
U.S. drives Taliban from power.

2004
New constitution promulgated.

2004
Presidential election—Hamid Karzai elected.

2005
Parliamentary elections.

2007
Land Policy passed.

2008
Law on Managing Land Affairs passed.

2009
Presidential election—Hamid Karzai reelected.

2010
Parliamentary elections.

2011
Osama Bin Laden killed in Pakistan.

2014
NATO combat mission ends.

2015
Islamic State announces presence in Khorasan province.

2014
Presidential election—National Unity Government formed by President Ashraf Ghani and CEO Abdullah Abdullah.

2016
Peace deal with Hezb-e-Islami.

2017
Islamic State affiliate storms Kabul's main military hospital leaving 50 dead and claims responsibility for major suicide bombing near the defense ministry.

2017

Afghanistan

At a glance

National civil war
High

Communal/ideological conflict
Low with potential to increase

National political conflict
Medium

Local political and electoral conflict
High

Transnational terrorism
High

Local resource conflict
Medium

Separatism and autonomy
Absent

Urban crime and violence
Medium

** Rankings are based on the last 15 years and are relative to other Asian countries.*

Overview

Due to decades of civil war, Afghanistan is the most fragile and volatile country in the region. The ongoing conflict is fueled by support to Taliban insurgents from Pakistan and poor governance, including entrenched patronage systems, corruption, and weak rule of law. Despite the U.S.-led international intervention since 2001, violence has continued between antigovernment insurgents and the security forces. Since the gradual withdrawal of international combat troops from 2011 onward, the security environment in the country has further deteriorated, with increasing attacks by the Taliban and other insurgent groups. Civilian casualties hit a record high in 2016, with 3,498 dead and 7,920 injured.[1] Transnational terrorist networks also continue to operate. The Islamic State (IS) is building up its presence in the country through its affiliated groups, and claimed responsibility for several large-scale deadly attacks against civilians in Kabul. As IS often targets religious minorities, a new surge of sectarian violence against the Shia community is reported. Security and personal safety continue to be major concerns among Afghan citizens.[2]

Afghanistan

National level

National civil war

Afghanistan has experienced several phases of civil war in its modern history: the guerrilla war waged against the Soviet-backed Communist government (1978–1992), subsequent fighting among rival mujahedeen factions (1992–1996), and half a decade of Taliban control over the state (1996–2001). The decades of civil war and unrest resulted in the deaths of over half a million[3] to as many as 2 million[4] people between 1978 and 2001 (figure 1). The lack of institutional and structural mechanisms for accommodating ethnic and cultural diversity led to social injustices and suppression of minorities, which further contributed to political instability and conflict. The country's diverse ethnic composition has been politicized by warlords who consolidated their power bases along tribal lines.[5]

A coup in 1973 ended monarchical rule and turned Afghanistan towards socialism and Soviet influence. The new republican government led by Mohammed Daoud Khan started modernization and socialist reforms that alienated Islamic conservatives. President Daoud also promoted Pashtunistan policy[6] and supported Pashtun and Baloch nationalists in their guerilla war against Pakistan. The Pakistani government started a proxy war in Afghanistan by supporting and training young religious militants through its Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) agency. Many groups receiving help—for example, the Haqqani network, Hezb-e Islami, and Jamiat-e Islami—played major roles in the war with Afghanistan and afterwards. In 1977, Daoud distanced himself from the Soviet Union and the pro-Communist People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) and reengaged with Islamic countries and the United States. The following year, PDPA took power in a coup, known as the Saur Revolution, and implemented radical land and cultural reforms. From April 1978 to the Soviet intervention in December 1979, around 27,000 dissidents were executed.[7] Most were village religious leaders (*mullahs*) and headmen from the countryside opposed to the reforms. Many insurgent groups organized along both tribal and nontribal lines, known as mujahedeen, emerged.

This political unrest, coupled with conflicts within the PDPA, resulted in a coup and several assassinations, prompting the Soviet Union to send troops to Afghanistan to prop up the Communist government. Afghan insurgents opposing the Soviet occupation received support from Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, the United States, China, and the United Kingdom. Pakistan became a training ground for Afghan and foreign fighters, with ISI recruiting Pakistani fighters, supplying foreign troops, and sending support to the mujahedeen.[8] The guerilla tactics drained the Soviet Union's energy to wage war, and within the first five years much of the country was outside of government or Soviet control. An exit plan for the Soviet Union was implemented after the 1988

100,000+

killed 2001-2016

Geneva Accord. By the time of Soviet withdrawal in 1989, more than one million Afghans and Soviet troops had been killed.[9] The Communist government, then under Mohammad Najibullah, collapsed in 1992 when the rebels seized Kabul. The Soviet occupation created conditions for the rise of groups outside formal power structures.[10] By reinforcing political patronage networks and a reactionary political culture, the turbulent 1970s and 1980s set the stage for insecurity, violence, and religious extremism in Afghanistan today.

Following the power-sharing Peshawar Accord in 1992,[11] Burhanuddin Rabbani and his Muslim political party, Jamiat-e Islami, succeeded the interim government and continued waging war with opposing groups, including Hezb-i Islami and the Taliban. During this period, vast areas of Afghanistan were controlled by different armed factions through ethnic, linguistic, or regional cleavages, replacing limited government functions. Support for various warlords from Saudi Arabia, Iran, Pakistan, and the United States accelerated fragmentation. The power vacuum and war-weariness paved the way for the Taliban seizure of Kabul in September 1996, establishing the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. Many of the Taliban leaders followed a fundamentalist version of Deobandi and Wahhabi revivalist movements, within South Asian Muslim contexts, and a narrow interpretation of Pashtun social and cultural norms such as the strict control of women, the use of Shari'a law, and iconoclasm.[12] Dissidents were publicly beaten or executed.

In 1996, groups opposed to the Taliban formed the National Islamic United Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan, commonly known as the Northern Alliance or the United Front, which supported the ousted government, the Islamic State of Afghanistan (ISA). The president of the ousted government, Burhanuddin Rabbani, served as the leader of the Northern Alliance. However, the real power lay with Commander Ahmad Shah Massoud, who was particularly influential in Panjshir, Parwan, and Takhar areas, and Abdul Rashid Dostum, who controlled Samangan, Balkh, Jowzjan, Faryab, and Baghlan provinces. The alliance received military, financial, and diplomatic assistance from Iran, Russia, and neighboring states. Both the Taliban and the Northern Alliance violated international humanitarian law by killing detainees, aerial bombardment

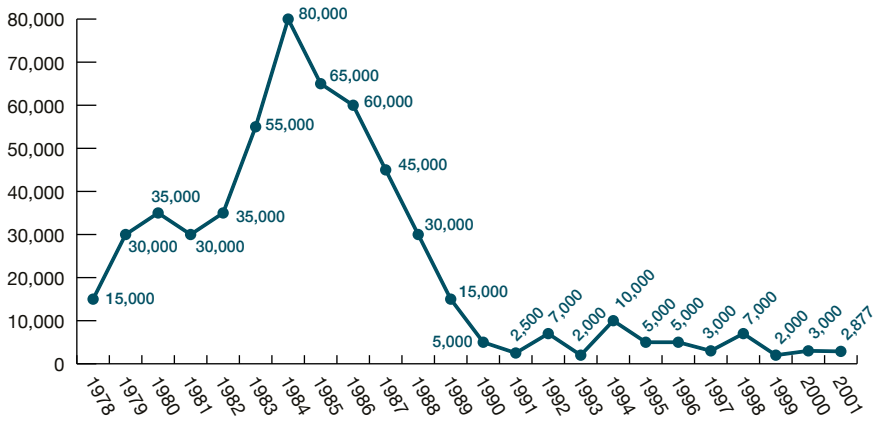


Figure 1. Civil war fatalities in Afghanistan (1979–2001)
Source: Lacina and Gleditsch[13]

and shelling, direct attacks on civilians, rape, torture, and persecution on the basis of religion. These violations were widespread and systematic. They continue to fuel ethnic conflict at the national and subnational level.[14]

Following the September 11, 2001, attacks, the U.S. government accused the Taliban of providing a safe haven for the Islamic terrorist group al-Qaeda. The U.S.-led coalition forces under Operation Enduring Freedom invaded Afghanistan, and drove the Taliban from power by December 2001. The civil war persisted, and the UN-mandated International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), with troops mainly from North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) member states, remained until 2014 to assist Afghanistan in rebuilding key government and security institutions and to engage in combat operations. With the NATO combat mission officially over, the number of international troops declined significantly, from 140,000 in 2011 to just 13,000 in 2015.[15] As of March 2017, only 8,450 U.S. troops were still based in Afghanistan, focusing on counterterrorism and training domestic security forces. President Trump's administration is currently reviewing U.S. Afghanistan policy, including the question of whether remaining troops should be withdrawn or augmented. The withdrawal of international combat troops left a fragile security environment. The Taliban and other groups have continued to attack civilians and the security forces. Recent reports by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) indicate that violence is growing, resulting in an increase in civilian casualties caused by Taliban militants and other antigovernment groups (figure 2).[16] It is estimated that over 100,000 people lost their lives between 2001 and 2016.[17]

Many attempts have been made to hold peace talks between the Taliban and the Afghanistan government since 2007. So far, however, these efforts have failed due to the recent political transitions, change in the Taliban's leadership, and geopolitics involving other foreign actors, such as Iran, Pakistan, Russia, and the United States. After failed attempts by the Quadrilateral Coordination Group, which comprises Afghanistan, China, Pakistan, and the United States, Russia is taking the lead in organizing regional consultations to promote Afghan peace and reconciliation efforts. Since a trilateral meeting held among China, Pakistan, and Russia in December 2016,

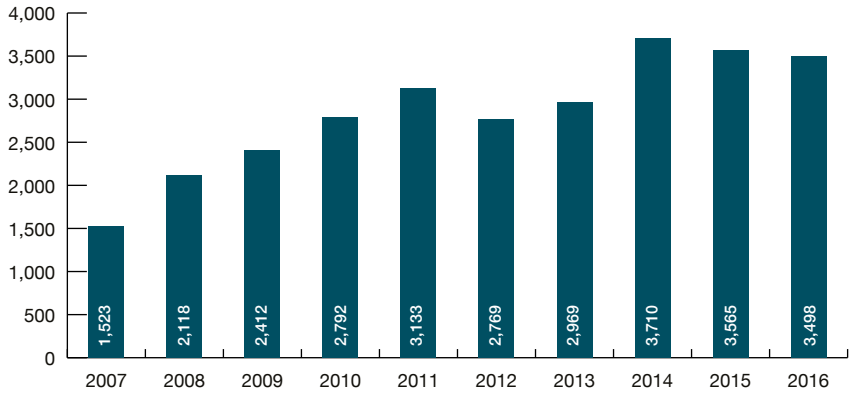


Figure 2. Civilian deaths in Afghanistan (2007–2016)
Source: UNAMA

Russia has hosted three more rounds of consultations.[18] However, direct talks with the Taliban have yet to begin. Meanwhile, the Afghanistan government successfully signed a peace agreement with Hezb-e-Islami, the country's second-largest militant group, in September 2016.[19]

National political conflict

In the midst of the prolonged civil war, Afghanistan has held several democratic elections in the post-Taliban era, including presidential elections in 2004, 2009, and 2014 and parliamentary elections in 2005 and 2010. They were marred by widespread electoral violence, fraud, and corruption. Figures on electoral violence reported by NATO and UNAMA show approximately 300–500 violent incidents have occurred on election days since the 2009 elections.[20]

Afghanistan saw a spike in violence during and after the last presidential election, in 2014. UNAMA documented 242 attacks by antigovernment groups, resulting in 380 civilian casualties (74 killed and 306 injured), during the first six months of 2014.[21] As a result of the violence, Taliban-controlled districts had low turnout.[22] The 2014 presidential elections pitted Ashraf Ghani, who received mainly Pashtun and Uzbek support, against Abdullah Abdullah, who was associated with the Tajik and Hazara groups. Such ethnic rivalries had not featured prominently during the campaign, but emerged after the runoff. Electoral violence rose as ethnic and tribal groups became more clearly identified with particular camps.[23]

Allegations of systemic fraud, including illegal transportation of unused ballots, and conflicts of interest among officials, resulted in political deadlock.[24] According to the European Union, a quarter of total votes cast (approximately 2 million of 8.1 million final-round ballots) came from polling stations with reports of voting irregularities.[25] An international audit to address voter fraud and other irregularities did little to dispel concerns of election rigging. In September 2014, U.S. secretary of state John Kerry brokered an agreement for a National Unity Government, which would be led by Ashraf Ghani as president and Abdullah Abdullah as chief executive officer. The disputed 2014 election highlighted the challenges facing Afghanistan's transition to democracy.[26] The parliamentary elections were scheduled to take place in 2015, but were postponed due to disagreements on electoral reform. As parliament five-year term ended in June 2015, President Ghani extended the term until the next election. The next parliamentary election is currently scheduled for July 2018.

Transnational terrorism

After decades of war, a governance vacuum and regional instability created conditions conducive to transnational terrorism, especially along the porous Afghan-Pakistani border. Foreign fighters who arrived during the Soviet occupation later joined several Islamic terrorist groups. Afghanistan became a base for international Islamic terrorism activities in the mid-1990s under the Taliban regime. Osama Bin Laden moved al-Qaeda's base of operations from Sudan to Afghanistan in 1996, where he planned the September 11, 2001, attacks on the United States and established camps to train fighters to support the Taliban. Since the death of Bin Laden in 2011, al-Qaeda has maintained its presence in Afghanistan.[27] Two of its training facilities in Kandahar were raided by U.S. special operation forces and their Afghan allies in October 2015. Al-Qaeda- and Taliban-affiliated groups of foreign origin operating, training, and hiding in Afghanistan include al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS), the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), Lashkar-i-Jangvi, Harakat ul-Jihad Islami (Movement of Islamic Jihad), and the Haqqani Network.[28] Indian interests in Afghanistan are the main targets of the last four groups, which are allegedly linked with Pakistan's ISI. The Islamic State (IS) also has a military presence in Afghanistan, recruiting new fighters from disaffected Taliban factions such as the TTP, LeT, and IMU.[29]

The 2016 Global Terrorism Index ranked Afghanistan as the country second-most affected by terrorism after Iraq, accounting for 14 percent of the world's terrorist attacks in 2015.[30] In 2016, the country suffered 6,994 civilian casualties from terrorist attacks—2,131 dead and 4,863 injured—a 2 percent increase over the previous year.[31] While the Taliban were responsible for the majority of terrorist attacks in the country, an IS affiliate, the Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP), carried out multiple deadly attacks that killed 286 civilians in 2016.[32] The ISKP claimed responsibility for a suicide bombing in Kabul in July 2016 that killed at least 85 people; more recently, in March 2017, they stormed Kabul's main military hospital, killing 50, and claimed responsibility for a suicide bombing near the defense ministry in April.

Subnational level

Separatism and autonomy

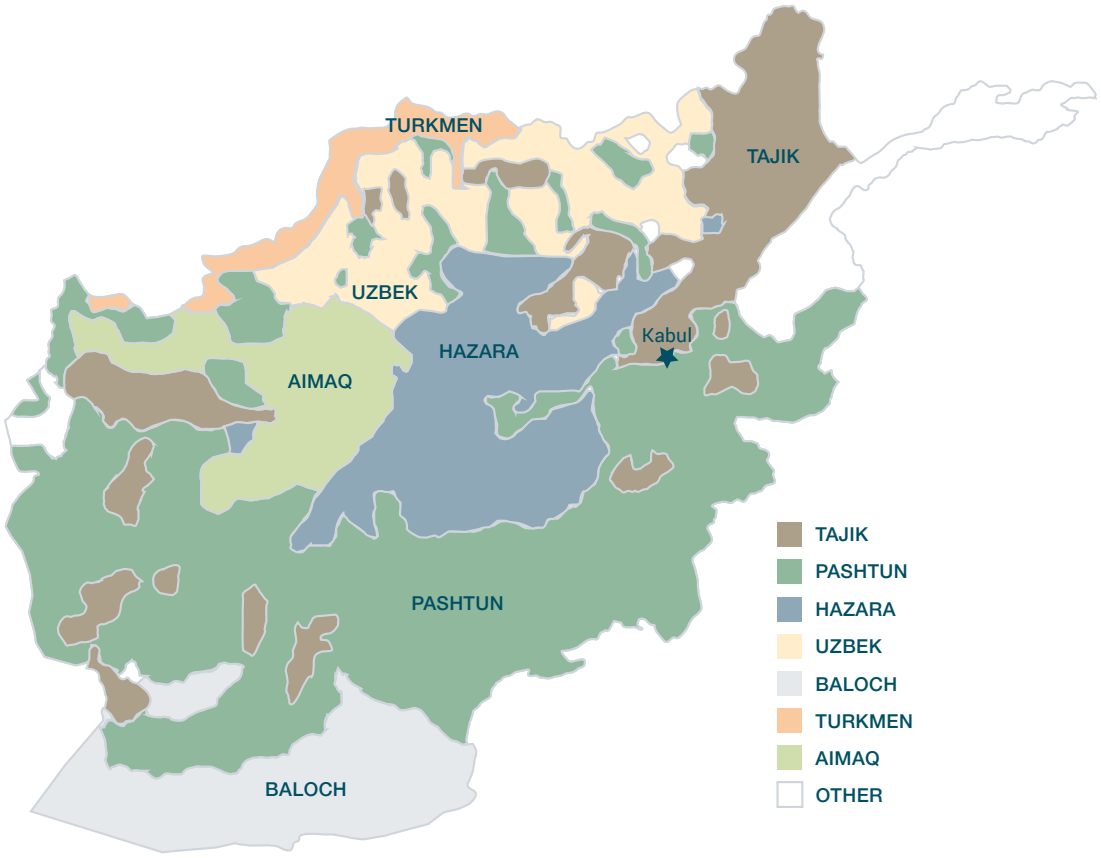
While there is no significant separatist movement in Afghanistan, and formal state authority is highly centralized, much of the country is governed in practice by local tribal and ethnic leaders. Due to weak and ineffective governance at the subnational level, the central government relies heavily on traditional mechanisms and local institutions such as *shuras* (standing councils) or *jirgas* (ad hoc councils).[33] Confidence in local institutions such as shuras and community development councils is generally higher than in national institutions.[34] To connect village politics to the central government, the international community adopted a hybrid approach: it built state capacity by integrating informal powers into the government.[35] Warlords thus were offered ministerial posts and received financial support to fight the Taliban.

Limited state capacity and accountability also resulted in a governance vacuum and local fragmentation, which contributed to worsening security.[36] With strong influence, militias, and rich resources, local strongmen have the political and economic means to challenge both the government and insurgents.[37] In some areas, the central government cannot maintain security or provide basic services, strengthening the influence of local warlords at the subnational level.

Large-scale communal and ideological conflicts

Afghanistan has faced growing ethnic and sectarian tensions in recent years, which have contributed to the ongoing conflict and violence. The country has 14 different ethnic groups recognized in the 2004 constitution: Pashtun, Tajik, Hazara, Uzbek, Baloch, Turkmen, Nuristani, Pamiri, Arab, Gujar, Brahui, Qizilbash, Aimaq, and Pashai.[38] Over 99 percent of the population is Muslim, Sunni Muslims comprising 85–90 percent and Shia Muslims making up 10–15 percent.[39] The Shia population includes Ismailis and a majority of ethnic Hazaras. Other religious groups, mainly Hindus, Sikhs, Bahais, and Christians, comprise an estimated 0.3 percent of the population.

Even though the two largest religious groups, Sunni and Shia, have lived in peace since the Taliban regime, a new surge of sectarian violence against the Shia community has been reported, with attacks on the Hazaras in particular. In the second half of 2016, UNAMA recorded five separate attacks against Shia mosques and gatherings, which killed 162 civilians and injured 618 others.[40] One of the worst attacks was during the peaceful protest organized by the Enlightening Movement in Kabul in July 2016, killing at least 85 civilians and injuring over 400 people.[41] Almost all civilian casualties were from the Shia Hazara community. The ISKP claimed responsibility for most of the attacks against Shias, particularly ethnic Hazaras. The group has carried out lethal attacks on religious minorities that have strongholds in Syria and Iraq.[42] The government has recognized inciting ethnic strife as a crime. Many believe that violence along ethnic lines may increase, including within the country's own security forces.[43]



Local level

Local political conflict and electoral violence

Local conflict and violence are intertwined with and mirror national political conflict. Local leaders have often resorted to ethnic allegiance and incited violence, just as they did during the civil war. The last provincial council elections were held on the same day as the first round of the presidential election in April 2014. These elections were also marred by attacks from the Taliban and affiliated groups. UNAMA documented 27 civilian deaths and 128 injuries on the day of the elections, including among Independent Election Commission (IEC) staff, women, and children.[44] The majority of civilian casualties resulted from violent clashes and bomb attacks by antigovernment groups targeting IEC convoys, polling stations, candidates, and supporters. The final results from the provincial council elections were released in October 2016, six months after the elections.[45] The adjudication of provincial election complaints was deferred due to the controversy around the presidential runoff election, which consequently postponed the release of the final results.

Local conflict over resources and community rights

Disputes over natural resources such as land, water, forests, minerals, and opium and cannabis often exacerbate existing political, ethnic, sectarian, and regional divisions in Afghanistan. Widespread poverty and a scarcity of productive land generate intense competition for access to and management of land and natural resources among people and communities, which often leads to intracommunal and intercommunal conflict. For example, disputes over access to pastoral land have been at the heart of interethnic tensions between the Shia Hazaras and the Sunni Kuchis for over a century, tensions that have frequently flared into violence.[46] According to a 2008 Oxfam report, land was a major cause of local disputes, accounting

70%

civilian casualties from suicide and complex attacks are in Kabul

for nearly 30 percent of all cases.[47] The Asia Foundation's 2016 *Survey of the Afghan People* found that land disputes were the most common type of disputes brought to dispute-resolution institutions by respondents.[48]

Population growth, urbanization, returning refugees/displaced people, and rising property values are among the critical factors driving pervasive land conflicts in the country.[49] The country has a mix of formal and traditional institutions governing the land-tenure system. The government attempted to address land rights by reformalizing land settlement and administration through the 2007 Land Policy and the 2008 Law on Managing Land Affairs, but land governance remained ambiguous, complex, and lacking in transparency.[50] Despite the government's effort to modernize the land-management system, most land ownership and use is still based on informal or customary arrangements that have evolved over time.

Disputes over access to and allocation of water are the second-most commonly cited cause of conflict after land.[51] Land and water issues are intimately related, as agriculture absorbs 95 percent of the water used in the country.[52] Inequitable distribution of water remains a source of great tension between communities that is often an underlying factor in other conflicts labeled as ethnic or sectarian in nature. To generate hydroelectricity and capture more water, the government has proposed 31 major infrastructure projects across the country, including the construction of 15 storage dams.[53] These projects have generated significant tensions among different groups, as well as with neighboring countries such as Iran, India, and Turkmenistan.

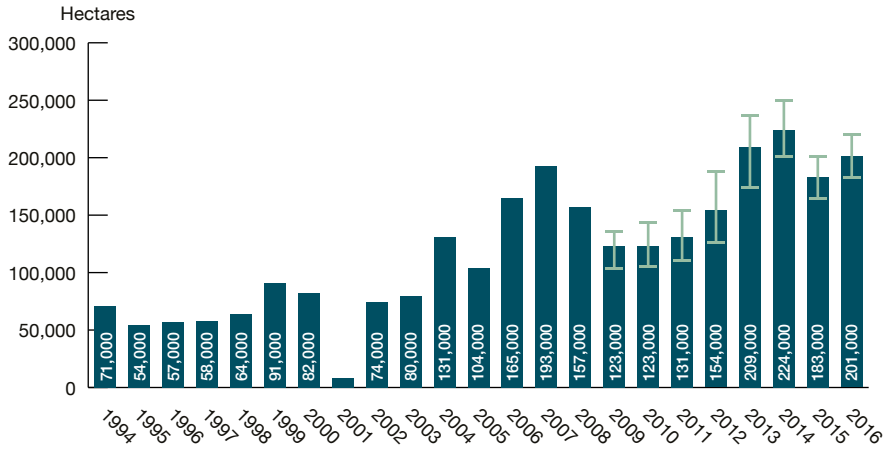


Figure 3. Opium cultivation in Afghanistan (1994–2016)
Source: UNODC (2016)[54]

Opium cultivation and trade are closely linked to insurgencies and terrorist activities, contributing to the high level of violence in the country. Afghanistan is the world's largest exporter of opium and a major producer of cannabis. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) reported that Afghanistan's total area under opium poppy cultivation reached a peak of 224,000 hectares in 2014 (figure 3).[55] Potential opium production was estimated at 4,800 tons in 2016, an increase of 43 percent from 3,300 tons in 2015.[56] The Taliban and other insurgent groups earn revenue to support their operations through taxation of poppy farmers, providing protection for the opium trade, and heroin production.[57] With a lack of economic incentives such as markets for other crops, current opium eradication efforts are doomed to failure.[58] The government's eradication efforts have been slow and risky due to poor security in the major opium-growing areas, which are typically insurgent strongholds.

Urban crime and violence

Kabul, Afghanistan's most populous city with 3.8 million people (2016–2017 estimate),[59] is a high-profile target for large-scale insurgent attacks. Antigovernment groups continue to conduct suicide and complex attacks against civilian and noncivilian targets in densely populated areas. In 2016, UNAMA recorded the second-highest number of civilian casualties (534 deaths and 1,814 injuries), an increase of 34 percent compared to 2015, in the central region that includes Kabul.[60] In particular, 70 percent of all civilian casualties from suicide and complex attacks took place in Kabul.[61] According to The Asia Foundation's 2016 survey, the level of crime and violence experienced by respondents in the central region went up by six points between 2006 and 2016.[62]

Homicide, assaults, thefts, kidnapping, and terrorist threats are rampant and deadly nationwide. While no regional crime statistics are available, the overall number of criminal incidents in the country rose from 1,107 in 2009 to 1,795 in 2014, an increase of 62 percent over seven years. However, this may reflect improvements in reporting as much as an actual increase in criminal activity. Data from the Ministry of Interior Affairs indicated that the rate of intentional homicide (excluding battle deaths) increased from 4.0 per 100,000 people in 2009 to 6.5 per 100,000 people in 2012.[63]

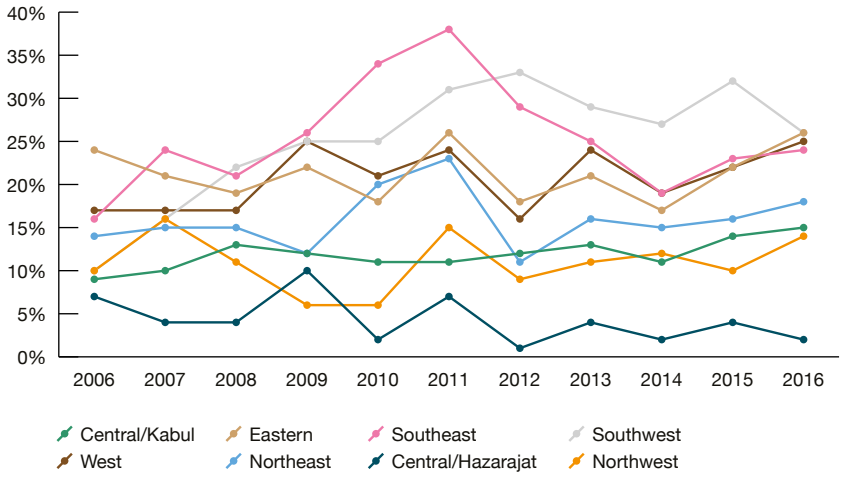


Figure 4. Level of crime or violence experienced by respondents, by region (2006–2016)
Source: The Asia Foundation

90%+

of women believe husbands are justified in using violence against their wives

Domestic and gender-based violence

The prevalence of violence against women continues to be a serious concern in the country. Physical, psychological, and sexual violence, forced marriage, and social exclusion of women are embedded in traditional norms and practices. The government recorded a total of 5,720 cases of violence against women, registered by the Ministry of Women's Affairs, Ministry of Interior, and Attorney General's Office, between March 2014 and March 2015, an increase of 27 percent over three years (figure 5).[64] In 2014–2015, battery and laceration were the most common forms of violence reported by women (33.6 percent), followed by domestic violence (10.8 percent) and murder (6.5 percent).[65]

Many Afghan women and girls suffer from domestic violence in their lifetime. The 2008 Global Rights survey found that 87 percent of Afghan women reported experiencing at least one form of domestic violence, and over 60 percent experienced multiple forms of violence.[66] The most common form of domestic violence experienced by women was psychological violence (74 percent), followed by forced marriage (59 percent), physical violence (52 percent), and sexual violence (17 percent).[67] While a forced, polygamous, or child marriage is common in the country due to traditional practices, the survey also found that married girls aged 10–14 were particularly vulnerable to all forms of domestic violence. In particular, one in three girls in this age group experienced sexual violence.[68] Another study conducted by the Central Statistics Organization (CSO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) revealed that over 90 percent of Afghan women believed a husband was justified in using physical violence against his wife for any reason.[69]

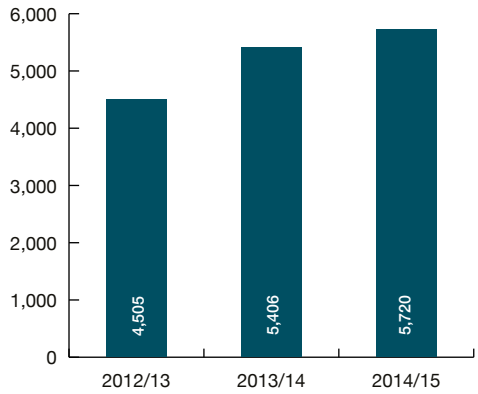


Figure 5. Registered cases of violence against women (2012–2015)
Source: Ministry of Women's Affairs[70]

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1971

1971
War of independence from Pakistan. Bangladeshi authorities claim as many as 3 million deaths.

1975
Sheik Mujibur Rahman, founding president of Bangladesh, and most of his family are assassinated in a military coup.

1976
The indigenous, mostly Buddhist *Jumma* of the Chittagong Hill Tracts launch armed struggle against Bengali settlers and security forces.

1981
Former president Ziaur Rahman, of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), is assassinated in a military coup.

1991
End of military dictatorship and return to parliamentary democracy.

1997
Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord is signed, but violence and Bengali settlement continue. There are 280,000 internally displaced people in CHT by January 2015.

2001
Postelection violence forces nearly 200,000 Hindus to flee or emigrate to India.

2004
Islamist group Huji-B attacks Awami League (AL) rally, killing 24 and injuring 200, including former prime minister Sheikh Hasina.

2001
Catholic church bombing kills nine and injures 20. Religious minorities are increasingly targeted by violent Islamist groups.

2007
Military coup. Over 52,000 are arrested and 29 killed by law enforcement in the first month of the ensuing state of emergency.

2013
BNP boycotts tenth parliamentary elections, leading to armed violence, attacks on minorities, and hundreds of dead and injured.

2008
Ninth parliamentary elections, after nearly two years of military-backed caretaker government.

2013
Communal attacks on Hindu houses and shops follow death sentence for Islamist war criminal.

2014
Islamist party leader Abdul Quader Mollah executed for crimes during war of independence. Large-scale protests, violence, and bombings ensue.

2013
First murders of secular bloggers by Islamic extremist group Ansarullah Bangla Team.

2015
BNP protest against AL government leads to violence. At least 112 die, including 40 in police custody.

2015
Islamic State (IS) affiliate claims credit for first bombing of a Shiite site in Bangladesh.

2016
AL clamps down on opposition, arresting thousands of activists and Islamists and sentencing 15 opposition lawmakers to life in prison.

2016
IS affiliate attacks Holey Bakery café in Dhaka. Twenty-eight die, including 20 hostages.

2017
Parliament passes the Child Marriage Restraint Act that permits girls under 18 to be married in special cases.

2017

Bangladesh

At a glance

National civil war
Absent

Communal/ideological conflict
Medium

National political conflict
High

Local political and electoral conflict
High

Transnational terrorism
Medium

Local resource conflict
Medium

Separatism and autonomy
Low

Urban crime and violence
Low

** Rankings are based on the last 15 years and are relative to other Asian countries.*

Overview

Bangladesh has faced rising political violence and terrorist attacks in recent years. The national parliamentary elections in 2014 highlighted the intense political tension between the ruling and opposition parties, resulting in over 500 deaths from violent clashes. Opposition protests and the government's heavy-handed response further exacerbated the situation. Political rivalry at the national level also affected the local political landscape after the government amended the law allowing registered political parties to nominate candidates in local government elections. Even though local elections had been peaceful compared to national elections in the past, deadly violence between political opponents erupted, killing over 140 people between March and June 2016. The polarized political climate and flawed democratic process appear to be feeding violent Islamist extremism. Transnational terrorist organizations, such as Islamic State and al-Qaeda, are gaining ground utilizing local extremist groups. Bangladesh had over 450 terrorist attacks in 2015 alone. In July 2016, Dhaka had one of its deadliest terrorist attacks, which took the lives of 28 people. Foreigners, secular journalists and bloggers, and religious minorities have been the primary targets of terrorist attacks in the country. Against this political backdrop, communal violence has escalated, and religious minorities continue to be persecuted, while the government is unable or unwilling to address the underlying causes.

Bangladesh

National level

National civil war

There has been no civil war in Bangladesh since its independence from Pakistan in 1971. During the Bangladesh Liberation War, widespread atrocities were committed, mainly against the Bengali population of East Pakistan. Bangladeshi authorities claim that as many as 3 million people died, although some independent researchers have estimated a lower toll.[1]

National political conflict

Political violence is a major feature of the Bangladeshi political landscape. Since the revival of the parliamentary system in 1991, tensions between the Awami League (AL) and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) have often led to violence.[2] The parties are bitter rivals, and each tries to undermine the other when it is in power. Instead of debating issues in the parliament, opposition parties take matters to the streets, leading to violent clashes with supporters of the ruling party. Political violence intensified during the BNP-led coalition government from 2001 to 2006, taking 2,722 lives. The antigovernment movement led by the AL was the biggest instigator of violence (figure 1).

The military has also played a large role. The country underwent several coups d'état that ended in massacres of political leaders and their families, including assassinations of two heads of state: Sheik Mujibur Rahman (the first president and Prime Minister Sheik Hasina's father) in 1975; and Ziaur Rahman (former president and BNP leader Khaleda Zia's late husband) in 1981. The latest military coup took place in January 2007, when a state of emergency was declared following widespread political unrest prior to the general election. In the first month of the country's state of emergency, 29 people were killed by law enforcement agencies, and over 52,000 were arrested,[3] including majority party leaders Sheik Hasina and Khaleda Zia and some of their senior staff. After nearly two years of the military-backed caretaker government, the ninth national parliamentary elections were held in December 2008.

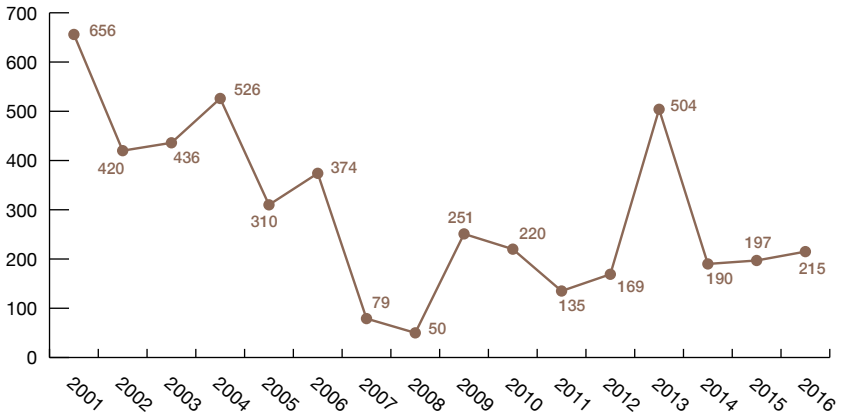

Figure 1. Fatality estimates from political violence in Bangladesh (2001–2016)
Source: Prepared based on political violence statistics provided by Odhikar[4]

USD 2.2 billion

net loss due to political turmoil in the first quarter of 2015

Political violence escalated again before, during, and after the tenth national parliamentary elections, which took place in January 2014. Months of violence left hundreds dead and injured across the country. Ain o Salish Kendra, a human rights organization based in Dhaka, reported over 500 deaths in 2013[5] and 62 deaths in the month of January 2014.[6] The violence began with a disagreement between the AL government and BNP-led opposition groups about the appropriate mechanism for free and fair elections. The BNP and other opposition parties demanded the reinstatement of the neutral caretaker government system to oversee the elections.[7] Calling for an election boycott, members of the BNP and opposition groups staged blockades and demonstrations starting in October 2013. In many incidents, opposition groups used petrol bombs and homemade grenades and set off improvised grenades in busy streets without warning. In some cases, opposition groups recruited street children to carry out the attacks. Attacks on property and public transportation scared ordinary citizens, who suffered from a series of national strikes and blockades. Religious and ethnic minority groups, particularly Hindus, were targets for vandalism and intimidation.

Tensions rose further over the trial of Islamist war criminals and debates about whether political Islam should be granted legal space in the country's democratic system. In December 2014, the Jamaat-e-Islami party (JI), the most influential Islamic party in Bangladesh, and its student organization, Islami Chhatra Shibir, staged large-scale protests around the country, marked by extensive violence including the use of crude bombs, after the execution of a senior JI leader, Abdul Quader Mollah, for crimes committed during Bangladesh's independence war in 1971. Violence surrounding the war crime trials also reflected intense debates over the role of political Islam in the country. The JI, the biggest ally of the BNP, was disqualified from participating in the 2014 elections when the High Court ruled that the party's charter did not conform to the secular constitution and cancelled its registration with the Election Commission.

On election day, and the days that preceded it, opposition activists targeted electoral officials and attacked schools and other buildings serving as polling stations. According to Human Rights Watch, attackers killed three election officials and injured 330 other officials and law enforcement agents on election day.[8] The Election Commission suspended voting in 597 of 18,000 polling stations due to violence.[9] A total of 553 schools and educational institutions were damaged.[10] The AL won nearly 80 percent of the parliamentary seats. Voter turnout was a record low 40 percent because of the boycott and violence.

5 bloggers killed and 3 injured in 2015

The AL government responded to the violence by deploying security forces to launch a brutal crackdown on opposition groups, unlawfully killing dozens of leaders and activists and carrying out widespread, arbitrary arrests. Human Rights Watch documented the killing of 11 opposition leaders and activists by security forces before, during, and after the 2014 elections.[11] Thousands of opposition party members and activists were arrested. The impunity enjoyed by Bangladesh's law enforcement agencies fueled widespread violations.

Following the 2014 elections, Bangladesh continued to experience political unrest as the ruling AL resisted calls for fresh elections. Violent clashes and protests against the government by the BNP and its allies ebbed and flowed. In January 2015, the anniversary of the tenth national parliamentary elections, large-scale protests demanding that Prime Minister Hasina's government step down escalated into a violent standoff between the opposition and government supporters. At least 36 people were killed. AL ignored the demands of the protestors and branded BNP a terrorist organization. BNP head Khaleda Zia was confined inside her office and called for a nationwide blockade. In the first two months of 2015, arsonists attacked nearly 1,200 vehicles, and at least 112 people died, 40 of whom, mostly opposition activists, were killed while in the custody of law enforcement agencies.[12] The World Bank estimated a net loss of USD 2.2 billion in the first quarter of 2015 due to the political turmoil.[13]

The ruling party remained in power by clamping down on opponents. Many opposition party leaders and members were imprisoned or faced serious charges that could bar them from office. For instance, 15 BNP and JI lawmakers were given life sentences over their alleged involvement in the violent protests of 2013, and over 100 BNP members were indicted for their participation in the 2015 BNP-led blockade.[14] In June 2016, Bangladeshi police arrested 2,100 leaders and activists from the opposition BNP as part of a crackdown on over 11,000 suspected Islamic extremists for religious violence.[15]

The bitter political conflict between the AL and the BNP has created space for Islamist parties such as the JI to expand their power bases. Some analysts believe that Islamists are increasingly influential due to their better organization and party discipline. Support for them has increased as people have lost confidence in the current political system due to widespread corruption, deteriorating law and order, and a weak judicial system. The AL has continued to execute opposition leaders for alleged war crimes during the Liberation War of 1971: the general secretary of JI, Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mujahid, and a top aide to Khaleda Zia, Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury, were executed in November 2015. The following year, a senior leader of JI, Mir Quasem Al, was also executed. Many argue that the rulings have been flawed, with arbitrary limitations on witnesses and documents and bias in favor of the prosecution.[16]

Transnational terrorism

Some violent Islamist groups have come into existence under political patronage, such as Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami Bangladesh (HuJI-B) and Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB). HuJI-B is backed by the Taliban and was officially banned by the government in 2005. JMB has an extensive network and also follows the Taliban's ideals. The government initially cracked down on these groups after a series of terrorist attacks in the mid 2000s. In August 2004, HuJI-B was accused of carrying out a deadly attack at a public rally of the Awami League that killed 24 people and injured 200.[17] The following year, JMB conducted synchronized explosions in 63 of the 64 districts of the country, targeting government buildings, major hotels, and Dhaka International Airport, killing two and injuring 50.[18] The government has used force and legal means to combat terrorism, but these groups have continued to exist even after many of their key leaders have been imprisoned or executed.

According to the 2016 Global Terrorism Index of the Institute for Economics and Peace, Bangladesh was ranked 22nd out of 163 countries in terrorist activities and attacks in 2015. The report noted that Bangladesh had 459 terrorist attacks in 2015, which resulted in 75 deaths.[19] Even though, historically, terrorism in Bangladesh has been carried out by local groups such as HuJI-B and JMB, recent terrorist violence has been linked to transnational terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) and the Islamic State (IS).[20] These transnational groups are increasing their capabilities in the country by leveraging local terrorist groups. A local Islamic extremist group, Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT; also known as Ansar al Islam, AI), that follows AQIS, was responsible for attacks and the murders of secular bloggers from 2013 to 2015. In 2015 alone, ABT killed five bloggers and seriously injured three.[21] These attacks have stoked public outrage, underscored the problem of rising violent extremism, and shown the government's inability to protect individuals at risk. ABT's links to the student wing of the JI have also been used to justify the government's crackdown against its political opponents.

The emergence of the IS in Bangladesh is relatively recent. The group carried out a series of attacks, targeting foreigners and religious minorities, through the local Islamic organization, JMB, which pledged its allegiance to the IS. In 2015, the IS claimed to be responsible for murdering two foreigners and detonating several bombs, one at a main Shiite site, killing one and wounding 80. This was the first time Shiites were targeted in Bangladesh.[22] On July 1, 2016, the group attacked the Holey Artisan Bakery café in Dhaka, resulting in 28 deaths, including 20 hostages (mostly foreigners), two security forces personnel, and six militants.[23] The government denies the growing presence of IS in the country.

Subnational level

Separatism and autonomy

The Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) in southeastern Bangladesh have been the site of an armed conflict between Bangladesh armed forces and the Shanti Bahini, a military arm of the United People's Party of the Chittagong Hill Tracts (Parbattya Chattagram Janashonghoti Samity, PCJSS). Between 1976 and 1997, indigenous peoples struggled violently for greater autonomy in the CHT. The tribal groups of the CHT, collectively known as the Jumma people, make up around 53 percent of the population in the CHT as estimated by the national census of 2011.[24] They previously had a special status of limited self-government under British colonial rule. Pakistan withdrew this status and initiated a process of modernization and settlement of the area by outsiders, precipitating the political and economic marginalization of the Jumma. After Bangladesh's independence from Pakistan, tribal leaders demanded greater autonomy and protection of traditional lands. The government rejected their demands, however, and adopted a constitution that focused on a distinctive Bengali identity, language, and culture.

In addition, the government started a program to send Bengali settlers to the CHT. In response, indigenous peoples formed the PCJSS to unite the different tribal groups of the CHT and created the Shanti Bahini as their military arm.

The magnitude of the conflict is difficult to determine. Uppsala University's Conflict Data Program estimates between 502 and 574 people were killed during the insurgency.[25] Of those, about 230 were civilians, primarily Bengali settlers, killed by the Shanti Bahini. The United Nations and human rights organizations have reported widespread and systematic human rights violations, primarily perpetrated by Bangladesh security forces, including unlawful killings, detention without trial, torture, rape, destruction of houses and property, and forcible occupation of traditional lands.[26] During the conflict, approximately 70,000 Jumma fled to India, and around 100,000 were internally displaced.[27] Large areas of traditional land vacated by the Jumma have been occupied by Bengali settlers who were encouraged by the government to migrate to the CHT under army protection as part of a counterinsurgency strategy.

The AL-led government and the PCJSS signed the Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord in 1997, granting limited autonomy to the elected council of the three hill districts. The Accord

promised reforms to promote autonomy and the cultural, economic, social, civil, and political rights of Jumma people. In addition, it promised the removal of all temporary army camps in the CHT and was to give administrative responsibility in a range of areas—including land management—to the three Hill District councils. Jumma refugees returning from India, and internally displaced people who had fled to other parts of Bangladesh or to deep forests in the CHT, were to be rehabilitated through the provision of land, housing, and rations. A land commission was promised to investigate and resolve land disputes.

Since the Peace Accord, tensions over land rights between the Jumma people and Bengali settlers have grown, as Bengali settlers continue to flow into the CHT, leading to an ongoing cycle of violence. The media frequently reports clashes in which Jumma and Bengali settlers have been killed and injured and homes destroyed. For example, Amnesty International reports that in February 2010, a Jumma villager in the Sajek area was killed when Bengali settlers attacked Jumma people and burned their houses following a protest against Bengali settlers building huts next to Jumma settlements.[28] On December 16, 2014, the 43rd anniversary of Bangladesh's independence, a Buddhist temple was vandalized, and more than 50 indigenous homes were burned down.[29] Ongoing violence has displaced both Jumma and Bengali settlers, and has prevented them from returning to their homes. As of January 2015, the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) estimates that there were 280,000 displaced people in the southeastern CHT.[30]

The government has not fully implemented the terms of the Peace Accord, such as removing all temporary military camps in the CHT and resolving land disputes caused by the transmigration program. Due to ongoing violence between Jumma and Bengali settlers, the Bangladesh government continues to maintain a heavy military presence to preserve law and order in the CHT. Jumma view the lack of action as government support for Bengali settlers and the continued invasion of their traditional land. The government agreed to amend the CHT Land Dispute Resolution Commission Act 2001 in July 2013. The amendment distributes decision-making authority among members of the commission instead of placing it solely in the hands of the chairman. It also gives indigenous people priority in the recruitment of staff for the land commission. In August 2016, the CHT Land Dispute Resolution Commission Act 2016 was finally approved by the cabinet to amend the 2001 Act. Due to the prolonged amendment process, the CHT Land Dispute Resolution Commission has been dysfunctional and has failed to resolve any land disputes since its establishment.[31] A government task force established under the Peace Accord estimates that over 90,000 Jumma families remain without access to their traditional land.[32]

Violence against indigenous women committed by settlers and the military is also widespread in the CHT, even though cases are often not reported. Kapaeeng Foundation, a local human rights organization working on indigenous issues in Bangladesh, reported that 290 women and girls from the CHT were victims of gender-based violence between 2007 and 2014.[33] The Home Ministry reported that not a single perpetrator was convicted, even though 215 cases of violence against women were recorded between January 2010 and December 2011.[34] This illustrates the high level of impunity for sexual and gender-based violence against indigenous women and girls in the CHT.

Large-scale communal and ideological conflicts

Religious and ethnic minorities in the country suffer from frequent threats, assaults, torture, and displacement. While the marginalization of and discrimination against religious minorities goes back to colonialism and the legacy of Partition, violence against them has escalated due to recent political developments and the rise of violent Islamist organizations.[35] Attacks against religious minorities often lead to injuries and involve grabbing and looting of properties and places of worship. Deaths were previously rare: only six fatalities were recorded by Odhikar between 2007 and 2015 (table 1).[36]

Table 1. Repression against religious minorities in Bangladesh (2007–2015)

Year	Killed	Injured	Assaulted	Arrested	Abducted	Grabbing		Attack		Idols damaged	Looted	Miscellaneous	Rape
						Land	House	Property	Temple				
2015	0	102	0	0	0	2	14	21	17	121	0	1	0
2014	1	78	2	0	0	14	0	371	32	193	1	0	0
2013	0	118	0	0	0	4	0	441	125	322	2	13	1
2012	0	69	2	0	0	0	1	81	46	0	24	0	1
2011	0	107	2	0	0	6	2	21	25	0	13	4	3
2010	2	244	0	0	0	9	1	20	23	0	4	6	6
2009	1	502	5	0	1	12	4	5	28	0	4	6	5
2008	1	90	1	0	0	7	0	2	24	0	6	0	0
2007	1	91	4	2	6	7	5	4	14	0	0	0	0
Total	**6**	**1,401**	**16**	**2**	**7**	**61**	**27**	**966**	**334**	**636**	**54**	**30**	**16**

Source: Odhikar[37]

Major political events, such as national elections, have often provoked communal violence. Hindus are often threatened and attacked, because the opposition sees them as the electoral base of the AL. Postelection violence in 2001 forced almost 200,000 Hindus to flee to safer areas or migrate to India.[38] Leading up to and following the 2014 elections, many Hindu homes, businesses, and temples were vandalized, looted, and burned down. In addition, Hindus have been targeted in connection with the trial and execution of Islamist war criminals. For instance, the death sentence judgment of Delwar Hossain Sayeedi, the former politician of the JI, triggered widespread violence across the country in 2013. Amnesty International reports that at least 300 Hindu homes and shops and more than 60 Hindu temples were damaged or destroyed between February and April 2013.[39]

Other religious and ethnic minority groups also face persecution. Buddhists, who represent less than one percent of the population, experience discrimination and violence due to ongoing tensions over land, particularly in the CHT (see the section on separatism and autonomy). Christians are increasingly targeted by violent Islamist groups. One major attack against Christians took place on June 3, 2001, when a bomb exploded in a Catholic church in south Bangladesh, resulting in at least nine deaths and 20 injuries.[40] In 2015, a number of priests received death threats, and some were nearly killed.[41] While the majority of the Muslim population in Bangladesh is Sunni, other Islamic denominations and sects are subject to discrimination. Members of the Ahmadiyya community, numbering 100,000 in Bangladesh, have faced frequent hostility from local Islamist organizations since the early 1990s. As of 2015, Shia shrines have also been targeted by violent Islamist groups. Likewise, violence against indigenous communities is widespread across the country. The Kapaeeng Foundation documented at least 13 extrajudicial killings and the torture and physical assault of 134 indigenous individuals in 2015.[42]

In general, the police have done little to prevent this violence, and authorities have failed to bring perpetrators to justice. Deteriorating political and security conditions and a culture of impunity have significantly increased the vulnerability of religious minorities and indigenous people in the country.

Local political conflict and electoral violence

Local electoral violence is characterized by retaliatory clashes between the ruling party and opposition parties. Violence is increasingly used to reduce political participation and as a strategy in political competition, even at the local level. After the national government amended the Local Government Act to allow political parties to contest local government elections, local elections were held for the first time on party lines in 234 municipalities on December 30, 2015. The elections were marked by widespread violence, irregularities, and vote rigging. Activists and supporters of the ruling-party (AL) candidates reportedly committed acts of intimidation and violence against the candidates and supporters of the opposition BNP and other political parties. Odhikar documented six deaths and nearly 1,300 injuries in the run-up to and aftermath of the municipal elections.[43] The local political climate continued to be volatile throughout 2016. The elections for Union Parishad, the lowest tier of local government institutions, which were held in phases from March to June 2016, resulted in 143 deaths and many injuries due to violent confrontations between political opponents.[44] Human rights organizations believe that the Election Commission has failed to deliver fair and peaceful elections and to prevent illegitimate activities by the government.

Local conflict over resources and community rights

See the separatism and autonomy section on local conflict over indigenous rights in the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

Urban crime and violence

As Bangladesh has experienced rapid urbanization in metropolitan areas, levels of urban crime and violence have also risen. Dhaka, the capital, with a population of over 7 million people, had the highest number of reported crimes at 19,727 in 2015, followed by Chittagong at 4,862. Theft is the most common form of crime reported in Dhaka, followed by violence against women and children (figure 2). While the incidence of dacoity,[45]

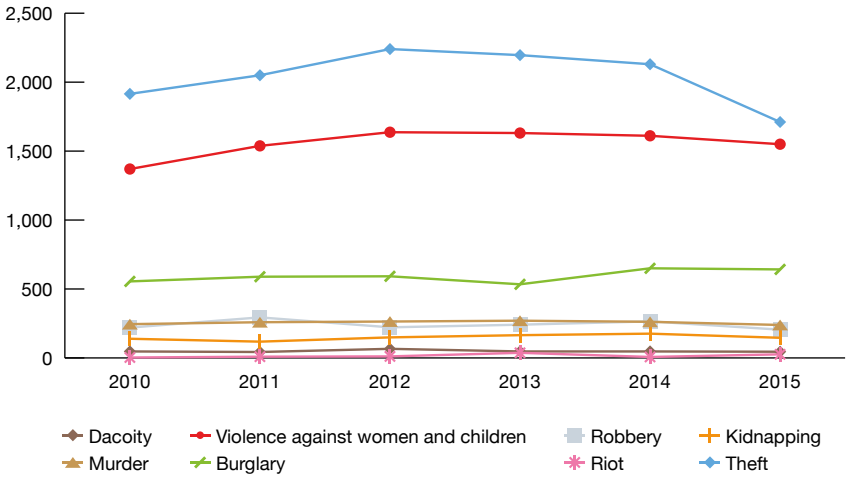

Figure 2. Dhaka's crime statistics (2010–2015)
Source: Prepared based on statistics provided by the Bangladesh Police[46]

robbery, murder, violence against women and children, and theft fell from 2010 to 2015, riots, kidnapping, and burglary increased. The largest proportional increase was in riot-related crimes, which rose from three to 26 cases between 2010 and 2015. An alarming trend is the growth in police seizures of illegal explosives, which jumped from 82 incidents in 2010 to 195 in 2015. The national homicide rate remains low at 2.6 per 100,000 people.

Domestic and gender-based violence

Violence against women and girls is common in Bangladesh. Women and girls face various forms of gender-based violence, including domestic violence, physical and psychological abuse, dowry-related violence, rape, and early marriage. Deeply rooted patriarchal social norms and traditional practices and a weak and corrupt criminal justice system enable such violence. The Bangladesh police recorded over 21,000 cases of violence against women and children in 2015, making it the most prevalent violent crime in Bangladesh.[47]

Domestic violence is the most pervasive form of violence against women and girls in Bangladesh, and it is significantly underreported. The Report on Violence Against Women Survey 2015, carried out by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, revealed that almost three-quarters of women who had ever been married had experienced violence at the hands of a spouse.[48] The most common form of intimate partner violence was controlling behavior (55.4 percent), followed by physical violence (49.6 percent). Nearly one-third had experienced sexual violence by their spouse. Three in every five married women had experienced a combination of physical, sexual, and emotional violence. The survey also found that rates of intimate partner violence were higher in rural areas (51.8 percent) than in urban areas (48.5 percent). The majority of women (72.7 percent) did not disclose their experience of intimate partner violence to anyone, a rate that was similar in rural and urban areas.

Dowry-related violence is a root cause of domestic violence, despite the Dowry Prohibition Act of 1980. Dowry demands are usually settled at the time of marriage; however, some men and their families continue to make dowry demands throughout the marriage. Women who are

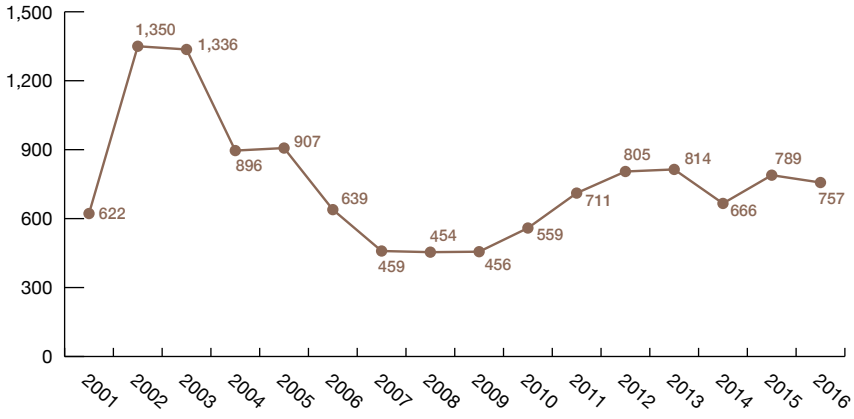

Figure 3. Rape cases in Bangladesh (2001–2016)
Source: Prepared based on data provided by Odhikar[49]

unable to satisfy those demands suffer threats of abandonment, beatings, cigarette burns, deprivation of food and medicine, acid attacks, and death. In 2016, Odhikar reported 206 cases of such violence against married women,[50] with 107 women killed, 94 physically abused, and five committing suicide. Documented cases of dowry-related violence have declined significantly over the years, however, falling from 822 in 2012 to 206 in 2016.

Early marriage remains prevalent. Until recently, the legal age of marriage for women was 18, but a large proportion of women are married before reaching this age. The Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey (BDHS) indicates that the proportion of women marrying in their early teens has declined. The 2014 BDHS found that 59 percent of women aged 20–24 got married before the age of 18, a decrease from 65 percent in 2011.[51] The median age at first marriage among women aged 20–49 increased from 14.4 years in 1993–94 to 16.1 years in 2014. Childbearing also begins early in Bangladesh, with almost half of women aged 25–49 having given birth by the age of 18. Although early marriage is declining, Bangladesh recently took a step backwards in efforts to end child marriage. Despite criticisms from domestic and international human rights and women's organizations, the parliament passed the Child Marriage Restraint Act in February 2017, permitting girls younger than the age of 18 to be married in special cases.[52]

Rape is one of the most common forms of violence against women and girls in Bangladesh, but victims rarely seek legal redress, due to social stigma. There were 757 reported cases of rape in 2016, 212 of them gang rapes, and more than two-thirds involving children below the age of 18.[53] The number of reported rapes has begun to increase again since 2009 (figure 3).

3/4 of married women abused by their spouse

Notes

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1960

1960s
Communist Party opposition to the regime of Prince Sihanouk grows. An unfolding civil war will kill 250,000 Cambodians by 1975.

1970
Prince Sihanouk is ousted in a coup d'état by right-wing general Lon Nol.

1975
With support from Sihanouk, the Khmer Rouge defeat Lon Nol's army and seize power.

1975
Envisioning an agrarian communist utopia, the Khmer Rouge begin a genocide that will kill 1.2 to 2.8 million people in four years.

1979
Vietnam invades, ending the Khmer Rouge regime, but civil war with the Western- and China-backed Khmer Rouge coalition lasts for 20 years, killing over 86,000.

1998
The Khmer Rouge collapse, and armed conflict ends.

1998
Hun Sen's CPP wins national elections. Hun Sen will serve as prime minister continuously to the present day.

2013
The CPP narrowly wins elections amid widespread irregularities. The opposition CNRP rejects the results and boycotts parliament as protests break out, beginning a yearlong political crisis.

2014
Security forces open fire on antigovernment protesters and striking workers. The government bans public demonstrations.

2014
After further violent clashes, the CNRP ends its yearlong boycott of parliament in exchange for electoral reform.

2015
Amid deteriorating political conditions, an arrest warrant is issued for CNRP leader Sam Rainsy, who remains in self-imposed exile.

2017
A new law forces Rainsy to resign from the CNRP. The CNRP elects Kem Sokha as its new president who was subsequently arrrested, accused of treason.

2017

Cambodia

At a glance

National civil war
Absent

Communal/ideological conflict
Low

National political conflict
Medium

Local political and electoral conflict
Decreasing from medium to low but with potential to rise

Transnational terrorism
Absent

Local resource conflict
High

Separatism and autonomy
Absent

Urban crime and violence
Medium

** Rankings are based on the last 15 years and are relative to other Asian countries.*

Overview

Despite improved levels of development since the 1990s, Cambodia today is characterized by rising political tensions and deepening social divisions, a result of the historical legacy of past civil wars, the Khmer Rouge regime, and economic challenges in the globalized world. Following the 2013 National Assembly elections, six months of antigovernment protests took place. For a year, the opposition party boycotted parliament, claiming victory. Tensions between the ruling and opposition parties are again on the rise, as national elections approach in 2018. There are allegations that the government is stepping up its efforts to suppress the opposition, targeting its members and supporters as well as human rights defenders, social activists, and political commentators on the basis of their real or perceived political opposition to the government and its leader. Historically, attacks against ethnic Vietnamese living in Cambodia have been exacerbated by political conflict. The opposition party continues to use racially charged rhetoric against the ethnic Vietnamese as a populist strategy, which also aims to undermine the ruling party's legitimacy to hold power. Cambodia faces mounting labor and land conflicts as the country aims to increase exports and exploit its natural resources for economic development. The country lacks accurate statistics on crime, due to widespread corruption and people's mistrust of authorities. Cases of gender-based violence are common. A culture of impunity prevails due to weak rule of law, a dysfunctional judicial system, and a political system that is dependent on a monopoly of power within the executive. In a country dominated by a single party and still suffering from the traumas of genocide, citizens are understandably reluctant to constructively engage their government, but with a maturing "youth bulge" this may be changing.

Cambodia

National level

National civil war

Cambodia has experienced the turmoil of civil war, genocide, and prolonged conflict in recent decades. Cambodia's civil war (1967–1975) led to an estimated 250,000 deaths.[1] In the 1960s, several groups in the opposition Communist Party started to oppose Prince Sihanouk's regime, and the prince was ousted in 1970 in a coup d'état by right-wing military leaders. A new authoritarian leadership under General Lon Nol was backed by the United States and the Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam). Sihanouk and his followers joined forces with the Communist Party of Kampuchea, the Khmer Rouge, and attacked Lon Nol's army. In 1975, the Khmer Rouge won the civil war and gained power.

During the Khmer Rouge regime (1975–1979), Cambodia experienced one of the worst mass killings of the twentieth century. The Khmer Rouge leader, Pol Pot, envisioned an agrarian communist utopia, turning the country into an organization of farms with citizens as laborers. All civil rights and liberties were immediately suspended, leading to severe repression. The genocide began with ethnic and religious minorities such as Chinese, Vietnamese, Thais, Christians, and Muslims. Everyone was forced to leave the cities, including the sick, the elderly, and children. People who were too slow or refused to leave were killed on the spot. The Khmer Rouge also eliminated anyone who could threaten their rule, especially intellectuals, such as teachers, doctors, lawyers, monks, and members of opposition groups, because they had the intelligence to question authority and could possibly overthrow the regime. Estimates of fatalities during the Khmer Rouge regime vary, but between 1.2 and 2.8 million people were killed or died from starvation or disease between 1975 and 1979.[2] Today, former members of the Khmer Rouge are on trial for crimes against humanity.

The Khmer Rouge regime ended when Vietnam invaded Phnom Penh, triggering another civil war, of 20 years, between a new Cambodian government, backed by the Vietnamese army, and an antigovernment coalition led by the Khmer Rouge. The invasion was precipitated by a

1.2–2.8
million people
died under the Khmer Rouge regime

border conflict, from 1975 to 1977, between Democratic Kampuchea (the name of the Khmer Rouge-controlled state) and Vietnam. The Khmer Rouge started an armed resistance, forming an antigovernment alliance, the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea, with two noncommunist groups: the Khmer People's National Liberation Front (KPNLF), under the leadership of Son Sann, and the National United Front for an Independent, Neutral, Peaceful, and Cooperative Cambodia (FUNCINPEC), led by Sihanouk. Western countries and China supported the antigovernment alliance in an attempt to limit Soviet and Vietnamese influence in the region. Despite a 1991 peace agreement, the conflict continued until 1998. After the Cold War ended, Vietnam withdrew its forces from Cambodia, and foreign support to the warring parties decreased substantially. In 1998, the Khmer Rouge collapsed, and armed conflict came to an end. The conflict caused over 86,000 deaths between 1979 and 1998 (figure 1). As part of its strategy of guerrilla warfare, the Khmer Rouge targeted the civilian population, resulting in at least 661 deaths.[3]

National political conflict

National Assembly elections in 2013 marked two decades of peacebuilding in Cambodia since elections were held under UN supervision in 1993. The Cambodia People's Party (CPP), led by Prime Minister Hun Sen, has controlled the government since the 1998 National Assembly elections. As shown in figure 2, political violence at the time of national elections significantly declined during the second decade of peacebuilding. However, the political process continues to be volatile. The opposition believes that the ruling CPP will not give up power, and Cambodia arguably does not have the conditions in place for any peaceful transition of power. This exacerbates the already difficult and complicated postconflict reconciliation process.

The 2013 elections indicated the growing polarization of Cambodian politics. Despite a high number of election irregularities detected by domestic and international observers, the 2013 elections were held peacefully, with the ruling CPP claiming victory, winning 68 seats in the National Assembly, but coming within four percentage points of losing the popular vote. The

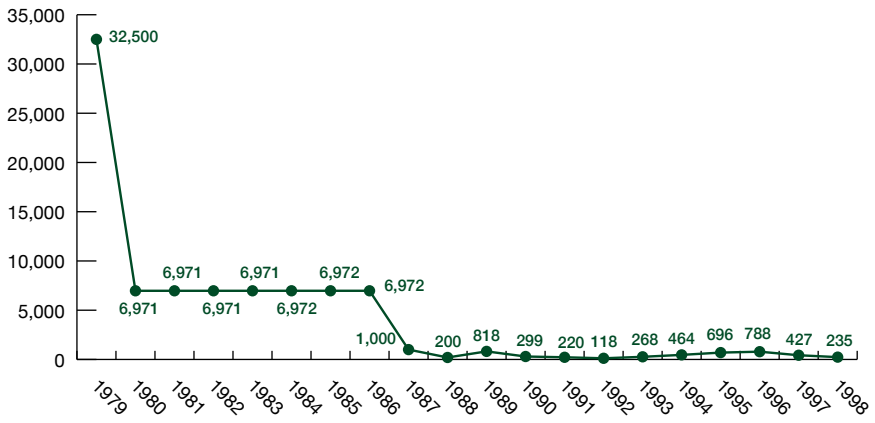

Figure 1. Estimate of battle deaths in Cambodia (1979–1998)

Source: Prepared based on estimates provided by "PRIO Battle Deaths v. 3.0"[4] for the period between 1979 and 1988 and "UCDP Battle-Related Deaths Dataset v. 5"[5] for the period between 1989 and 1998.

opposition Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP) rejected the election results, calling for an independent and credible investigation into allegations of widespread irregularities. The CNRP refused to participate in parliament after the elections and organized a series of protests. Even though most of the protests were carried out peacefully, some turned into violent clashes with government security forces, who used excessive force to suppress unrest, resulting in at least six deaths and many injures.[6] The Municipal Police reported 445 protests in Phnom Penh during the yearlong political crisis following the 2013 election, costing the country over USD 72 million in public and private property damage and loss of business investments.[7]

Multiple labor strikes and demonstrations to demand higher wages have also contributed to the antigovernment protests. For example, in early January 2014, strikes co-organized by garment workers and opposition supporters turned deadly, as security forces opened fire and killed five people.[8] Following the violent strikes, the Ministry of Interior announced an indefinite ban on public demonstrations, and Freedom Park, a legally designated area for demonstrations, was shut down in April. After a couple of violent clashes in July 2014, the CNRP finally agreed to end its yearlong boycott of parliament in exchange for electoral reform, ending the political crisis.

Since the truce, the political situation in Cambodia has deteriorated. As tensions between the ruling and opposition parties escalate ahead of the upcoming local and national elections scheduled for 2017 and 2018, respectively, politically motivated prosecutions of the opposition appear to have increased.[9] Amnesty International reported that at least 16 CNRP activists and officials remained in prison during 2016, while at least two CNRP members were held in pretrial detention and at least 13 had charges pending against them.[10] Those in prison included 14 CNRP members and activists who were convicted of leading or participating in a violent "insurrection" in July 2014, demanding the reopening of Freedom Park.[11] In November 2015, an arrest warrant was issued for the opposition president, Sam Rainsy, to belatedly enforce a judicial ruling from March 2013 that sentenced him to two years in jail.[12] Throughout 2016, he remained in self-imposed exile in France as he faced additional new charges against him. In February 2017, Rainsy resigned from the CNRP in response to the government's effort to pass a new law that could be used to dissolve political parties whose members are convicted of criminal offenses. Following Rainsy's resignation, the parliament amended the law on political parties to stop anyone convicted of an offence from running for office and to ban political party activities that were deemed to incite or promote "secession," or that could otherwise harm

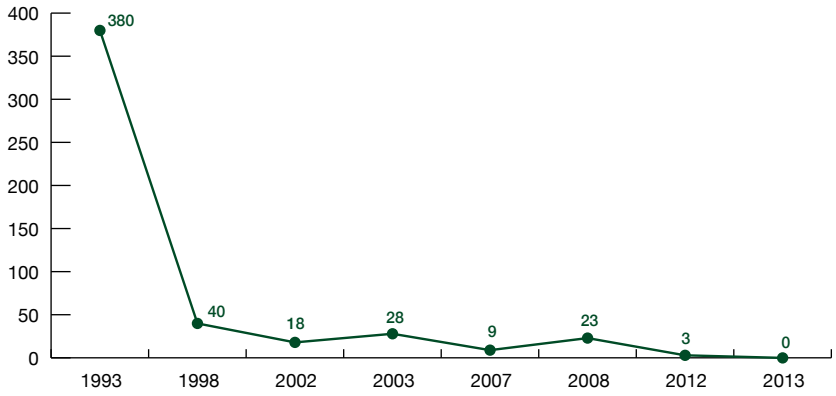

Figure 2. Killings of political activists and party members in Cambodia (1993–2013)
Source: COMFREL[13]

national security. The CNRP elected Kem Sokha, the former vice-chairman of the National Assembly,[14] as a new president. Sokha was also sentenced to five months in prison after refusing to appear as a witness in the prosecution of two CNRP members, but was pardoned by the king in December 2016. In September 2017, Cambodia's parliament voted to prosecute Sokha for treason, accusing him of plotting a plan with the United States to topple the government.[15] The US issued a statement doubting the Cambodian government's ability to organize credible national elections in 2018.[16]

The CPP-led government is also allegedly cracking down on human rights defenders, social activists, union workers, and antigovernment critics, who are deemed to undermine the government. Since 2015, a series of repressive laws has been enacted, including the Law on Associations and NGOs (LANGO), the Trade Union Law, and the Telecommunication Law. The LANGO allows the authorities to deny nongovernmental organizations registration and shut them down, while the Trade Union Law imposes new restrictions on the right to freedom of association. The Telecommunication Law gives authorities powers to order telecommunications operators to monitor and record telecommunications activities, and to imprison people for using telecommunications in a manner deemed to threaten "national security." Human rights defenders as well as civil society organizations are subjected to notorious judicial harassment. For example, four senior members of the Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association (ADHOC), and Ny Chakrya, a former ADHOC staffer and deputy secretary general of the National Election Committee, were detained in April 2016.[17] The case was related to advice and material support provided by ADHOC to a woman alleged to have had an extramarital relationship with Kem Sokha. Following their arrest, civil society launched a "Black Monday" campaign in May 2016 to call for their release. The authorities attempted to ban the protests and arrested and detained participants. In August 2017, the government closed the US-funded NGO, the National Democratic Institute (NDI), because of alleged failure to comply with legal duties. The organization was accused of planning to support the opposition in the 2018 election. NDI argued it was non-partisan and had fulfilled all legal obligations for registration.[18]

Transnational terrorism

There are no reports of transnational terrorists operating in Cambodia.

Subnational level

Separatism and autonomy

There is no conflict or violence related to separatism and autonomy at the subnational level in Cambodia.

Large-scale communal and ideological conflicts

Ethnic Vietnamese[19] are often targeted for harassment and communal violence in the country. Most of them live as fishermen in the Tonle Sap River and Lake region. They are vulnerable because the constitution grants political rights and civil liberties only to Khmer citizens. Even though many have lived in Cambodia for several generations, Cambodian authorities regard them as immigrants or foreign residents unless they have documents that can prove their Cambodian citizenship. The Minority Rights Organization (MIRO) reports that some ethnic Vietnamese are stateless, as they do not hold either Cambodian or Vietnamese identity cards.[20] They are often trapped in poverty and face widespread discrimination and exploitation,

including a lack of access to education, healthcare, the justice system, social security, housing, land ownership, and voting. The issue of Vietnamese marginalization is often ignored by the domestic and international communities.

The ethnic Vietnamese have been the target of xenophobic attacks by political parties since the 1990s. Attacks have been exacerbated by the political conflict in the past two decades, which has created further animosity and intolerance towards them. The opposition party has long been accused of using racially charged rhetoric against ethnic Vietnamese, and pledging to deport Vietnamese immigrants, to gain support from Khmer voters. On the other hand, the CPP-led government announced in August 2016 that it would offer a path to legal residency for the majority of 160,000 immigrants, mainly Vietnamese, living in the country without proper documentation.[21]

Anti-Vietnamese harassment and attacks occur more frequently when political tensions are high in the run-up to and the aftermath of elections. One of Cambodia's leading human rights organizations, the Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights (LICADHO), reports that election observers have witnessed crowds preventing ethnic Vietnamese from voting.[22] The United Nations special rapporteur on human rights also noted that ethnic Vietnamese were physically prevented from casting their votes in Sa Ang District, Troeuy Sla Commune, in Kandal Province.[23]

Local level

Local political conflict and electoral violence

The political atmosphere was less unstable during the 2012 commune elections than during elections in 2002 and 2007. COMFREL reported three cases of murder and 39 cases of threats or intimidation in 2012. The activists who were killed belonged to opposition political parties. The number of violent cases decreased significantly compared to previous commune elections (table 1). Commune elections held in June 2017, saw escalating political tensions between the ruling and opposition parties but little reported violence.

Table 1. Violent incidents during the commune elections in Cambodia (2002–2012)

	2002	2007	2012
Political activists killed	18	9	3
Incidents of serious violence, intimidation, and threats	138	127	39

Source: COMFREL[24]

Local conflict over resources and community rights

Conflict over land and forests has emerged in recent years as the government seeks to increase exports and exploit its natural resources for national development. Global demand for land, accompanied by rapid economic expansion, has made the poor more vulnerable by reducing the security of land tenure, despite the government's efforts to provide legal guarantees. Cambodia's economic land concession (ELC) scheme leases large plots of state land (up to 10,000 hectares) to private investors for industrial and agricultural

10,000+ families involved in land disputes in 2014

development. Over three million hectares of land, approximately 16.6 percent of the total land in the country, has been granted through ELCs to foreign and domestic companies and to wealthy political elites.[25] Communities living on the land are often forcibly evicted and involuntarily resettled or relocated, with little planning or respect for due process of law and basic human rights. Media often report villagers losing their land despite legal protections under the 2001 Land Law. Indigenous communities and ethnic minorities are particularly affected, losing access to their traditional lands and forests. Awarding private land titles rather than communal or collective ones is eroding traditional practices and beliefs.

Due to concerns raised by local and international communities about the negative impact of ELCs on communities and the environment, in May 2012 the government suspended granting new ELCs and called for a review of existing concessions. After the review, 24 concessions were revoked or reduced in size by a total of 202,210 hectares in 11 provinces.[26] However, economically and politically influential private investors continue to grab land from impoverished residents and cultivators. Villagers have become more confrontational, and security forces have increasingly used force against them. Evictions have sometimes been carried out with excessive force.

Ambiguous land policies and weak implementation of laws due to corruption and a lack of political will have increased land disputes between citizens and land concessionaires. The human rights organization LICADHO estimates that more than half a million people were affected by land conflict between January 2000 and March 2014.[27] These conflicts are widely distributed across the country and cases have increased sharply over the past 13 years. In 2014 alone, the organization recorded land disputes involving 10,625 families.[28] This is a substantial jump from 3,475 families in 2013 and 5,672 families in 2012.[29] Land disputes can lead to violent confrontations because the judicial system fails to provide fair and prompt resolutions. After the LANGO came into effect in August 2015, land activists and representatives of affected communities were arrested and imprisoned on fraudulent criminal charges.[30]

Urban crime and violence

Cambodia's population is still largely rural, with only around 20 percent of the population living in urban areas.[31] Urbanization has occurred very slowly, with an annual growth rate of 3.7 percent.[32] According to an Asian Development Bank survey of urban violence in public spaces, the most common form of crime and violence in Cambodia's capital, Phnom Penh, is robbery (32 percent), followed by the snatching of valuables (23 percent) and fighting (22 percent).[33] Robbery was significantly higher in Phnom Penh than in other

1 in 5 women experience intimate partner violence in their lifetime

provinces. Phnom Penh had an average rate of 33.2 cases per 100,000 people over seven years (1996–1999 and 2001, 2003, and 2005), but the rate declined to 14.8 per 100,000 in 2006.[34] In contrast, statistics show that homicide rates tend to be higher in many rural areas than in the capital.[35] Figures for Cambodia's homicide rates in urban areas are not readily available, while the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) reports the homicide rate in the country overall as 6.5 per 100,000 people in 2012.[36] Due to widespread corruption and mistrust of authorities, the United Nations International Crime Victim Survey (UNICVS) has found that most victims of crime in Cambodia do not report their cases to the police.[37]

Domestic and gender-based violence

Violence against women is culturally entrenched in Cambodian society. It is rooted in norms, practices, and attitudes that denigrate women's roles and contributions to society. Intimate partner violence (IPV) is widespread in the country but underreported. The National Survey on Women's Health and Life Experiences, conducted by the Ministry of Women's Affairs and the National Institute of Statistics, reports that approximately one in five women in Cambodia aged 15–64 has experienced physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner at least once in their lifetime.[38] Emotional abuse is the most common form of IPV (32 percent), followed by controlling behavior (30 percent).[39] The survey also reveals that women in rural areas are more likely to experience IPV than urban women.[40] Nearly 60 percent of women who have experienced physical or sexual violence condone wife beating under certain circumstances, such as unfaithfulness or neglecting the children.[41] A multicountry UN study also reports that Cambodian women hold more conservative or gender-inequitable views than men. Over two-thirds of women responded that they should tolerate violence in order to maintain the family, compared to 60 percent of men.[42] Deeply entrenched and unequal gender relations, underpinned by male domination and control, continue to shape the attitudes of many men and women towards the use and acceptance of violence.

Rape is a grave and widespread problem in Cambodia. Young women and children are particularly affected by this crime. In an investigation of over 1,000 rape cases between 2012 and 2015, the local human rights organization LICADHO found that over 70 percent of victims were under the age of 18, most of them female.[43] Perpetrators of rape also start very young. According

to the multicountry UN study, 15.8 percent of male respondents in Cambodia admitted to having committed rape before they were 15.[44] Another notable finding of the UN study was that gang rape is reported as the most common form of nonpartner rape in Cambodia. The true magnitude of rape is unknown, as only a fraction of cases are reported to the authorities. Amnesty International's in-depth study of sexual violence in Cambodia confirms that victims often choose not to report, or delay reporting, because of fear of the perpetrators, fear of being blamed by their parents and family, social stigma, and mistrust of the authorities and the legal system.[45] Even if they decide to report, rape cases are often dealt with in extralegal, out-of-court agreements between a victim and a perpetrator in which the rapist pays a sum of money to the victim and the police or the court staff take a cut.

Another major concern is human trafficking and the sexual exploitation of Cambodian men, women, and children. Poverty and lack of opportunities push vulnerable populations to seek employment overseas in nations such as Thailand, Malaysia, South Korea, Japan, Kuwait, and Qatar. Labor migration has risen dramatically in recent years: between 2004 and 2011, the number of registered Cambodian migrants increased by 272 percent.[46] Undocumented migrant workers in particular are subjected to sex trafficking, domestic servitude, debt bondage, or forced labor in the fishery and agricultural sector as well as in factories. Internal trafficking of women and children for sexual exploitation is also a serious concern. Cambodia is a destination country for women and children who are trafficked from neighboring countries, mainly from Vietnam. Children under the age of 15 are particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation, and the sale of virgin women and girls continues to be a problem in Cambodia. Poverty, lack of education, lack of legal protection, and low levels of awareness about risky labor migration leave many Cambodians vulnerable to human trafficking.

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1967

1967
Violent peasant uprising gives birth to Naxal/Maoist movement in West Bengal. Naxal guerillas are present in 20 states by 2014.

1971
Refugees from Bangladesh stir anti-Muslim militancy in Northeast India.

1977
Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front formed to fight for Kashmir's independence.

1983
Nellie massacre kills over 2,000 Bengali Muslims after Indira Ghandi gives Bengali immigrants the right to vote.

1984
Government operation against Sikh insurgents in the revered Golden Temple complex leads to at least 1,000 deaths. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi assassinated by Sikh bodyguards. At least 3,000 killed in anti-Sikh riots.

1987
Militant groups in Kashmir gain ground after perceived irregularities in state elections.

1990
Nine hundred Muslims killed in Bihar as BJP and other Hindu nationalist parties organize mass march across India.

1993
More than 900 die, mainly Muslims, as Hindu nationalists demolish 500-year-old Babri Masjid mosque in Uttar Pradesh. Revenge bombings kill 350.

2002
More than 1,000 die in Gujarat riots after Muslim militants set fire to train carrying Hindu pilgrims.

2003
Pakistan-backed Laskar-e-Taiba (LeT) kills 52 in Mumbai bombing.

2006
LeT bombings in Mumbai kill 200.

2008
LeT bombings in Mumbai kill 195.

2012
Ethnic clashes in Assam kill 77.

2012
Gang rape and death of a medical student on a New Delhi public bus triggers demonstrations across India.

2013
Indian penal code amended: acid attacks, sexual harassment, voyeurism, and stalking are now crimes.

2014
Attacks against Muslims kill 43 during lower house elections.

2013
Seven thousand people from 15 states protest as government removes clause on consent from Land Acquisition Act.

2016
Unrest flares again in Kashmir as militants kill 19 on Indian army base.

2017

India

At a glance

National civil war
Absent

Communal/ideological conflict
High

National political conflict
Low

Local political and electoral conflict
Medium

Transnational terrorism
Medium

Local resource conflict
High

Separatism and autonomy
Decreasing from high to medium high

Urban crime and violence
Low

** Rankings are based on the last 15 years and are relative to other Asian countries.*

Overview

India is a stable democracy with regular and largely peaceful elections at the national and state levels. In the decades since independence, the Indian state has grappled with an increasingly complex set of conflicts at the national and subnational levels. These conflicts range from subnational secessionist and ethnic movements to armed conflict and violence in certain regions. There are increasing concerns about transnational terrorism. The rapid development of the economy over the past decade has sparked localized conflicts over natural resources such as land, water, and forests. Gender-based violence and crimes against women are a serious concern, and a number of high-profile rapes have generated domestic and international uproar. Given the country's religious and ethnic diversity, concerns over communal violence and religious intolerance remain omnipresent.

India

National level

National civil war

Not present in India since independence.

National political conflict

Elections are the main arena for political competition in India. Public discontent towards government is occasionally expressed through demonstrations, but these rarely involve mass violence.

Transnational terrorism

Most transnational terrorism in India relates to its conflict with Pakistan over Jammu and Kashmir (J&K). Even incidents outside J&K are often coordinated or facilitated by Kashmir-based groups and Pakistani intelligence. Militant movements to free J&K from India gained ground after the 1987 state assembly election. Dissatisfaction over election irregularities and perceived illegitimate government led to unrest across Kashmir, which transformed into mass mobilizations against India, and many young protesters joined insurgent groups such as the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) and Hizb-ul-Mujahideen (HM).

The rise of militarism in Kashmir in the late 1980s coincided with the end of the Soviet-Afghan war in 1989. This allowed Pakistani intelligence to divert the support it had been giving to the Afghan mujahedeen to the Kashmiri insurgents. Through its Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) agency, Pakistan began to provide arms and training to militants inside and outside Kashmir. To sideline JKLF, an armed movement formed in 1977 to fight for Kashmir's independence, Pakistan created and assisted several armed groups from 1989 on that had a different goal: to join

17 active and 19 inactive terrorist groups in Jammu and Kashmir

J&K with Pakistan. Many groups operating in J&K have bases in Pakistan and coordinate with each other; they also have ties with international jihadi organizations and transnational crime groups, including Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), Hizb-ul-Mujahideen (HM), Harkat-ul-Mujahideen (HuM), Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), Harkat-ul-Jehad-i-Islami (HuJI), and Lashkar-e-Omar (LeO). Some, such as LeT, HuM, and LeO, are believed to have links with al-Qaeda. According to the South Asia Terrorist Portal (SATP), there are at least 17 active and 19 inactive terrorist/extremist groups in J&K.[1]

Outside Jammu and Kashmir, LeT, JeM, and HuJI have collaborated with India-based jihadi groups such as the Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) and India Mujahideen (IM). SATP records show that since 2000, most terrorist attacks outside J&K with a known perpetrator have been attributed to SIMI (15 incidents) and IM (10 incidents). At least nine incidents involved LeT, including in Mumbai, where serial bomb blasts in 2003 and 2006 killed 52 and 200 civilians, respectively, and multiple attacks in 2008 left 195 dead.[2] Bangladesh-based jihadi groups such as the Asif Reza Commando Force (ARCF) and Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) also take part in some of SIMI and IM's operations. Communal violence against Muslims (discussed below) contributed to the emergence and growth of SIMI and IM.[3]

The number of incidents and deaths has significantly declined since 2006. However, the security situation in the Kashmir Valley[4] experienced a setback in late July 2016 following the killing of militant leader Burhan Wani of HM. Unrest instigated by separatists broke out throughout Kashmir. A curfew was imposed several times, with the turmoil lasting for five months. In the first month, telephone and Internet services were suspended in the Valley. Clashes between protesters and security forces claimed at least 94 lives. More than 13,000 were injured, and 1,100 had their eyes hit by pellet guns used by authorities.

Amid the turmoil, unknown militants attacked an Indian army base in Uri on September 18, 2016, killing 19 officers.[5] The government suspected JeM, and on September 29 launched a raid against a terrorist base in Pakistan-administered Kashmir, straining India-Pakistan relations further. Tensions in the Valley are still simmering.

Table 1. Trends in terrorist violence in Jammu and Kashmir

Year	Number of incidents	Security forces killed	Civilians killed	Terrorists killed
2005	1,990	189	557	917
2006	1,667	151	389	591
2007	1,092	110	158	472
2008	708	75	91	339
2009	499	79	71	239
2010	488	69	47	232
2011	340	33	31	100
2012	220	38	11	50
2013	170	53	15	67
2014	222	47	28	110
2015	208	39	17	108
2016	322	82	15	150
Total	**7,926**	**965**	**1,430**	**3,375**

Source: Ministry of Home Affairs, *Annual Report 2013–14* and *2016–17*[6]

Separatism and autonomy

Independent India combines regions with different cultural identities and political histories, such as tribal regions in the Northeast and more than 500 princely states. Several armed and unarmed movements have demanded independence and autonomy. Tamil Nadu also saw many separatist groups from the late 1980s, when the Indian Peacekeeping Force was sent to Sri Lanka after the 1987 Indo-Lanka Accord. The accord aimed to end the war between the Sri Lankan government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). Some Tamils in Tamil Nadu supported the LTTE. Groups based in the state who had advocated for an independent Tamil Nadu, like the Tamil Nadu Liberation Army and the Tamil National Retrieval Troops, became inactive in the mid-2000s. The Khalistan movement, which aimed for the independence of Sikh Punjab, turned militant in the 1980s. A bloody operation against insurgents inside the revered Golden Temple complex in 1984 led to at least 1,000 deaths.[7] The assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi by two of her Sikh bodyguards led to anti-Sikh riots that killed at least 3,000.[8]

There are multiple demands for independence and autonomy in the Northeast. SATP lists 149 active and inactive insurgent groups in its seven states.[9] More than two-thirds are based and operate in Assam and Manipur. Their objectives vary, and include secession (e.g., NSCN, NDFB, ULFA, NLFT, KCP, GNLA), separate ethnic states (e.g., KLO, Karbi People's Liberation Tiger in Assam), tribal autonomy (e.g., HNLC, early Hmar People's Convention–Democracy), and protection of the rights and identities of religious and ethnic communities (e.g., Adivasi Cobra Forces and Muslim United Liberation Tigers in Assam, People United Liberal Front in Manipur, PREPAK, ATTF). The militant groups that the Ministry of Home Affairs considers to pose a major threat are shown in table 2.[10]

Table 2. Insurgent groups in India

Assam	• United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) • National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) • Kamtapur Liberation Organisation (KLO)
Manipur	• People's Liberation Army (PLA) • United National Liberation Front (UNLF) • People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (PREPAK) • Kangleipak Communist Party (KCP) • Kanglei Yawol Kanna Lup (KYKL) • Manipur People's Liberation Front (MPLF) • Revolutionary People's Front (RPF) • Coordination Committee (CorCom) (conglomerate of six Valley-based underground outfits)
Meghalaya	• Hynniewtrep National Liberation Council (HNLC) • Garo National Liberation Army (GNLA).
Tripura	• All Tripura Tiger Force (ATTF) • National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT)
Nagaland	• National Socialist Council of Nagaland–Isak-Muivah (NSCN–IM) • National Socialist Council of Nagaland–Khaplang (NSCN–K) • National Socialist Council of Nagaland–Khole-Kitovi (NSCN–KK)

Source: Ministry of Home Affairs, *Annual Report 2014–15*

Along with counterinsurgency, the central government has responded by granting statehood, union territory, and autonomous areas. These approaches have yielded only limited success, however, due to ethnic complexity in the region. State demarcations do not correspond to the territories demanded by tribes. Naga tribes, for example, are spread across Manipur, Assam, Nagaland, and parts of western Myanmar, which makes the goal of a united Greater Nagalim unattainable. Smaller tribes and ethnic and religious minorities within these states feel their interests and territorial claims are ignored by the predominant tribes or groups in power. This has led to the emergence of many armed groups and movements for ethnic unity and autonomy in every state in the Northeast. Sixteen autonomous administrative divisions were created to ease tensions in Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Tripura. However, militant secessionist movements persist in some divisions in Assam and Meghalaya. This continued militancy generally reflects the failure of these autonomous divisions to respond to the demands of dominant tribes for protection of their lands and resources from outsiders.

Rivalry within and among tribal or ethnic armed groups competing for control of territory and resources encourages other groups to take up arms to protect their interests and their communities. These intertribal conflicts include the Nagas vs. the Kukis in Manipur, and the Bodo vs. the Adivasi, Kamtapur, and Muslim Bengali in Assam. Due to an absence of government administration, armed groups fight to establish parallel states that impose laws and raise money through extortion. Peace talks have caused new factions to emerge over internal disagreements. In several cases, factions dominated by particular tribes are competing to represent the interests of their ethnic group, as in the case of the Nagas' NSCN. In other cases, such as the conflict between the NDFB and the Bodo Liberation Tigers Force, the groups represent different religious communities.

Ethnic militancy in the Northeast also targets Bengali Muslim immigrants. Indigenous groups feel their identity, land, and livelihoods are threatened by the influx of refugees who arrived during the Bangladesh war of independence in 1971 and subsequent illegal immigration. Bengali Muslim immigrants often acquire the right to vote and to receive public services by securing fraudulent identification. In Assam, protests and riots against Muslim migrants have become common since the late 1970s. The 1983 Nellie massacre in central Assam was triggered by Indira Gandhi's decision to give 4 million Bengali immigrants the right to vote. Tensions are high in the Bodoland Territorial Area District, which borders Bangladesh. The Bodo population accounts for just 29 percent of the district, and they are hostile to other communities because they fear losing their ancestral land and political power. Different factions of the NDFB have been responsible for fatal attacks against Adivasis, Bihari migrants, and Bengali Muslim immigrants.[11] These fears were behind the ethnic clashes in 2012, which left 77 people dead,[12] and a series of NDFB attacks against Muslim immigrants in May 2014. In Tripura, one of the causes of the insurgency was opposition to unrestricted migration from Bangladesh. This violence has led, in turn, to the formation of Muslim militant groups. Transnational jihadi groups are also present in the region.

Overall, insurgent activities in the Northeast have declined in recent years. There are several factors. The Indian government has conducted peace talks with several major and minor militant groups. Significant improvement in counterinsurgency cooperation with Bangladesh and Myanmar has made it harder for militants to hide, train, and smuggle arms. Many insurgent groups have degenerated into criminal and terrorist gangs that engage in extortion, abduction, and other illicit activities.

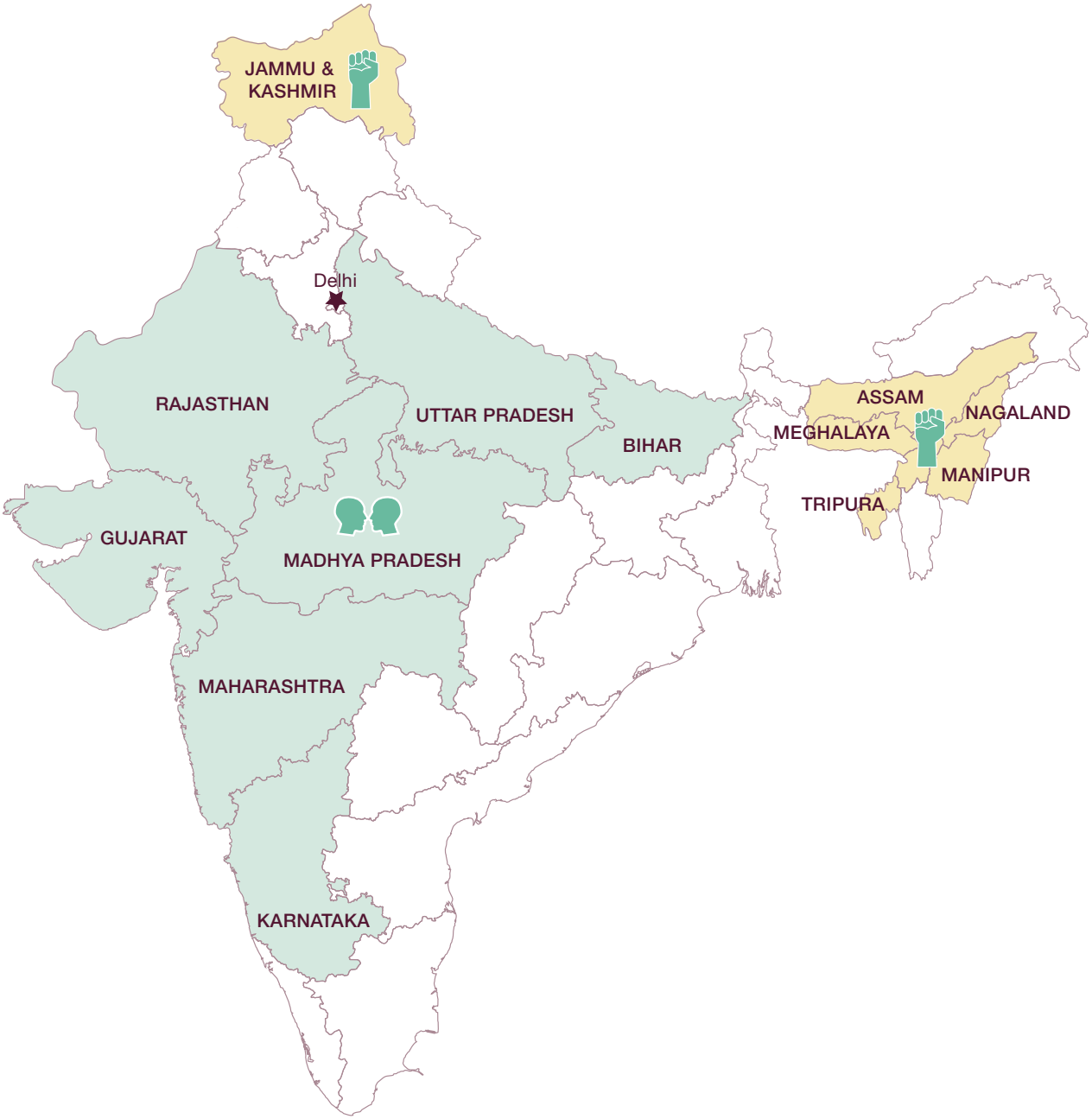
Table 3. Numbers of militants, security forces, and civilians killed in insurgencies in the Northeast

Year	Arunachal	Assam	Manipur	Meghalaya	Mizoram	Nagaland	Tripura
2009	22	368	436	9	1	31	10
2010	13	174	147	18	0	5	4
2011	27	78	64	31	0	15	1
2012	19	91	94	53	0	74	2
2013	10	92	58	58	0	42	1
2014	11	274	47	65	0	13	3
2015	9	58	80	44	3	47	0
2016	9	84	31	23	0	5	0

Source: Prepared based on Ministry of Home Affairs, *Annual Report 2014–15* and *2016–17*[13]

Large-scale communal and ideological conflicts

Before the 1990s, communal Hindu-Muslim riots occurred locally, mostly in towns with a large Muslim population. Local political-economic rivalries between communities were generally the trigger. Casualties per incident varied from none to more than 2,000 fatalities.[14] Communal conflicts worsened in the 1990s when the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) tried to consolidate its support by using a Hindu nationalist discourse. It focused on rebuilding Hindu sites destroyed during the Mughal Empire. A flashpoint was the campaign to rebuild Ramjanmabhoomi temple in Ayodhaya, Uttar Pradesh, on the site of the nearly 500-year-old Babri Masjid mosque. From September to October 1990, the BJP and other Hindu nationalist parties organized a march across India in protest. There were riots along the path of the march,


JAMMU &
KASHMIR
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UTTAR PRADESH
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ASSAM
NAGALAND
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MANIPUR
TRIPURA
GUJARAT
MADHYA PRADESH
MAHARASHTRA
KARNATAKA

including approximately 1,400 incidents in Gujarat alone. Almost 900 Muslims were killed in the related violence in Bihar. The campaign culminated at the end of 1992 with the demolition of Babri Masjid and other mosques in Ayodhaya by supporters of Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP, a religious organization), the Shiv Sena Party, and the BJP. The demolition instigated Muslim-Hindu violence in Mumbai. Clashes lasted until the end of January 1993, killing more than 900 people, mostly Muslims. The Muslim underworld don Dawood Ibrahim retaliated with coordinated bombings in March, killing 350 and injuring 1,200 in one day.[15]

The 2002 Gujarat riots were sparked by the burning of a train carrying Hindu pilgrims from Ayodhaya to Godhra. Fifty-eight were killed, triggering revenge killings of Muslims in Gujarat.[16] Violence lasted for three months. Narendra Modi, then BJP chief minister of the state (and now India's president), was believed by many to be complicit, as security forces did little to curb the massacre. A government inquiry revealed that 790 Muslims and 254 Hindus had been killed, around 2,500 people had been injured, and at least 223 were reported missing.[17] There have also recently been small-scale, Hindu-Christian clashes caused by forced conversions.

Incidents of communal violence fluctuate, with official records showing 580 riots in 2011, 668 in 2012, 823 in 2013, 644 in 2014, 751 in 2015, and 703 in 2016.[18] Communal violence mostly occurs in the northern states, with Uttar Pradesh experiencing the largest number of incidents (155) in 2015, followed by Maharashtra with 105, Karnataka with 105, Madhya Pradesh with 92, Bihar with 71, Rajasthan with 65, and Gujarat with 55.[19]

Table 4. Naxal violence, by state (2011–2016)

State	2011		2012		2013		2014		2015		2016	
	Incidents	Deaths	Incidents	Deaths	Incidents	Deaths	Incidents	Deaths	Incidents	Deaths	Incidents	Deaths
Andhra Pradesh	54	9	67	13	36	11	18	4	35	8	17	6
Bihar	316	63	166	44	177	69	163	32	110	17	129	28
Chhattis-garh	465	204	370	109	355	111	328	111	466	101	395	107
Jharkhand	517	182	480	163	387	152	384	103	310	56	323	85
Madhya Pradesh	8	0	11	0	1	0	3	0	0	0	12	2
Maharash-tra	109	54	134	41	71	19	70	28	55	18	73	23
Odisha	192	53	171	45	101	35	103	26	92	28	86	27
Telengana	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	4	14	5	11	2	7	0
Uttar Pradesh	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
West Bengal	92	45	6	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Others	6	1	8	0	7	0	7	0	10	0	6	0
Total	**1,760**	**611**	**1,415**	**415**	**1,136**	**397** [401]*	**1,090**	**309**	**1,089**	**230**	**1,048**	**278**

Source: Ministry of Home Affairs, *Annual Report 2016–17*

*All numbers are taken from the Ministry report. Erroneous totals are corrected in brackets.

703 cases of communal violence in 2016

The Naxal/Maoist movement originated in 1967 in a violent peasant uprising over land reforms in Naxalbari village in West Bengal. It uses guerrilla warfare against security forces to overthrow what it perceives to be a semicolonial, semifeudal system that oppresses and exploits the masses.[20] The insurgency ebbed and flowed during the 1970s and 1980s, but became stronger in 2004 when the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) People's War—commonly known as the People's War Group (PWG)—joined forces with the Maoist Communist Centre of India (MCCI). Violence significantly increased, and the Naxal threat became a greater security concern for policymakers than the insurgencies in J&K and the Northeast.[21] Whereas the Naxal movement in 2003 was active in only 55 districts in eight states, the Ministry of Home Affairs reported in 2014 that it was present in 20 states. Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, and Bihar have the highest numbers of Naxal incidents. The movement recently expanded to Assam, Uttar Pradesh, and Haryana.

Weak state presence, poverty, and grievances related to natural resource management, particularly mining, help the Naxal movement recruit and secure community support. Naxal cadres are mostly tribal or low caste. The insurgency is present in districts with high poverty and low literacy rates.[22] According to Oxford University's Multidimensional Poverty Index (2010), more than 400 million Indians living below the poverty line are in states severely affected by Naxal violence.[23] Naxalites have exploited local anger at underdevelopment and offered to help protect communities' rights to water, forests, and land. Mining is fueling the conflict by increasing support for the Maoists' anticapitalist and anti-foreign-investment discourse. The insurgents are also reported to have stolen explosives from mines and extorted mining companies.

Local level

Local political conflict and electoral violence

Violence is a regular feature of Indian elections and local politics. Politicians mobilize support and votes along ethnic, religious, or caste lines. During campaigns, polling days, and afterwards, there are sporadic incidents of communal violence, clashes between supporters of competing parties, intimidation, threats, and assault or killing of voters, candidates, and election officials. Generally there is more violence where political competition is tight.

Other forms of violence already discussed often intensify around elections. For example, Maoist and other antigovernment rebel groups target election officials and polling booths to contest the state's legitimacy. Communal violence caused by Bodo ethnic armed groups attacking Bengali Muslims and other tribal Adivasi groups also took place during elections in 1983, 1996, and 2014. For example, a series of attacks against Muslims during the 2014 lower house election killed 43 people.[24]

It is difficult to know how prevalent violence is, as there is no monitoring, and there are no publicly available official statistics on election incidents. Yet reports of violence are common during electoral periods. Other violence during the April–May 2014 national election included rebel ambushes in Kashmir and Jharkhand that killed four paramilitary soldiers and three election officials,[25] and Maoist attacks in Chhattisgarh that killed 14 officers.[26] Municipal elections are also violent. There were 70 poll-related clashes reported to the Election Commission during the April 2015 Kolkata Municipal Corporation election.[27]

Local conflict over resources and community rights

In India, land is scarce. With 329 people per square kilometer, changes in land use often result in large-scale displacement. Since independence, development initiatives have displaced many Indians. Prior to the 1980s, when economic development was still state led, the government coercively acquired land for roads, dams, and industry. Since liberalization in the late 1980s, land has been transferred to private entities for power projects, mines, economic zones, and other infrastructure as part of public-private partnerships. The majority of people who have been displaced are still waiting for compensation. The aboriginal tribal communities known as Adivasi are particularly affected, because their livelihood depends on access to their land. Most land conflicts take place in mineral-rich and forested areas of Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand, Meghalaya, and Assam where Adivasis live.[28] These conflicts significantly contribute to support for the Naxalite movement.

A recent survey recorded 252 conflicts over land, in 165 of India's 664 districts, in 2013–2014.[29] When the government amended the Land Acquisition Act of 2013 to remove a clause on consent and social impact assessment, more than 7,000 people from 15 states demonstrated in New Delhi in March 2015. Local protests against public or private enterprises generally lead to clashes with state security forces and arrests of activists.

Urban crime and violence

The number of violent crimes (crimes against the body, property, public safety, and women) slightly increased from 2009 to 2015.[30] The rate in 2015 was 26.7 per 100,000 people. When nonviolent crimes are included, average crime rates are significantly higher in megacities (defined by the Government of India as cities with more than one million people). In 2015, there were 420.7 crimes per 100,000 people in megacities, compared to 234.2 per 100,000 nationally. Among the megacities, Delhi had the highest number of major crimes such as murder, rape, and robbery: 464, 1,893, and 6,766 cases, respectively.[31] The homicide rate has fluctuated over the last ten years and was 3.2 per 100,000 in 2014, having declined from 4.5 in the year 2000.

Criminal gangs are active in smuggling, money laundering, illegal gambling, counterfeiting, contract killing, and extortion. During the 1990s, money laundering, or *hawala,* accounted for more than USD 6.25 billion per year.[32] Since the 1970s, the Indian government has periodically cracked down on criminal groups, especially in Mumbai, where targeted killings by criminal groups were common during the 1980s and 1990s. Major figures such as Dawood Ibrahim fled the country during the 1980s and remotely coordinated operations such as the 1993 Mumbai

Almost
400,000
women and girls
abducted in the past decade

bombings discussed above. Maharashtra state's Control of Organised Crime Act, issued in 1999, drove most organized crime groups in Mumbai underground. While gang violence has subsided, criminal groups continue to carry out illicit activities and extort businesses, especially in Mumbai's real estate sector. Those with an international network often cooperate with transnational terrorist and insurgent groups.

Criminal gangs have close ties with politicians. Seventeen percent of candidates in the 2014 national election had criminal charges pending, including serious crimes like murder, rape, and extortion. One study shows that candidates with a criminal background perform better in elections.[33] The best-known gangster-turned-politician is Arun Gawli, who formed his own political party, Akhil Bharatiya Sena, and was elected to the state legislature in 2004.

Domestic and gender-based violence

Domestic and gender-based violence are prevalent in India due to traditional social practices and the low status of women. Child marriage and sati (widowed women committing suicide on their husband's funeral pyre) are illegal, but both practices, especially the first, continue. The tradition of the bride's family paying a dowry leads to female feticide, female infanticide, and dowry deaths (women murdered or driven to suicide in the attempt to extort a higher dowry). While official statistics show low rates of feticide and infanticide,[34] these crimes are likely underreported. The 2011 census revealed a child sex ratio of 914 girls per 1,000 boys,[35] in marked contrast to the global ratio of 1,300 girls per 1,000 boys.[36] Between 2009 and 2013, there were an average of 8,342 dowry deaths per year.[37]

The most common crime against women is torture by a husband or his relatives (38.4 percent), followed in frequency by abduction, physical harassment, and rape. Official statistics for 2012 through 2016 show an increase in these crimes. This can be interpreted in two ways: either measures to protect women are not effective, or more women are reporting crimes following years of gender-violence activism.

Table 5. Crimes against women, by type of crime (2011–2015)

Type of crime		Year					Change from 2014 to 2015 %
		2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	
1.	Rape	24,206	24,923	33,707	36,735	34,651	-5.7
2.	Attempt to commit rape	-	-	-	4,232	4,434	4.8
3.	Kidnapping and abduction of women	35,565	38,262	51,881	57,311	59,277	3.4
4.	Dowry death	8,618	8,233	8,083	8,455	7,634	-9.7
5.	Cruelty by husband or his relatives	99,135	106,527	118,866	122,877	113,403	7.7
6.	Assault on a woman with intent to outrage her modesty	42,968	45,351	70,739	82,235	82,422	0.2
7.	Insult to a woman's modesty	8,570	9,173	12,589	9,735	8,685	-10.8
8.	Importation of a girl from foreign country	80	59	31	13	6	-53.8
9.	Abetment of a woman's suicide	-	-	-	3,734	4,060	8.7
A.	Total Indian Penal Code crimes against women	219,142	232,528	295,896	325,327	314,575 [314,572]*	-3.3
10.	Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act, 1987	0	0	0	0	0	0
11.	Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956	2,436	2,563	2,579	2,070	2,424	17.1
12.	Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986	453	141	362	47	40	-14.9
13.	The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961	6,619	9,038	10,709	10,050	9,894	-1.5 [-1.6]*
14.	Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act	-	-	-	426	461	8.2
B.	Total Special and Local Law crimes against women	9,508	11,742	13,650	12,593	12,819	1.8
Total (A+B)		228,650	244,270	309,546	337,922 [337,920]*	327,394 [327,391]*	-3.1

Source: Government of India, National Crime Records Bureau[38]

*All numbers are from the NCRB. Erroneous totals are corrected in brackets.

The gang rape and death of a young medical student in December 2012 in New Delhi triggered demonstrations across India and international outrage at the low status of women and cultural practices that breed sexual violence. In traditional rural areas, several women have been gang raped as punishment for their family's wrongdoing by order of the community's senior members or the village committee.[39] Rapes have also occurred during communal riots, for example in the 2002 Gujarat riots and the 2013 Muzaffarnagar riots.

Activists secured an amendment to the Indian penal code in 2013. Acid attacks, sexual harassment (unwelcome physical, verbal, or nonverbal sexual behavior), voyeurism, and stalking are now criminal offences**.** Rape is defined as sexual assault, which covers physical contact with the genitals, anus, or breasts against another person's will and includes same-sex crimes. The

age of consent was changed from 16 to 18 years old. Marital rape continues to be legal. Reports of rape, in Delhi in particular, have sharply increased since 2013, although the conviction rate has declined.[40]

Almost 400,000 women and girls have been abducted in the past decade. Abductions mostly involve rape, sexual trafficking, and forced marriage; rates are higher in northern states with the most imbalanced child sex ratios.[41] In rural areas, women and girls of low castes, especially Dalits (the lowest untouchable caste), are abducted for sex by men generally of higher and dominant castes. Victims and their families generally remain silent due to shame, fear of reprisal, and police bias favoring higher castes.[42] Open defecation increases the risk of poor women being abducted, molested, and raped.

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1945

1945
Indonesia declares independence from the Netherlands, with Sukarno as President. After four years of hostilities, the Dutch acknowledge Indonesia in 1949.

1948
Communist Party of Indonesia (PKI) attempts to form an Indonesian Soviet Republic in the city of Madiun, East Java. The revolt is violently suppressed by Sukarno. The PKI reenters politics in the 1950s.

1949
The Darul Islam rebellion, led by Kartosuwiryo, declares an Islamic state. The rebellion gains significant territory and lasts for 13 years.

1957
Sukarno declares martial law and replaces Indonesia's parliamentary system with his authoritarian Guided Democracy.

1958
Rebellious military commanders declare a "revolutionary government" in several provinces. Sukarno suppresses the rebellion over the next three years.

1959
Aceh Province, where resentment over a lack of autonomy is growing, is granted special territorial status.

1962
Kartosuwirjo is captured and executed. Darul Islam is suppressed.

1965
Apparent coup by the September 30th Movement is suppressed, and General Suharto takes full control of the military. Suharto blames the PKI, triggering massacres that kill at least 500,000.

1967
Suharto becomes president. Sukarno's Guided Democracy is replaced by Suharto's New Order.

1969
Dutch cede Papua to Indonesia in controversial Act of Free Choice, sparking armed resistance. Government starts counterinsurgency, with Papua seeing conflict until the present.

1976
Hasan Tiro forms the Free Aceh Movement. The insurrection is decimated by 1979, but eventually escalates into subnational warfare by the early 2000s.

1997
Asian financial crisis severely affects Indonesia.

1998
After three months of student protests, and three days of rioting that kills 1,200, Suharto resigns. The next five years are the most violent since 1965.

1999
Referendum on independence in East Timor.

1999
Large-scale communal violence breaks out in Maluku, North Maluku, and West Kalimantan.

2000
Large-scale communal violence in Central Sulawesi.

2001
Large-scale communal violence in Central Kalimantan.

2001
Malino peace accord ends violence in Central Sulawesi.

2002
Malino II peace accord ends violence in Maluku.

2002
First Bali bombing by jihadi group Jemaah Islamiyah kills 202, 164 of them foreigners.

2003
Government declares martial law in Aceh as secessionist warfare intensifies.

2004
A tsunami strikes Aceh, killing almost 170,000.

2005
The Helsinki peace accord ends the war in Aceh. Since 1998, 10,613 have died.

2016
Group loyal to the Islamic State launches a suicide bombing in Jakarta.

2017
As Islamist ideas increasingly influence public debate, the Christian governor of Jakarta is jailed for blasphemy against Islam.

2017

Indonesia

At a glance

National civil war
Absent

Communal/ideological conflict
Shifted from high to medium low

National political conflict
Low

Local political and electoral conflict
Medium low

Transnational terrorism
Medium

Local resource conflict
Medium

Separatism and autonomy
Shifted from high to low

Urban crime and violence
Low

** Rankings are based on the last 15 years and are relative to other Asian countries.*

Overview

Indonesia is regarded as a rare Asian example of a successful and enduring multicultural democracy. Yet today's relatively peaceful Indonesia is the product of a history of periodic violence. Following independence from the Dutch, political forces engaged in a struggle to define Indonesia's political and national identity, leading to the anticommunist massacres of 1965–66. The 1998 collapse of the New Order regime led to another period of violence, including large-scale ethnoreligious conflicts in several provinces and a surge in the civil war with separatist insurgents in Aceh. Democratization, decentralization, and a dynamic economy helped Indonesia overcome these challenges. Large-scale conflict has largely disappeared since 2005, but sporadic and localized forms of violence betray persistent issues with justice and governance, land, and natural resources management. The country's tradition of religious pluralism is also under stress, as fringe Islamic groups and ideas have gained a growing influence over mainstream politics.

Indonesia

National level

National civil war

Indonesia has not experienced national civil war since the 1960s. The only current armed challenges to the authority of the state come from radical Islamist militants and a low-level separatist movement in Papua. Neither have the means to escalate violence beyond sporadic attacks.

Following independence in 1945, Indonesia experienced two decades of instability as the state struggled to extend its authority across the archipelago. The Netherlands, the colonial power, tried to regain Indonesia by force following the Japanese withdrawal after World War II. Under international pressure, the Dutch relented in 1949 and negotiated the transfer of the former Dutch East Indies to an independent Indonesia.

The main internal drivers of conflict in Indonesia's early years were ideology and regionalism. The most violent challenge came from Soekarmadji Maridjan Kartosuwiryo, an Islamic mystic from Central Java, who aimed to establish an Islamic state. In 1948, President Sukarno's government had in effect surrendered West Java to the Dutch by agreeing to withdraw the Indonesian army. In response, Kartosuwiryo established the Darul Islam movement. The revolt spread to Central Java, South Sulawesi, South Kalimantan, and Aceh, and lasted until Kartosuwiryo was captured and executed in 1962. The vision of an Indonesia founded on Islamic principles, and networks associated with Darul Islam, have had a long afterlife and remain crucial to understanding Indonesian Islamic extremism today.[1]

Another threat came from the left. An attempt to form an Indonesian Soviet Republic by the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) at Madiun was violently suppressed in September 1948. The PKI returned to mainstream politics in the 1950s. Sukarno used them as a foil for the military, whose leaders doubted civilian rule even as they shared the vision of a secular, modern Indonesia.[2] A violent challenge to Sukarno's government emerged from within the army's ranks in 1956–1957. Commanders in Sumatra, Sulawesi, Maluku, and Nusa Tenggara wrested power from governors in bloodless coups, accusing Sukarno of excessive bureaucracy, neglecting outlying regions, and being too close to the PKI. The rebels declared a revolutionary government in 1958. Sukarno eventually suppressed the rebellion.[3]

500
Indonesians
fighting in Iraq and Syria
in 2015

National political conflict

Under Indonesia's first president, Sukarno, relative peace was achieved by top-down means. He began to dismantle Indonesia's fledgling democracy in 1957, declaring martial law and replacing the parliamentary system with his authoritarian Guided Democracy. Parties were pushed to the margins, with the exception of the PKI, which remained allied with Sukarno. The only other major political force was the military, whose leadership was anticommunist. National politics were intensely polarized between the right and the left.

Stability crumbled as the contradictions in Sukarno's coalition unraveled. On September 30, 1965, six generals were killed in an apparent putsch by members of the military, seemingly in concert with the PKI. The following day, a group called the September 30th Movement announced that it had taken action to prevent a coup. By evening the mutiny had been crushed, and General Suharto, a high ranking officer who headed the army's strategic command, was in full control of the army.

Suharto whipped up anticommunist fervor in late 1965. A campaign of mass killing ensued, targeting PKI members and supporters, with the worst violence in Central and East Java, Bali, and North Sumatra. An estimated 500,000 people were killed.[4] By March 1966, Suharto had dismissed Sukarno's cabinet; he became president the following year.

National political competition was limited during Suharto's tenure. He stayed in power until 1998 by skillfully and selectively deploying violence against opponents, banning most political parties, and stage-managing elections. His New Order regime brought together military elites, technocrats, and civilian politicians in support of policies that stimulated foreign investment and kept growth rates high. However, Indonesia was severely affected by the 1997 Asian financial crisis, contributing to Suharto's downfall.

Suharto was forced to resign on May 21, 1998, handing over power to Vice President Habibie. His resignation was precipitated by three months of student protests, which garnered support from the middle class. Violence spiked following the killing of four students by the security forces during a protest in Jakarta. Over the next three days, widespread rioting in Jakarta and other cities targeted ethnic Chinese Indonesians and their businesses. An estimated 1,200 people were killed, and over 50 women were raped.[5]

Indonesia is now politically stable. Four peaceful presidential transitions have occurred since the 1998 fall of the authoritarian President Suharto. Dealmaking between elites has sometimes led to corruption and nepotism, but has also served to limit extreme or violent contestation.

National-level legislative and presidential elections in 1999, 2004, 2009, and 2014 have regularly been accompanied by shows of force and occasional incidents—usually involving youth fronts or thugs affiliated with political parties and candidates—but they have not led to significant violence.

Transnational terrorism

The New Order did not stamp out Islamist radicalism. Violent militants have extensive and longstanding ties with radical networks outside the country. Ties were forged during the New Order era when, due to repression by Suharto, extremists went abroad, to the Afghanistan-Pakistan border and to Malaysia, where exiled jihadis founded Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) in the early 1990s. The skills and networks forged abroad injected capacity into Indonesian extremist organizations, which perpetrated a series of lethal, high-profile attacks on Western targets beginning in the early 2000s, including the 2002 Bali bombings that killed 202 people, 164 of them foreigners, and further bombings in Jakarta and Bali.

Since then, the jihadi scene has evolved, with key personalities jailed or killed and alignments shifting due to theological and strategic disputes. With extensive foreign assistance, the government has been able to reduce the threat. The police counterterrorism unit Densus 88 has achieved considerable success in dismantling terrorist cells.[6] This led to a shift in homegrown Islamic terrorism: since 2010, most attacks have been small and poorly planned and executed, often by small groups with limited training and funding.[7]

The Syrian civil war and the declaration of the Islamic State (IS) in 2013 provided fresh momentum to Indonesian jihadi networks. In 2015, 500 Indonesians were fighting with IS in Irag and Syria[8] with a special military unit, Katibah Nusantara, established for Malay Indonesian speakers. Back home, jihadi clerics such as Abu Bakar Ba'asyir and Aman Abdurrahman have sworn allegiance to IS from their prison cells, with both involved in the creation of Jamaah Anshar Khilafah (JAK). JAK was responsible for a suicide bombing and shooting at a Starbucks cafe and a police station in Jakarta on January 14, 2016. Another group affiliated with IS, Mujahidin Indonesia Timur (MIT), has carried out numerous attacks on the police since 2012 from its hideout in Central Sulawesi. The Jakarta attack was a failure (it resulted in four deaths), and MIT's leader, Santoso, was killed by security forces on July 18, 2016. But observers fear that the return of IS-trained Indonesians may lead to better-organized attacks in the future.[9] Major weaknesses also remain in Indonesia's counterterrorism response. These include a lax and corrupt prison system that allows convicted jihadis to continue recruiting and plotting from their cells; poor monitoring of former convicts and Syria returnees; a lack of effective action against the spread of jihadi ideology via radical Islamic schools, websites, publications, and lectures; and outdated antiterrorism laws.[10]

Subnational level

Separatism and autonomy

Preserving the integrity of Indonesia has been a major concern of the state. Separatist movements developed in Aceh, Maluku, East Timor, and Papua. Sukarno and Suharto managed to control the centrifugal forces of separatism through military action, special autonomy arrangements, political patronage, and economic development. After the collapse of the New Order, decentralization reforms and special autonomy arrangements helped address regional calls for greater representation and inclusive growth.

Aceh. The Acehnese played an important role in the anticolonialist struggle, but discontent grew when promises that Aceh would become its own province were broken, leading many to join Darul Islam. The conflict was largely resolved in 1959, with Aceh given special territorial status. As the Indonesian central state gained strength, however, this became meaningless. In 1976, Hasan di Tiro declared the formation of the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) and independence. The insurgency was largely wiped out by 1979, but grew again after fighters trained in Libya returned in the late 1980s. In response, the military launched a decade-long campaign that killed thousands.[11] Following the New Order's demise, the conflict escalated into subnational war. The new political environment, and East Timor's independence referendum, led to calls for an independence plebiscite. GAM grew, gaining presence across the province. Two attempts at restoring peace—the Humanitarian Pause of September 2000, and the Cessation of Hostilities Agreements (CoHA) of December 2002—failed. The government declared martial law in 2003. Tens of thousands of additional troops were deployed.

On August 15, 2005—less than nine months after the December 2004 tsunami, which killed 167,000 people in Aceh—a peace deal (the MoU) was signed in Helsinki. The tsunami played a role: with tens of thousands of aid workers pouring in, offensives could not take place. Other

factors were also important. GAM had been decimated by martial law, and its leaders understood that international support for the independence of a small Muslim state on the Straits of Malacca was unlikely post-9/11. New Indonesian president Yudhoyono favored a political approach to Aceh. The MoU devolved considerable power to Aceh, granted the province a larger share of oil and gas revenues, and enabled former rebels to form a political party and run for local elections. It included provisions to disarm and reintegrate rebel forces. Over 30,000 Indonesian military and police left the province. An unarmed peace mission, the Aceh Monitoring Mission, was deployed by the EU and ASEAN to oversee the peace process. The impact of the conflict had been deep. From 1998 until the signing of the peace accord, an estimated 10,613 people lost their lives. Damages and losses from the conflict exceeded USD 10.7 billion, double the economic cost of the tsunami.[12]

Aceh is now at peace, and few predict that large-scale violence will reemerge. Former rebels have moved into governing roles, securing landslide victories in post-MoU local elections. Deaths dropped drastically after the accord, but the end of the war did not mean the end of all violence (figure 1). Crime increased sharply after the MoU. This was partly a result of leftover weapons from the conflict and the disappointment of former combatants at postwar economic opportunities. Elections have been marked by significant political violence. The 2009 legislative elections were the first in which Partai Aceh, the political party formed by GAM, fielded candidates for provincial and district parliaments. The 2012 election, for provincial governor and district heads, was marked by divisions between two GAM factions. Both elections saw widespread intimidation and violent incidents such as attacks—sometimes deadly—on party cadres: since 2005, 465 incidents of election-related violence have been recorded in Aceh, which led to 13 deaths.[13] However, the latest round of elections for governor and district heads, in October 2016, was peaceful.

Papua. Since integration into Indonesia in 1969, Papua[15] has seen a low-intensity but sustained separatist insurrection by the armed wing of the Free Papua Organization (TPN-OPM). Counterinsurgency campaigns by Indonesian armed forces led to severe human rights violations, including mass killings of civilians, with hundreds of thousands of deaths and displaced people.[16]

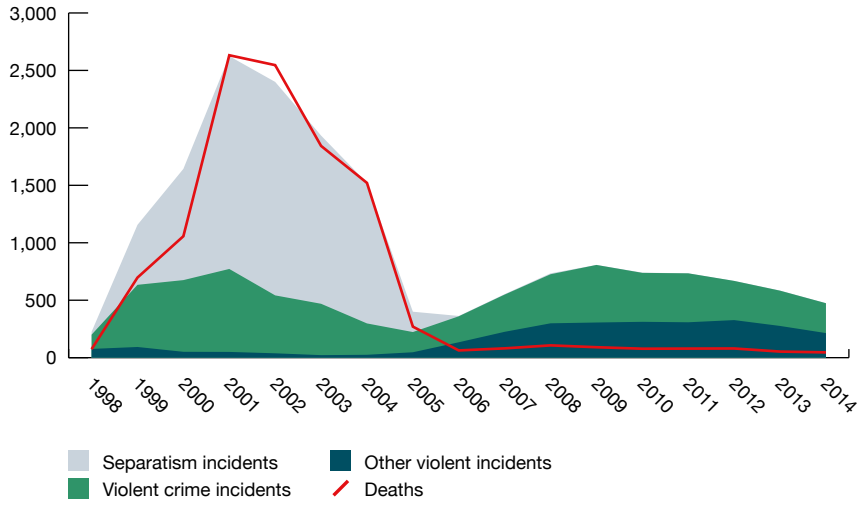


Figure 1. Violent deaths and incidents, by type, Aceh
Source: Indonesia's National Violence Monitoring System (NVMS),[14]
Indonesia's Coordinating Ministry for Human Development and Cultural Affairs, and World Bank

Economic impact of Aceh conflict double that of the tsunami

Since the end of the New Order, the intensity of the conflict has dramatically decreased, and it now involves only sporadic shootings between rebels and security forces. The frequency of incidents surged again sharply in recent years, however, leading to an average of 31 fatalities per year from 2011 to 2014 (figure 2).

Pro-independence sentiment is widespread among Papuans, rooted in historic political and socioeconomic grievances including the contested transfer of sovereignty from the Dutch to Indonesia via the 1969 Act of Free Choice. The Act was meant to meet Papuan demands for a plebiscite on independence. Although the vote's outcome was endorsed by the UN, it is broadly regarded as illegitimate by most Papuans.

Other grievances include a sense of marginalization and disenfranchisement of indigenous Papuans, the perception that the exploitation of Papua's natural resources does not benefit locals, and the presence and poor track record of security forces. Papua has seen a steady influx of migrants from other parts of Indonesia, as a result of both transmigration programs and spontaneous migration.[17] The proportion of nonindigenous people in Papua's population was 53.5 percent in 2009, and many Papuans fear becoming "a minority in their own land."[18] Extractive industries drive tensions. The Grasberg mine, the richest gold and copper deposit in the world, has been the target of frequent ambushes attributed to separatist groups, and is associated with other tensions and violence related to labor issues, environmental damage, and rivalries between security forces over protection rent. Investments have been made in natural gas (the BP plant in Bintuni Bay), forest exploitation, and oil palm. While these create revenues and jobs, they also frequently lead to conflict. Tensions over customary land rights and resettlement have pitted communities against companies, and have exacerbated tribal disputes over land borders and the distribution of benefits.[19] Finally, the police and military often use excessive force in response to peaceful demonstrations of support for independence. Human rights abuses go largely unpunished.[20]

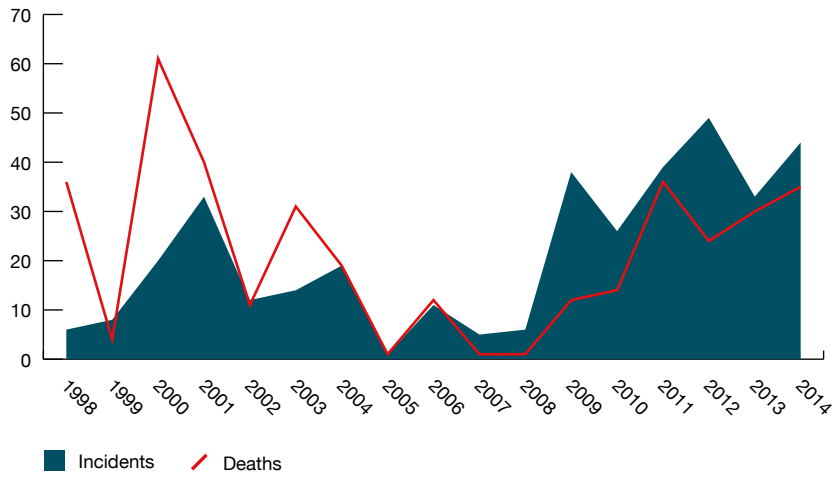


Figure 2. Separatism-related incidents and deaths, Papua and Papua Barat provinces
Source: NVMS, Coordinating Ministry for Human Development and Cultural Affairs, and World Bank

Jakarta's response to the "Papua problem" has combined ramped-up military action with efforts to accelerate the region's development. Papua was designated a special autonomous region in 1999, and Law 21/2001 on Special Autonomy (OTSUS) devolved considerable political and fiscal authority to local government, along with preferential access to civil service jobs for indigenous Papuans. However, OTSUS is broadly regarded in Jakarta and Papua as a failure. Over USD 5 billion in special autonomy funding flowed into Papua and West Papua provinces between 2002 and 2017, with little effect on development. The largest share of funds has been spent on a growing number of civil servants and government facilities resulting from the proliferation of new districts.[21] In 2016, Papua and West Papua provinces still ranked as the worst and second-worst Indonesian provinces on the Human Development Index.[22]

Under the Joko Widodo presidency, efforts have been made to improve development and provide the local population with a sense of justice. For example, fuel prices—historically very high in Papua because of the region's remoteness and difficult terrain—were brought down to levels more comparable with the rest of the archipelago; the price differential between urban and rural areas within Papua decreased. Fuel prices affect the price of other commodities, and high prices have been a major obstacle to Papua's economic development, especially in rural areas. Joko Widodo also ended state-sponsored transmigration, and he visits Papua and West Papua regularly.

Nonetheless, Papua remains the most violent region of Indonesia. In 2014, Papua's homicide rate was five per 100,000 people, five times the national Indonesian average. While separatist conflict accounted for 22.5 percent of fatalities that year, other violence, such as resource-related and identity-based conflict, is frequent.

Large-scale communal and ideological conflicts

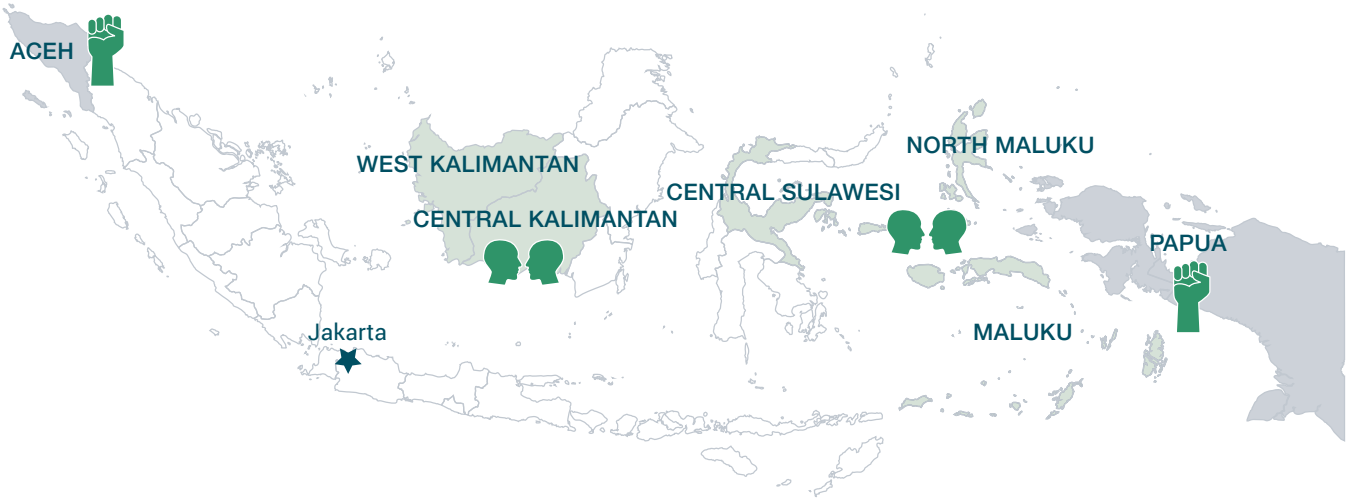
The five years following the collapse of the New Order regime were a period of major political and socioeconomic change. The years 1998–2004 saw the highest levels of violence since the 1965 anticommunist killings, with communal conflicts erupting in five Indonesian provinces.

In West and Central Kalimantan, the violence pitted indigenous Dayak and ethnic Malays against migrant Madurese populations; in Central Sulawesi and Maluku, the cleavage was primarily religious (Muslims versus Christians); in North Maluku, ethnic violence morphed into interconfessional battles. Violence in each place started with small-scale clashes between community groups, but then escalated into much larger armed confrontations. Fatalities were high (table 1), violence was organized, government services halted, and clashes spread over large geographic areas.[23]

Table 1. Extended intercommunal violence, by province, in transitioning Indonesia

Province	Period of extended violence	Deaths	Injuries	Buildings damaged
North Maluku	August '99 through June '00	3,257	2,635	15,004
Maluku	January '99 through February '02	2,793	5,057	13,843
West Kalimantan	January '97 through February '97 February '99 through April '99	1,103	646	3,830
Central Kalimantan	February '01 through April '01	1,031	77	1,998
Central Sulawesi	April '00 through December '01	517	579	6,004

Source: NVMS, Coordinating Ministry for Human Development and Cultural Affairs, and World Bank



By 2002, these episodes had ended, in part as a result of local peace deals such as the 2001 Malino Declaration for Central Sulawesi and the 2002 Malino II agreement for Maluku. Communal violence dropped sharply in Indonesia: related deaths in the five most affected provinces fell from 3,624 in 1999 to an average of 17 per year from 2003–2014. However, in Maluku, segregation along communal lines remains, and tensions continue to lead to regular violence. Central Sulawesi continues to serve as a base for violent Islamist militants, such as Mujahidin Indonesia Timur (MIT). Data for 16 provinces[24] shows a significant increase in incidents related to identity since 2010 (figure 3): incidents were more than three times more frequent during the 2010–2014 period than during 2005–2009, and fatalities were 67 percent higher (65 identity-related deaths per year in 2010–2014, compared with 39 in 2005–2009). A quarter of these deaths resulted from attacks on minority Muslim sects and minority religions by Sunni militant groups.

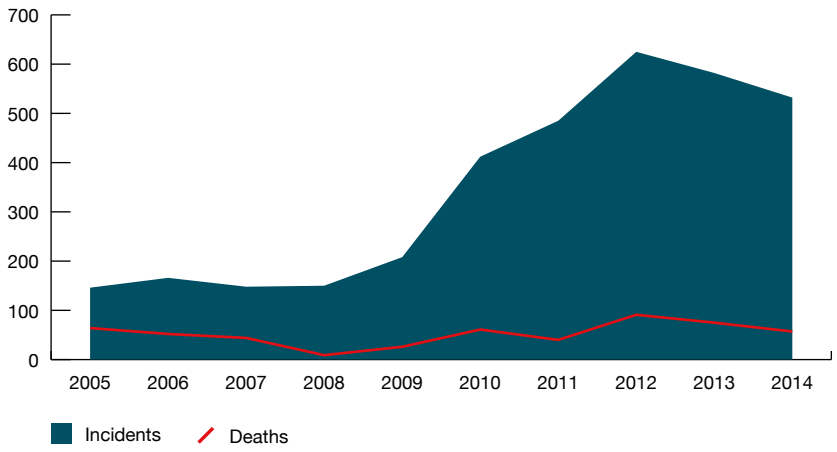


Figure 3. Identity-related incidents and deaths per year, 16 Indonesian provinces (2005–2014)
Source: NVMS, Coordinating Ministry for Human Development and Cultural Affairs, and World Bank

Over the past few years, fringe radical Islamic groups have also acquired a growing influence over mainstream politics, using shows of force and blasphemy accusations to capture the attention of the media and shape public debate. A recent example was the 2017 election for the governor of Jakarta, where the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI), a vigilante group mainly known for using violence to extort payments from nightclubs and gambling dens, spearheaded mobilization against the incumbent governor, Basuki Tjahaja Purnama ("Ahok"), an ethnic Chinese, over allegations of insulting the Quran. With the support of opposing political forces, FPI's agitation led to massive street protests and likely played a crucial role in Ahok's defeat in the second round of the elections in April.

Local level

The large-scale conflicts that followed the collapse of the New Order were largely over by mid-2005. Democratic reforms and decentralization were starting to show benefits, while the economy was rapidly recovering. Violence has dropped, and its nature has shifted to more sporadic, localized incidents (figure 4). While violence is now far less deadly, it shows persistent issues related to law enforcement, community access to justice, land and natural resources management, political representation, and minority rights.[25]

There has been a dramatic drop in fatalities since 2002 (red line in figure 4). As deaths dropped, the nature of violence changed. From 1999 to 2001, identity-related violence accounted for up to 80 percent of all reported deaths in the nine provinces. From 2002 to 2004, as communal conflicts receded and civil war escalated in Aceh, separatism became the main driver of deadly violence. After 2005, the violence assumed a more typical, peace-time model, with crime the main issue (on average accounting for 60 percent of deaths annually from 2005 to 2014). The second main driver of fatalities was domestic violence (15 percent of deaths in the period). Focusing on collective violence, mob justice—in reaction to criminal, moral, or personal offenses—was the deadliest type.

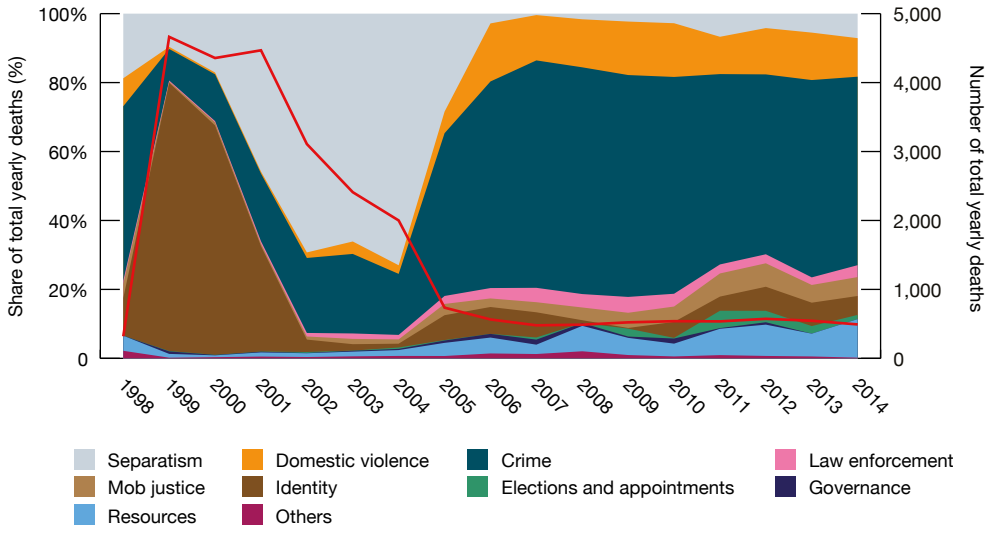


Figure 4. Share of yearly deaths, by type of violence, for nine provinces (1998–2014)
Source: NVMS, Coordinating Ministry for Human Development and Cultural Affairs, and World Bank

Papua's homicide rate

5 times

higher than the national average in 2014

Local political conflict and electoral violence

A large democracy with nearly 200 million registered voters, Indonesia has 34 governors and 514 district heads and mayors, all of whom are elected directly, and as many provincial and district parliaments. Local political competition sometimes plays out violently: contenders mobilize thugs for shows of force that occasionally lead to clashes and street violence. This has led to calls to cancel direct local elections and revert to the previous system where governors and district heads were chosen by parliaments. However, subnational elections have not led to major unrest. From 2005 to 2014, just 98 of a total of nearly 2,500 violent deaths were related to elections or other forms of political competition. Violence has mainly been concentrated in remote regions such as Papua's highlands (where district politics often map onto clan-based tensions), or in regions formerly affected by large-scale conflict, such as Aceh.

Local conflict over resources and community rights

Land and natural resources conflicts lead to more deaths. Annual violent incidents have increased steadily during the past five years. Between 2010 and 2014, incidents increased by 40 percent, and deaths more than doubled, from 34 to 72. Resource-related violence represents only a small share of all violence in Indonesia (2–3 percent), but it is comparatively more likely to lead to fatalities than other types of violence.[26]

The vast majority of these incidents result from contestation over land. These typically pit local communities against agribusiness companies or extractive industries granted concessions by the state, but they also map onto communal lines of opposition between different ethnic groups, or between indigenous populations and migrants. Many large cases, such as the Mesuji and Jambi land disputes, defy simple narratives. They involve overlapping claims by customary (*adat*) communities, migrants, and private interests, and are further complicated by the intervention of political actors and land speculators trying to take advantage of the dispute.[27]

Multiple factors explain the prevalence of land conflicts in Indonesia, many of which can be traced back to the colonial era and policies under the authoritarian New Order regime. These include the 1967 Forestry Law, which placed the state in control of 70 percent of Indonesia's land.[28] This opened the way for the massive conversion of rainforest into timber and plantation agriculture concessions, with little regard for customary rights, environmental damage, or sustainability.[29] Contradictory laws and regulations, and overlapping lines of bureaucratic authority across ministries and between central and local government, have led to a lack of clarity in land classification and ownership rights. Other factors include the excessive application of the state's power of eminent domain; the lack of safeguards to enforce the right of local communities to free,

prior, and informed consent; poor maps and cadastral records; and corrupt courts.[30] Claimants, and civil society organizations acting on their behalf, often have little choice but to use shows of force to secure public attention and pressure government into addressing their grievances. On the other side, heavy-handed responses by police and private security forces contribute to the escalation of disputes into lethal violence. In 2014, institutional mechanisms for the adjudication of land disputes were established from national to district level. Whether they will be effective remains to be seen.

Urban crime and violence

Violent crime is the main source of violent deaths today, with 1,744 deaths in 2014, or 58 percent of all homicides that year. Since the 1970s, Indonesia has undergone rapid urbanization. Fifty-three percent of the population, 134 million Indonesians, lived in cities in 2014. One-fifth were poor or close to the poverty line. The third main cause of deadly violence in Indonesia—mob justice—is also related to crime, as it is in large part a response to it. Lynchings killed over 300 people in 2014; two-thirds were petty thieves. The prevalence of mob justice incidents in Indonesia reflects a pervasive lack of trust in the police and the justice system, especially among poor and rural Indonesians.

Domestic and gender-based violence

Domestic violence is currently the second-highest cause of violent death in Indonesia. It killed 449 persons in 2014, or 15 percent of all violent deaths. However, the number of reported domestic violence incidents, as well as the number of female homicide and sexual assault victims, has been declining over the past decade (figure 5).

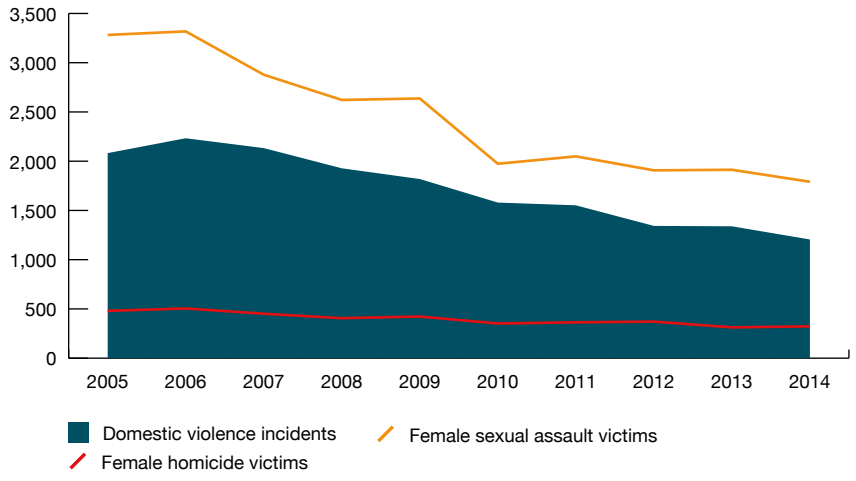


Figure 5. Domestic violence incidents and female victims of sexual assault and homicide, 16 provinces
Source: NVMS, Coordinating Ministry for Human Development and Cultural Affairs, and World Bank

Notes

1 Quinton Temby, "Imagining an Islamic state in Indonesia: From Darul Islam to Jemaah Islamiyah," *Indonesia* 89 (April 2010).
2 Ruth McVey, "The Post-Revolutionary Transformation of the Indonesian Army," *Indonesia* 11 (April 1971).
3 Herbert Feith and Daniel S. Lev, "The End of the Indonesian Rebellion," *Pacific Affairs* 36, no. 1 (1963): 32–46.
4 Robert Cribb, ed., *The Indonesian Killings 1965–1966: Studies from Java and Bali* (Clayton, Australia: Monash University, 1990).
5 The Habibie government convened a commission that concluded that 300–1,200 people were killed and 52 women were raped. See International Crisis Group (ICG), *Indonesia: Impunity versus Accountability*, Asia Report No. 12 (Jakarta and Brussels: ICG, 2001), https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-east-asia/indonesia/indonesia-impunity-versus-accountability.
6 Densus 88 has a reputation for abusive force: many suspects were killed during arrest, and at least 121 died in custody, 2007–2016. See Eko Prasetyo, "Police Negligence Admission only Tip of the Iceberg: Amnesty International," *Jakarta Globe*, April 22, 2016, http://jakartaglobe.beritasatu.com/news/police-negligence-admission-tip-iceberg-amnesty-international/.
7 Since the Bali bombing, 120 have been killed in terror attacks, but the 2009 bomb attacks on the JW Marriott and Ritz Carlton hotels in Jakarta were the last to kill more than five.
8 The Soufan Group (TSG), *Foreign Fighters: An Updated Assessment of the Flow of Foreign Fighters into Syria and Iraq* (TSG, December 2015), http://soufangroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/TSG_ForeignFightersUpdate3.pdf.
9 See Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict (IPAC), *Disunity Among Indonesian ISIS Supporters and the Risk of More Violence*, IPAC Report No.25 (IPAC, February 1, 2016), http://file.understandingconflict.org/file/2016/02/IPAC_25.pdf.
10 For example, joining a foreign terrorist organization such as ISIS is not considered a crime in Indonesia. See IPAC, *Disunity Among Indonesian ISIS Supporters*.
11 Edward Aspinall, *Islam and Nation: Separatist Rebellion in Aceh, Indonesia* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2009).
12 World Bank, *Multi-Stakeholder Review of Post-Conflict Programming in Aceh: Identifying the Foundations for Sustainable Peace and Development in Aceh* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2009), http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/716601468259763959/Full-report.
13 International Crisis Group (ICG), *Aceh: Post-Conflict Complications*, Asia Report No. 139 (ICG, 2007); ICG, *Indonesia: Pre-Election Anxieties in Aceh*, Asia Briefing No. 81 (ICG, 2008); ICG, *Indonesia: Deep Distrust in Aceh as Elections Approach*, Asia Briefing No. 90 (ICG, 2009); ICG, *Indonesia: Averting Election Violence in Aceh*, Asia Briefing No. 135 (ICG, 2012).
14 NVMS was implemented by the World Bank on behalf of the Government of Indonesia, and in partnership with The Habibie Center, a think tank. It contains data on every violent incident reported by local newspapers in Indonesia from 1998 to 2014. Data can be accessed via http://snpk.kemenkopmk.go.id.
15 Throughout this chapter, unless specified otherwise, *Papua* is used to refer to both Papua and West Papua province.
16 Estimates of fatalities range from 100,000 to 500,000. See the government-issued report, Muridan S. Widjojo et al., *Papua Road Map: Negotiating the Past, Improving the Present and Securing the Future*, (Jakarta: The Indonesian Institute of Science, 2008).
17 The transmigration program (*transmigrasi*) was an initiative of the Dutch colonial government, later continued by the Indonesian government, to move landless people from Java and other densely populated areas of Indonesia to less populous areas of the country. President Joko Widodo ended transmigration to Papua in 2015.
18 Estimates from Widjojo et al., *Papua Road Map*.
19 For a case study on local disputes related to resource extraction in Boven Digoel, see International Crisis Group (ICG) *Papua: A Local Perspective on the Conflict*, Asia Briefing No. 66 (ICG, 2007).
20 Human Rights Watch, "World Report 2016: Indonesia," Human Rights Watch website, https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2016/country-chapters/indonesia.
21 In 1999, Papua was a single province with ten districts. By 2013, it had become two provinces with 42 districts, and proposals for 33 more divisions awaited parliamentary consideration. See Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict (IPAC), *Carving up Papua: More Districts, More Problems*, IPAC Report No. 3 (Jakarta: IPAC, 2013), http://www.understandingconflict.org/en/conflict/read/8/Carving-Up-Papua-More-Districts-More-Problems.
22 "Indonesia Database for Policy and Economic Research (INDO-DAPOER)," World Bank DataBank, accessed October 2016, http://databank.worldbank.org/data/reports.aspx?source=indo~dapoer-(indonesia-database-for-policy-and-economic-research).
23 Gerry van Klinken, *Communal Violence and Democratization in Indonesia: Small Town Wars* (London and New York, Routledge, 2007); John T. Sidel, *Riots, Pogroms, Jihad: Religious Violence in Indonesia* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2006); Jacques Bertrand, *Nationalism and Ethnic Violence in Indonesia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Dave McRae, "The Escalation and Decline of Violent Conflict in Poso, Central Sulawesi, 1998–2007" (PhD diss., Australian National University, 2008); Chris Wilson, *Ethno-Religious Violence in Indonesia: From Soil to God* (Routledge, 2008).
24 These 16 provinces represent all major island groups and account for about 53 percent of the country's population.
25 The figure is based on NVMS data for a sample of nine provinces that includes all six provinces most affected by these conflicts: Aceh, Maluku, North Maluku, Central Sulawesi, Central Kalimantan, and West Kalimantan (see note 14).
26 In 2014, the NVMS dataset counted one death for every five resource-related incidents; the average ratio for all violence types recorded by NVMS is one death for every ten incidents (see note 14).

27 Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict (IPAC), *Mesuji: Anatomy of an Indonesian Land Conflict*, IPAC Report No. 1 (Jakarta: IPAV, 2013), http://file.understandingconflict.org/file/2013/09/Mesuji_FINAL.pdf; and IPAC, *Indigenous Rights vs. Agrarian Reform in Indonesia: A Case Study from Jambi*, IPAC Report No. 9 (IPAC, 2014), http://file.understandingconflict.org/file/2014/04/IPAC_Report_9_Case_Study_from_Jambi_web.pdf.

28 A 2013 Constitutional Court decision to remove customary forests from state control was an important victory for indigenous rights activists, but implementation remains a long way off. See IPAC, *Indigenous Rights*.

29 For example, Indonesia had 120,000 ha of land under oil palm cultivation in 1968; in 2014, it had over 10 million ha, with more than 600,000 ha added each year. See IPAC, *Indigenous Rights*.

30 Shivakumar Srinivas et al., *Towards Indonesian Land Reforms: Challenges and Opportunities* (Jakarta: World Bank, 2014).

1870

1870
British colonial government begins bringing Chinese and Tamil laborers to the Malay peninsula to work in mines and rubber plantations.

1945
Sino-Malay race riots lead to an estimated 2,000 deaths.

1946
The Malayan Union, established by the British, grants citizenship to the country's Chinese and Indians. The United Malays National Organization (UMNO), founded that year, opposes it.

1948
The Federation of Malaya replaces the Malayan Union.

1955
The Alliance, an intercommunal coalition composed of the UMNO and Chinese and Indian parties, wins an election landslide. Later known as Barisan Nasional, the coalition has dominated Malaysian politics since.

1957
The Federation of Malaya achieves independence from the UK.

1963
The Federation of Malaysia is formed with Singapore and the Borneo states of Sabah and Sarawak.

1964
Tensions between the UMNO and Singapore's ethnic-Chinese-dominated People's Action Party (PAP) spark communal riots.

1965
Singapore exits the Federation of Malaysia.

1969
Following historic opposition electoral gains, the May 13 riots between ethnic Chinese and ethnic Malays kill at least 196.

1971
The New Economic Policy (NEP) is launched. It will succeed in reducing poverty, but entrench Malays' preferential status.

1981
Amid growing Malay nationalism, Mahathir Mohamad becomes prime minister, bringing rapid economic growth, but also authoritarianism.

1982
Young Islamic leader Anwar Ibrahim joins UMNO amid conflict between Mahathir and the Pan-Malayan Islamic Party (PAS).

1987
Operation Lalang jails 106 opposition politicians and activists under the Internal Security Act.

1997
The Asian financial crisis.

1998
Anwar, then deputy prime minister, is sacked over economic policy and put on trial for sodomy and corruption. Public outrage gives birth to the Reformasi movement.

2003
His coalition weakened by the Asian financial crisis and mounting opposition, Mahathir steps down.

2007
The Bersih ("Clean") movement demands free and fair elections.

2013
200 armed Filipinos from the Royal Sulu Sultanate Army invade a coastal village in Sabah.

2016
The fifth iteration of the Bersih protests, "Bersih 5.0," calls for the resignation of Prime Minister Najib Razak over the 1MDB corruption case.

2017

Malaysia

At a glance

National civil war
Absent

Communal/ideological conflict
Medium

National political conflict
Medium

Local political and electoral conflict
Low

Transnational terrorism
Medium

Local resource conflict
Low

Separatism and autonomy
Low

Urban crime and violence
Low

** Rankings are based on the last 15 years and are relative to other Asian countries.*

Overview

Politics in Malaysia have been shaped by ethnic and religious dynamics. In the years leading to independence and the decade that followed, growing economic disparities between ethnic Malays and the Chinese and Indian communities led to the emergence of political formations organized along communal lines. Simmering tensions culminated in race riots in May 1969, a watershed event that left a lasting mark on Malaysian politics. Barisan Nasional (National Front), a broad, intercommunal political coalition, remained continuously in power by safeguarding Malay political supremacy while at the same time introducing economic policies that benefited all. Under its rule, Malaysia experienced rapid growth and kept racial tensions in check. This, however, came at the cost of civic freedoms, as the Barisan Nasional government took a semiauthoritarian turn, using latent racial tensions to legitimate restrictions on democratic expression. The aftermath of the 1997 Asian financial crisis altered the political landscape. Divisions appeared within the ruling coalition over the sacking of Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, making room for an emboldened civil society to assert itself and demand civic freedoms, electoral reform and transparency. As the hegemony of the ruling coalition has increasingly been challenged, protests have often been met with arrests and police brutality. The continued use of communalism for political advantage raises the risk of violence in the future. Terrorist attacks on Malaysian soil have been relatively rare, but Malaysians have been involved in attacks elsewhere, and extremist views appear to be widespread in the country. Rates of local electoral violence, resource conflict, and criminal violence, however, are low compared to many countries in the region.

Malaysia

National level

National civil war

National civil war has not been present in Malaysia since independence.

National political conflict

Ethnic and religious communalism in large part define the Malaysian political landscape. Policies favoring ethnic Malays and other indigenous people, collectively known as *Bumiputera* (68.6 percent of the population[1]), are by and large accepted by the large Chinese and Indian communities (respectively 23.4 percent and 7 percent) as a trade-off for broad-based economic growth and stability. While these tensions have rarely escalated into violence since the 1969 riots, the threat of social unrest has been used to secure the support of minorities for the multiethnic Barisan Nasional political coalition, which has ruled Malaysia without interruption since independence. Since the 2000s, however, an emboldened civil society has increasingly challenged the status quo, as evidenced by the success of the *Bersih* movement. Demands for electoral reform and an end to corruption have mobilized citizens across communal divides.

Between 1870 and 1930, Chinese and Tamils were brought to the Malay peninsula in large numbers by the British colonial government to work as laborers in the mining industry and on rubber plantations. The British ruled through the feudal Malay Sultanate system. A minority of better-educated urban Malays were employed in the colonial administration, while rural Malays continued to live by subsistence farming. While Malays were subjects of the British Malaya state and benefited from customary land rights, free education, and other advantages, Chinese and Indians were considered temporary foreign residents. Nevertheless, exposure to the new economy of mining and large-scale planting improved the economic welfare of the Chinese and Indian populations. The former became dominant in trade, while Indians continued to work in plantations. The growing urban working class became largely composed of such "foreigners," with Malays increasingly lagging behind, leading to an increase in racial tensions. These erupted into violence during the Japanese occupation, when Malay anticolonial forces, trained and armed by the Japanese, fought antifascist forces armed by the British and composed mainly of Chinese. In 1945, Sino-Malay race riots led to an estimated 2,000 deaths.[2]

Following World War II, the short-lived Malayan Union, established by the British to prepare for independence, considerably reduced the power of the Sultans and granted citizenship and access to the civil service to Chinese and Indians. These provisions were met with vocal opposition from the United Malays National Organization (UMNO), which was established in 1946. This led to the replacement of the Malayan Union by the Federation of Malaya in 1948, which restored the authority of the Sultans under the British high commissioner.

Chinese and Indian demands for equal citizenship and educational and employment opportunities continued, however. The Chinese and Indian communities formed political parties—the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC) in 1946, and the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA) in 1949—to gain political leverage to bargain for better status. At the same time, an insurgency, led by the Communist Party of Malaya (CPM), which was dominated by ethnic Chinese, erupted in 1948 (see the section on large-scale communal and ideological conflicts, below).

The MIC and MCA eventually rallied around the UMNO to form the Alliance (the forerunner of Barisan Nasional). The MIC and MCA's support for UMNO was based on a compromise

whereby minorities would support Malay preferential status in exchange for security and a tacit understanding that the government would not interfere in their economic affairs. The Alliance went on to win the 1955 elections by a landslide. The same coalition has dominated Malaysian politics without interruption to this day.

The Federation of Malaya achieved independence in 1957, and in 1963 became the Federation of Malaysia after integrating Singapore and the states of Sabah and Sarawak in northern Borneo. Lee Kuan Yew's People's Action Party (PAP) dominated Singapore, where Chinese are a large majority, from the 1959 elections onward, posing a political threat to UMNO at the federal level. Tensions between the two parties culminated in the 1964 communal riots, during which at least 22 people were killed and 454 injured.[3] Singapore was expelled from the Federation in 1965. In the rest of Malaysia, competition between the Alliance and a developing political opposition also resulted in racial violence. UMNO's control over the ethnic-Malay constituency was challenged by the Pan-Malayan Islamic Party (PAS), founded in 1951 by Muslim clerics in the rural and conservative north. Meanwhile, Chinese frustration over the MCA's performance led to the formation of the Democratic Action Party (DAP) in 1965, and the Malaysian People's Movement (Gerakan) in 1968, both of which campaigned for the abolition of Malay privileges.[4] Opposition parties made historic gains in the 1969 elections, inflicting a major setback on the Alliance, which failed for the first time to achieve the crucial two-thirds majority needed to pass constitutional amendments in the federal parliament. Following incidents during celebrations by DAP and Gerakan supporters, riots broke out on May 13, three days after the election. Chinese properties were looted, and at least 196 people, most of them Chinese, were killed.[5]

The riots led to a major shift in Malaysian politics, marked by the consolidation of Malay power and a long-lasting authoritarian turn. A state of national emergency was declared on May 14, and the parliament was suspended for two years. When it reconvened in 1971, it amended the 1948 Sedition Act to further suppress contestation of the preferential status of Bumiputera. The Alliance reformed as Barisan Nasional, integrating opposition parties such as PAS and Gerakan. The 1969 riots were also used to justify the launch of a New Economic Policy (NEP). The NEP was meant to foster interracial harmony by reducing poverty and eliminating the association of ethnic groups with specific economic activities. In practice, it included many affirmative action provisions to decrease the dependence of Bumiputera on subsistence agriculture and increase their representation in business, commerce, and salaried professions. Implemented from 1971 to 1990, the NEP achieved significant success, reducing the share of Malaysians living under the poverty line from 49.3 percent in 1970 to 16.3 percent in 1990.[6] It also resulted in greater representation of ethnic Malays in nonagricultural sectors, tertiary education, and the country's growing middle class. The NEP's effects on interracial harmony are more debatable, however, as it entrenched the preferential status of Bumiputera and fed resentment among ethnic minorities. Another effect of the 1969 riots was the growing influence of ultra-Malay nationalism, especially within the UMNO. This enabled the rise to power of the conservative politician Mahathir Mohamad, who became prime minister in 1981 and remained in that office for the next 22 years.

Under Mahathir rule, Malaysia became a relatively successful developmental state,[7] with state-led macroeconomic planning leading to rapid economic growth. This came at a cost, however. Democratic freedoms were curbed, and racial issues were frequently manipulated to mobilize the Malay vote, keep minorities in line, and suppress dissent. In a major crackdown, Operation Lalang, in 1987, 106 opposition politicians and civil society activists were arrested under the Internal Security Act (ISA) for allegedly inciting racial tensions.[8] The 1980s and '90s also witnessed the Islamization of the state in response to the political challenge posed by the Islamic PAS party, which had left the Barisan Nasional to return to the opposition in 1977.[9] Benefiting from a religious revival, fueled by global events such as the Arab-Israeli wars and the Iranian revolution, PAS challenged UMNO dominance within the ethnic-Malay community.[10] To undercut PAS, Mahathir groomed his own Islamic leader, the charismatic Anwar Ibrahim, and championed

policies supporting the establishment of Islamic courts, banks, universities, and medical centers and the progressive Islamization of the bureaucracy. In the 1990s, Mahathir took advantage of PAS's support for Sharia-inspired criminal punishments (*hudud* ordinances), and alleged links to local and Indonesian terror groups, to brand the political party as extremist.

The first decade of the 21st century was marked by the growth of a more vocal civil society and reform movement cutting across communal lines. During the Asian financial crisis (1997–1998), Anwar Ibrahim, then finance minister, was sacked over disagreements on economic recovery measures.[11] His subsequent trial for alleged sodomy and corruption was met with public outrage, transforming Mahathir's former protégé into the leader of a movement (Reformasi) that channeled the discontent of Malaysia's growing middle class. The Reformasi activists demanded genuine democratic representation, social justice, and an end to corruption. The movement's initial success was, however, short lived. A coalition formed by PAS, DAP, and Anwar Ibrahim's new party (later known as the People's Justice Party, PKR), collapsed amid disagreements between PAS and DAP about state-level Islamist policies implemented by PAS and demands from the Chinese community relayed by DAP. Only in 2007, four years after Mahathir stepped down, did the reform movement regain momentum with the establishment of the Coalition for Free and Fair Elections (Bersih, or "Clean"). Focusing on a practical set of simple demands regarding elections,[12] Bersih drew between 10,000 and 30,000 protestors into the streets in November 2007. During the following year's general election, Barisan Nasional lost its two-thirds majority for the first time since 1969. Anwar Ibrahim's PKR won five states out of 13 and formed the People's Alliance (Pakatan Rakyat) with PAS and DAP. Four more Bersih protests, in 2011, 2012, 2015, and 2016, attracted large multiracial crowds. Protests were often met with police brutality and arrests. In the 2013 general election, Barisan Nasional's majority in the federal parliament continued to shrink.[13] The 2016 "Bersih 5.0" protesters called for the resignation of current prime minister Najib Razak over his alleged involvement in the 1MDB corruption case.[14] To bolster support in the lead-up to the 2018 general election, Najib has allegedly been resorting to old communal tactics: he proposed to further Islamicize Malaysian law by adopting the same hudud punishments once promoted by PAS.[15] Within the opposition, communal divides also persist. Common demands regarding electoral reform and good governance bring together different constituencies. But fundamental differences over the preferential status of Bumiputera and the role of Islam in the state are bound to resurface.

Transnational terrorism

Malaysian volunteers have gone abroad to wage jihad, first with the Afghan mujahedeen and more recently with the Islamic State. Jihad returnees have contributed to the spread of extremist views within Malaysia.[16]

Although no precise number of Malaysians joining the Afghan jihad in the 1980s was documented, a USAID report estimated that around 300–400 fighters from Malaysia and Indonesia together were trained in Pakistan and Afghanistan as anti-Soviet mujahedeen.[17] In 1986, Malaysians returning from the jihad formed a clandestine "prayer group," Halaqah Pakindo, bringing together graduates of religious institutions in India, Pakistan, and Indonesia. The group was allegedly sponsored by PAS, and gave birth to other Malaysian radical organizations.[18] In 1995, Kumpulan Mujahidin Malaysia (the Malaysian Mujahideen Movement, KMM) was established by Zainon Ismail, an Afghan jihad veteran and a member of the PAS State Youth Committee in Kedah state.[19] KMM's goal was to overthrow Mahathir's government and create a regional Islamic state comprising Malaysia, Indonesia, and the southern parts of Thailand and the Philippines. The group was responsible for robberies, bombings, and the murder of government officials. High-profile incidents included the bombing of a Hindu temple in Kuala Lumpur in 2000 and the assassination of a state assemblyman in Penang who was believed to have persuaded Malay Muslim women to convert to Christianity.[20] KMM was closely linked with the Indonesian terror

group Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), which shares the same goal of a pan-Malay Islamic state, and which helped KMM reach out to militant groups in the Philippines as well as to al-Qaeda.[21] In 2001 and 2002, 14 members were arrested, and KMM was disbanded. However, some former KMM members were later found joining the Islamic State (IS).[22]

A Malaysian national, Noordin Mohammad Top, was the mastermind of some of the most high-profile JI attacks in Indonesia in the 2000s, such as the 2005 Bali attacks and the bombings in Jakarta of the JW Marriott Hotel (2003), the Australian Embassy (2004), and the JW Marriott and Ritz Carlton Hotels (2009).[23] Noordin was killed by Densus 88, the counterterrorism unit of the Indonesian police, during a raid in Central Java in 2009.

Following the rise of IS in Syria beginning in 2013, some Malaysians went abroad to join the jihad. The government's official count was 100 in 2015. A Malay-speaking IS combat unit, Katibah Nusantara, was formed in Syria, although a large majority of its members were Indonesian. The Soufan Group noted that the Malaysian state was more efficient at preventing the departure of combatants than neighboring Indonesia.[24] Between 2014 and 2016, the Malaysian police carried out multiple arrests of suspected militants preparing attacks in the country, and claimed to have foiled several plots.[25] A grenade attack on a bar frequented by expatriates in Puchong, Selangor, which injured eight people in June 2016, was the first claimed by IS in Malaysia. Fifteen suspects were arrested, two of whom were police officers. The perpetrators allegedly reported to Muhammad Wanndy Mohamed Jedi, a Syria-based IS leader and Malaysian national, who also ordered attacks on prominent Malaysians including Prime Minister Najib Razak.[26] Wanndy was killed in Syria in April 2017. The Soufan Group found that Malaysians arrested while trying to join IS tend to be less hardened and committed militants than their Indonesian counterparts.[27] However, the Pew Research Center found that 11 percent of Malaysians view IS favorably, the second-highest score globally (figure 1).

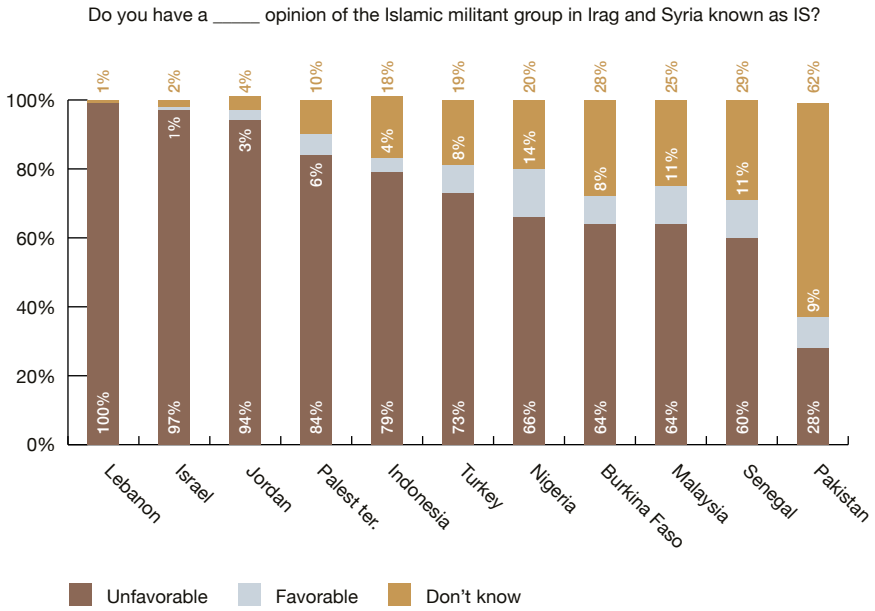


Figure 1. Views toward IS
Source: Pew Research Center[28]

Separatism and autonomy

The borders of Sabah, one of the two Malaysian states situated on the island of Borneo, have long been a bone of contention between Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines. In 2002, the International Court of Justice settled a territorial dispute between Indonesia and Malaysia over the Ligitan and Sipadan islands in favor of Malaysia. Both countries continue to claim sovereignty over the Ambalat continental shelf. Another dispute, with the Philippines, over northern Sabah has led to several eruptions of violence. In the 17th and 18th centuries, the region of Sabah was under the influence of the Sultanate of Sulu, based in the archipelago of the same name in the southern Philippines. It became a British protectorate in the 19th century and, after the Japanese occupation during World War II, a British colony and a founding member of the Federation of Malaysia in 1963. The Philippines claim Sabah on the basis that the sultan of Sulu only leased the territory to the British in 1878, while Malaysia considers that the people of Sabah exercised their right to self-determination in joining the Federation in 1963.

The Philippines at times has used military means to try to gain control of Sabah. In 1968, the government of President Ferdinand Marcos trained a special commando team of Muslim combatants, the Jabidah, to infiltrate Sabah, recruiting among the local Tausug[29] population and carrying out sabotage operations to destabilize the region and strengthen the Philippines' territorial claims. However, the operation failed and ended in tragedy, with the massacre of dozens of Jabidah trainees by the Philippine army on Corregidor Island.[30]

The dispute remained dormant until 2013, when over 200 armed men, identifying themselves as the Royal Sulu Sultanate Army, invaded the coastal village of Lahad Datu in Sabah by motorboat. The men were followers of Jamalul Kiram III, one of the claimants to the title of sultan of Sulu. The ensuing stand-off lasted over a month and escalated into military confrontation.[31] A total of 56 militants were killed, along with six civilians and 10 members of the Malaysian security forces.

In Sabah and in Sarawak, the other North Borneo Malaysian state, there have also been indigenous calls to separate from peninsular Malaysia. In 2014, a group called Sabah Sarawak Keluar Malaysia (Sabah Sarawak Leave Malaysia, SSKM) appeared on social media to demand independence for the two states. At the same time, a coalition of NGOs, politicians, and activists addressed a petition to the United Nations secretary general on the issue of self-determination.[32] Malaysian authorities declared the initiative unlawful, and charged SSKM members under the Sedition Act.[33]

Large-scale communal and ideological conflicts

Communal tensions have shaped Malaysian politics and society since independence (on this, refer to the national political conflict section, above).

Malaysia fought a domestic communist insurgency from 1948 to 1960—a first phase known as the Malayan Emergency—and then again from 1967 to 1989. The Communist Party of Malaya (CPM) was formed in 1930 to oppose colonial rule. It briefly received British support to fight the Japanese occupation during World War II, but started fighting the British after the war. Besides independence, the CPM also demanded equal rights for all inhabitants of Malaysia regardless of ethnicity. While the party was a multiethnic organization, its membership was predominantly Chinese. Its armed wing, the Malayan National Liberation Army (MNLA), recruited among ethnic Chinese "squatters," landless farmers in rural Malaysia.[34] In 1948, the colonial administration declared a state of emergency after the assassination of three European planters by the

11% of Malaysians **view IS** favorably, the 2nd highest score globally

communists in Perak. The ensuing guerilla war was characterized by acts of sabotage and attacks on rubber plantations, to which the British responded by relocating half a million rural Chinese into camps. In 1952, the MNLA assassinated the British high commissioner. Peace talks began in 1955 after Malaysia's first general election, along with an offer of amnesty for surrendering combatants. Although the talks were not successful, the liberation war waged by the CPM lost steam after Malaysia gained independence in 1957; the MNLA retreated to the Thai border, and the emergency was declared over in 1960.

The conflict killed an estimated 10,533 people, including 6,710 MNLA fighters and approximately 2,500 civilians.[35] It also served to justify repressive legislation that would be used to suppress peacetime contestation in the following decades, such as the Sedition Act and emergency regulations that formed the basis of the Internal Security Act of 1960.[36]

A second phase of the insurgency started in 1968, in parallel with the intensification of the Vietnam War and the 1969 ethnic riots in Kuala Lumpur. The MNLA launched attacks from their stronghold along the Thailand-Malaysia border. But insufficient foreign support, internal factionalism, and the insurgents' failure to mobilize national support beyond their ethnic-Chinese base led them to enter peace talks and eventually end the war in 1989, as the USSR collapsed.

Local level

Local political conflict and electoral violence

Election-related violence has not been as prevalent in Malaysia as in many other Southeast Asian countries. However, increased political competition between the ruling BN and the opposition Pakatan Rakyat, which made large gains in the 2008 election, resulted in frequent incidents prior to the 2013 general election.

Violent acts prior to the campaign period were limited to blocking access to meetings, stone and egg throwing, and destruction of property. However, when the official, two-week campaign period started in April, incidents became more violent. These included physical harassment of two men in Georgetown who held the opposition party flags, a bomb at a BN rally in northern Penang that injured a security guard, two petrol bombs at a BN office in Kuala Lumpur, and the

torching of two vehicles that belonged to the daughter of a candidate from the opposition Pakatan Rakyat in Klang. [37] Police reported 1,166 cases of election-related violence and intimidation in the first week of the campaign, and 43 arrests.[38]

Local conflict over resources and community rights

The land-development policy implemented in the 1970s as part of the NEP provided over one million acres of land on the peninsula to the poor and resettled more than 76,200 families from 1970 to 1980.[39] The program also contributed to economic development by increasing Malaysia's production of rubber and especially palm oil, of which it is now a major exporter. Over 200 plantations had opened as of 2014, with 103,156 registered settlers and more than 477,000 hectares of developed land. [40]

Land use for oil palm plantations, however, has been associated with environmental issues such as deforestation and biodiversity loss and the violation of customary indigenous land rights. In Sarawak, for example, the area planted with oil palm rose from 23,000 hectares in 1980 to more than one million hectares in 2013.[41] The Sarawak state government in the 1980s believed that poverty could be eradicated by providing both public lands and customary lands belonging to the indigenous Dayak population to outsiders and private companies for large-scale plantations.[42] Unsurprisingly, this led to land conflicts between oil palm companies and local communities. Cases of physical violence have included the shooting of a village headman in 1997,[43] a clash between villagers and gangsters hired by an oil palm company in 1999 that resulted in the deaths of seven gangsters, a clash between 200 natives and 100 armed men from an oil palm company in 2011,[44] and the 2016 murder of an indigenous and land rights activist, Bill Kayong, who had actively assisted communities in Sarawak to mobilize against logging by big oil palm and timber companies.[45]

Land conflict related to plantation development is also prevalent in peninsular Malaysia. Indigenous people (*orang asli*) have been vulnerable during land development, in part due to inconsistencies in the laws governing indigenous land ownership. Many do not possess legal documents that prove their ownership of the land, and are involuntarily relocated when the area they occupy is slated for development.[46] Deforestation resulting from land development also damages indigenous livelihoods. In 2016, an indigenous community set up blockades against developers in Balah Forest, which they claim as their customary land. Blockades were later taken down and dozens of locals detained by the police.[47]

Urban crimes and violence

Malaysia's criminal homicide rate was 1.9 deaths per 100,000 people in 2010, the latest year for which UNODC data is available.[48] Since then, the Malaysian government has released data showing its success in reducing the Crime Index under the Government Transformation Program (GTP), launched in January of that year. According to GTP data, there has been an average annual decline of 9 percent in the Crime Index, with a total reduction of 47 percent from 2010 to 2016. The Perception of Crime Indicator (PCI) showed that 61 percent of people in Kuala Lumpur in 2015 feared becoming victims of crime, a reduction from 80 percent in 2010.[49]

Despite relatively low homicide rates, gang violence in Malaysia is common. In 2013, the police published a list of 49 gangs, with around 40,000 members involved. Gangsters take part in many criminal activities, such as drug trafficking, armed robberies, loan-sharking, and contract killings. Gang recruitment targets schoolchildren and is generally carried out along ethnic lines,[50] with 70 percent of gang members reportedly ethnic Indians.[51] Twelve percent of members of these gangs are girls and women.[52]

1.9 deaths / 100,000

One of the lowest homicide rates in Asia

Domestic and gender-based violence

Gender-based violence in Malaysia is underreported, and few studies have been conducted. Baseline research in 2013, which used WHO questionnaires to study women's health and domestic violence against women across 13 states in western Malaysia, found that 8 percent of women had suffered violence by intimate partners.[53] Police records show a steady, recent increase in domestic violence cases: 3,173 cases were recorded in 2010, while 4,807 cases were recorded in 2014 (figure 2).

Transgender people are stigmatized by their families, communities, and government officials. They face employment discrimination and are vulnerable to violence, particularly due to the enactment of the Sharia Criminal Law, which penalizes same-sex conduct with sentences of up to three years imprisonment, although the law has rarely been enforced.[54] A report by Human Rights Watch addressed several cases related to sexual assault of transgender people by state authorities and discrimination related to cross-dressing. It cited an incident in 2014 in which at least 16 adult transwomen were arrested at a wedding and sentenced to seven days imprisonment. It also reported abuse by the state during arrest, custody, and imprisonment.[55]

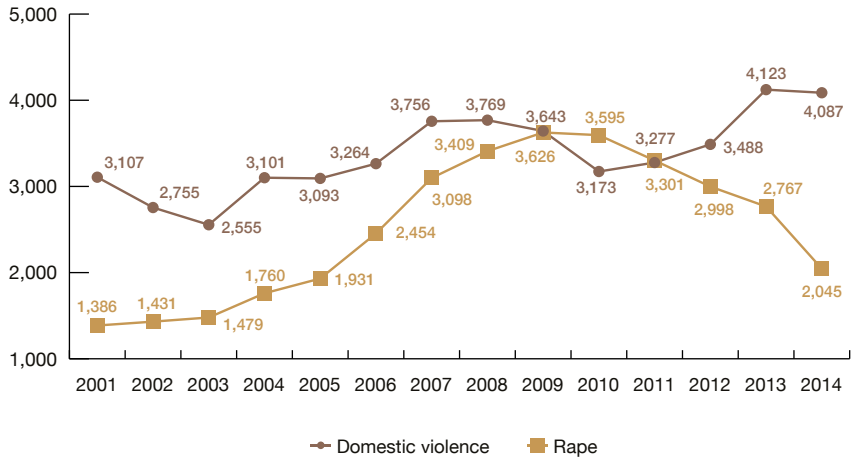


Figure 2. Domestic violence and rape cases (2001–2014)
Source: Royal Malaysia Police and Ministry of Women, Family, and Community Development[56]

Notes

1 "Current Population Estimates, Malaysia, 2014–2016," Malaysia Department of Statistics website, https://www.dosm.gov.my/v1/index.php?r=column/ctheme&menu_id=L0pheU43NWJwRWVSZklWdzQ4TlhUUT09&bul_id=OWlxdEVoYlJCSohUZzJyRUcvZEYxZz09.

2 Martin Vengadesan, "May 13, 1969: Truth and Reconciliation," *Sunday Star*, May 11, 2008, as reproduced on the Malaysian Bar website, accessed January 12, 2017, http://www.malaysianbar.org.my/news_features/may_13_1969_truth_and_reconciliation.html.

3 Adeline Low Hwee Cheng, "The Past in the Present: Memories of the 1964 'Racial Riots' in Singapore," *Asian Journal of Social Science* 29, no. 3 (2001): 431–455.

4 Both parties were multiethnic, but ethnic Chinese were dominant among members and cadres.

5 Unofficial sources provide much higher estimates, up to 800–1,000. See Vengadesan, "Truth and Reconciliation."

6 The measures and statistics used by the Malaysian government have been disputed, but few commentators deny that the policy had a significant effect on poverty. International Crisis Group (ICG), *Malaysia's Coming Election: Beyond Communalism?* Asia Report no. 235 (ICG, 2012), https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-east-asia/malaysia/malaysia-s-coming-election-beyond-communalism.

7 Michael T. Rock, "Southeast Asia's Democratic Developmental States and Economic Growth," *Institutions and Economies* 7, no. 1, (2015): 29–34, http://ijie.um.edu.my/filebank/published_article/7498/IE15April3.pdf.

8 The pretext for the arrests was protests by Chinese politicians and activists over the hiring of non-Chinese-speakers as staff in Chinese-language schools. During Operation Lalang, the government also revoked the licenses of several opposition newspapers. Diane K. Mauzy and R. S. Milne, *Malaysian Politics Under Mahathir* (London: Routledge, 1999).

9 PAS fell out with UMNO over a political dispute in Kelantan, the home state of PAS president Asri Muda, where UMNO refused to back PAS in a motion of no confidence against the state's chief minister.

10 Jason P. Abbott and Sophie Gregorios-Pippas, "Islamization in Malaysia: Processes and Dynamics," *Contemporary Politics* 16, no. 2 (2010): 135–151.

11 Anwar and the central bank preferred high interest rates and austerity measures to control Malaysia's currency, while Mahathir preferred to increase government spending and lower rates. "Malaysia's deputy prime minister fired," *BBC News*, September 2, 1998, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/163200.stm.

12 These demands were: (a) clean-up of the electoral rolls, (b) use of indelible ink, (c) abolition of postal voting for the police and military, and (d) free and fair access to the media for all parties. Bersih 2.0 website, www.bersih.org.

13 Barisan Nasional's majority was secured with just 49 percent of the vote. See "Ruling coalition wins Malaysian election amid fraud allegations," *ABC News*, May 6, 2013, http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-05-06/an-barisan-wins-malaysia-election/4670904.

14 It was alleged that at least USD 700 million was siphoned from the 1Malaysia Development Berhad, a state-owned development fund, to accounts and foundations linked to Najib Razak. See, for example, Tom Wright, "Fund Controversy Threatens Malaysia's Leader," *Wall Street Journal*, June 18, 2015, https://www.wsj.com/articles/fund-controversy-threatens-malaysias-leader-1434681241?mod=e2fb.

15 Joseph Sipalan, "Malaysian PM voices support for Islamic laws as he seeks to bolster support," *Reuters*, November 29, 2016, http://www.reuters.com/article/us-malaysia-politics-idUSKBN13O0LO.

16 USAID, *Indonesian and Malaysian Support for the Islamic State* (South Arlington: USAID, 2016), http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/report/2016/PBAAD863.pdf.

17 Ibid.

18 Mohd Kamarulnizam Abdullah, "Limiting The Threats of Ideological-Based Terror Groups: Lessons to be Learned from Malaysia?" in *International Seminar on Nuclear War and Planetary Emergencies–31st Session: The Cultural Planetary Emergency; Focus on Terrorism,* ed. Antonino Zichichi and Richard Ragaini (Singapore: World Scientific, 2004).

19 Most members of the group were also veterans of the Afghan war, and some were also PAS members. Kamarulnizam Abdullah, "Kumpulan Mujahidin Malaysia (KMM) and Jemaah Islamiyah (JI): The Links," *Journal of Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism* 4, no. 1 (2009): 29–46, http://www.platformpk.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/mujahidin1.pdf.

20 Ibid.

21 Ibid.

22 Prior to the first successful attack on Malaysia's soil in 2016, a former KMM member, Abu Thalma, appeared in videos released by IS warning of an attack against Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines. "Chilling ISIS videos precede first strike on Malaysia," *Straits Times*, July 5, 2016, http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/chilling-isis-videos-precede-first-strike-on-malaysia. A USAID report also identified Murad Halimmuddin, a member of KMM and a returnee from Syria, who, along with other Malaysian returnees, planned to launch attacks and create an IS-like Islamic State in Malaysia. USAID, *Indonesian and Malaysian Support*.

23 The combined attacks killed 48 and injured hundreds. Noordin Top may also have been involved in the preparation of the 2002 Bali bombing that killed 202 people. He was also a representative of al-Qaeda in Southeast Asia. See "Who was Noordin Mohammed Top? Suspected planner of deadly bomb attacks dies in house raid," *Al Jazeera*, September 18, 2009, http://www.aljazeera.com/news/asia-pacific/2009/08/200988549546510 8.html.

24 The Soufan Group, *Foreign Fighters in Syria and Iraq: An Updated Assessment of the Flow of Foreign Fighters into Syria and Iraq* (New York: The Soufan Group, 2015), http://soufangroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/TSG_ForeignFightersUpdate3.pdf.

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27 Soufan Group, *Foreign Fighters*.

28 Jacob Poushter, "In Nations with Significant Muslim Populations, Much Disdain for ISIS," *Pew Research Center*, November 17, 2015, http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/11/17/in-nations-with-significant-muslim-populations-much-dis'dain-for-isis/.
29 Tausug are the dominant ethnic group in Sulu.
30 Much of the detail regarding this operation, known as "Merdeka" remains shrouded in mystery. See Marites Dañguilan Vitug and Glenda M. Gloria, "Jabidah and Merdeka: The Inside Story," *Rappler*, March 18, 2013, http://www.rappler.com/newsbreak/24025-jabidah-massacre-merdeka-sabah.
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1990

1990
Mongolia secures its independence from the Soviet Union in a democratic and peaceful revolution.

1998
Prime Minister Elbegdorj sells the state-owned Reconstruction Bank to a private bank owned by fellow Democrats. The MPRP opposition walks out of parliament in protest, and Elbegdorj and his cabinet are forced to resign.

1998
Elbegdorj's nominated successor, Zorig, is assassinated in his home. After a political impasse, Narantsatsralt becomes prime minister two months later.

2000
The MPRP, led by Enkhbayar, wins a landslide victory in parliamentary elections.

2008
After another MPRP electoral victory, Democrats protest alleged vote rigging. Three hundred are injured when riots break out, and Mongolia declares its first-ever state of emergency.

2009
Elbegdorj, a Democrat, defeats MPRP incumbent Enkhbayar to become president.

2012
The Democrats defeat the former MPRP (now MPP) in parliamentary elections.

2012
During the Democrats' rule, former president Enkhbayar is convicted of corruption and sentenced to seven years in prison.

2016
MPP returns to power with a supermajority in peaceful parliamentary elections.

2017
Following a contentious campaign, Battulga of the Democratic Party wins presidential elections.

2017

Mongolia

At a glance

National civil war
Absent

Communal/ideological conflict
Medium Low

National political conflict
Low

Local political and electoral conflict
Low

Transnational terrorism
Absent

Local resource conflict
Medium

Separatism and autonomy
Absent

Urban crime and violence
High

** Rankings are based on the last 15 years and are relative to other Asian countries.*

Overview

Since it emerged from its status as a satellite state of the Soviet Union, there has been little large-scale violence in Mongolia, although the transition from a centrally planned to a market economy has been unsteady and somewhat tumultuous. While the Mongolian Revolution of 1990 was democratic and peaceful, the collapse of the economy after the withdrawal of Soviet support triggered some political instability. The 2008 legislative elections highlighted tensions between the ruling and opposition parties, and a peaceful postelection protest by opposition parties turned violent, resulting in five deaths, many injuries, and damage to property, including the headquarters of the ruling Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party and the Central Cultural Palace building. Despite fears of a repeat of the 2008 violence, presidential elections in 2009 and 2013 and legislative elections in 2012 and 2016 were peaceful. Although the campaigns leading up to the 2017 presidential elections were contentious, the elections and run-off went smoothly, resulting in a victory for Khaltmaa Battulga of the Democratic Party. Ever since the government launched its economic development strategy based on mining in the 1990s, the country has experienced intermittent anti-mining and environmental protests. Although the protests are mostly peaceful, people's frustrations with the government and the large, foreign-backed mining companies continue to grow, especially as Mongolia's economy has been declining, with its annual growth rate of 2.3 percent in 2015 a steep five points lower than the previous year.[1] Ulaanbaatar has the highest homicide rate of any Asian city.

Mongolia

National level

National civil war

National civil war has not been present in Mongolia since 1264.[2] In 1920, the Russian Civil War spread into Mongolia. With the support of Mongols, the anti-Bolshevik Lieutenant General Roman von Ungern-Sternberg led his troops into Mongolia. In February 1921, Ungern and his troops defeated Chinese forces. Shortly after establishing its independence, the country came under Soviet control. After the breakup of communist regimes in Europe in the late 1980s, Mongolia experienced a peaceful democratic revolution in the early 1990s.

National political conflict

The political landscape is volatile in Mongolia. In 1998, under Democratic Party rule, a number of significant political events undermined Mongolian democracy and weakened the ability of the government to effectively manage the country. When Prime Minister Tsakhiagiin Elbegdorj made the controversial decision to sell the state-owned Reconstruction Bank to Golomt Bank, which was owned by Mongolian Democrats, members of the opposition party, the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party (MPRP), walked out of parliament in protest. As a result, Elbegdorj and his cabinet were forced to resign in July 1998. Sanjaasürengiin Zorig, minister of infrastructure and a member of the Democratic Party, became a potential candidate for prime minister. On the night of October 2, 1998, however, as the Democratic coalition leaders agreed to nominate Zorig as the new prime minister, he was stabbed to death in his home by two unknown assailants.[3] Media reported speculation of political motivations behind Zorig's unsolved murder. A political impasse between the Democratic coalition and the president, a member of the opposition party, lingered for another two months, until Janlavyn Narantsatsralt, the well-liked but politically weak mayor of Ulaanbaatar, took office as prime minister in December 1998. The MPRP, led by Nambaryn Enkhbayar, returned to power in a landslide victory in the year 2000.

During the summer of 2008, political crises again gripped the country. Mongolia held parliamentary elections on June 29, 2008. The MPRP achieved a major victory, securing 46 of the 76 seats in parliament. The Democratic Party led protests against alleged vote rigging by the MPRP. Riots broke out in Ulaanbaatar, where several thousand people had gathered in the streets after the preliminary results of the elections were announced.[4] In the ensuing violence, four individuals were killed by police, and one MPRP activist died of carbon monoxide poisoning in a fire at the party headquarters.[5] Over 300 people were injured, one-third of them police.[6] For the first time in Mongolia's history, a five-day state of emergency was declared by then president Nambaryn

700 arrested
in a 5-day state of emergency in 2008

Enkhbayar. More than 700 people were arrested. Several hundred of the arrested received prison sentences of between two and seven years; most of the charges related to burning and looting during the riots. A report by a coalition of Mongolian NGOs determined that government authorities had violated several national and international human rights laws.[7]

The MPRP, which reverted to its original name, the Mongolian People's Party (MPP) in 2010,[8] lost the 2012 parliamentary elections to the Democratic Party, following Democrat Tsakhiagiin Elbegdorj's defeat of incumbent president Enkhbayar in the 2009 presidential elections. During the Democratic Party's rule, former president Enkhbayar was convicted of corruption and sentenced to seven years in prison in August 2012 (his prison term was later reduced to two and a half years). Despite the establishment of the Anti-Corruption Agency in 2006, corruption remains prevalent in Mongolia, which ranked 87th out of 176 countries in Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index 2016.[9]

The country had a peaceful transfer of power after the 2016 parliamentary elections, in which the MPP won a supermajority with 65 seats.[10] Prior to the 2016 elections, parliament amended the election law to return to a fully majoritarian system. Critics argued that the last-minute change favored the two main political parties at the expense of smaller parties and independents. Tensions between the ruling and opposition parties rose ahead of the 2017 presidential election. When none of the candidates won a majority in the June elections, a run-off was held peacefully in early July. A former martial arts champion, Khaltmaa Battulga of the Democratic Party, became president, defeating his MPP opponent, Miyeegombo Enkhbold.

Transnational terrorism

Terrorism is not a pressing issue in Mongolia, and there have been no reports of terrorist attacks or groups in the country.[11] According to the 2016 Global Terrorism Index, Mongolia is considered a country where terrorism has no direct impacts.[12] However, Mongolia has more than 6,000 kilometers of porous borders, giving travelers from outside the country relatively easy access. As a consequence, government officials have increased awareness about terrorism and have instituted new laws. Mongolian officials, including the police, the Ministry of Justice and the General Intelligence Agency's counterterrorism branch, have begun cooperating with the United States on counterterrorism issues.[13]

Subnational level

Separatism and autonomy

There have been no active movements advocating separatism or autonomy in Mongolia since the region of Outer Mongolia declared its independence as the People's Republic of Mongolia in 1921. Inner Mongolia, a major part of Mongol territory, remained under Chinese control.

Large-scale communal and ideological conflicts

Tensions related to foreigners have risen due to a clash between traditional pastoral livelihoods and the large-scale mining operations run by foreign companies in the countryside, particularly in southern Mongolia. Mining-driven economic growth is threatening to the environment and the livelihoods of Mongolian herders, and local herders and environmental activists frequently protest against the land claims of mining and mineral resources industries and the pollution they cause (see local conflict over resources and community rights, below, for more information).

Local level

Local political conflict and electoral violence

Electoral violence has mostly occurred at the national level. Local political violence has not been a major issue in Mongolia. The most recent elections for the citizens' representative khurals (local parliaments) of the capital city (Ulaanbaatar) and *aimags* (provinces) were held on the same day as the national parliamentary elections in June 2016,[14] while the elections for *soums* (districts) were held that October.[15] Despite last-minute changes in the electoral system, discussed above, the elections were conducted peacefully at all levels.[16]

Local conflict over resources and community rights

Land conflict is a growing problem in Mongolia, particularly due to the recent rise of the mining industry. Competition over access to land and water has fueled tensions between Mongolian herders and those involved in mining, including large and medium-sized companies, both domestic and foreign. The mining boom started in the 1990s, when the government of Mongolia, facing one of its worst economic crises after the collapse of the Soviet Union, developed the Gold Program to promote gold mining as a way to overcome the deficit. The mining sector was liberalized with the passing of the Mineral Law in 1997. Expanding into new territories, mining activities across Mongolia's countryside have threatened the environmental, material, and cultural foundations of the livelihood of the country's herders. While some companies recognize and redress environmental concerns, others in mining and mineral resources industries continue to create serious environmental problems, such as soil pollution and overuse of the country's limited water sources.

Since early 2000, local resistance movements have emerged in response to mining-related environmental issues and accompanying threats to livelihoods. The grassroots anti-mining movements are organizing a series of peaceful protests, petition drives, legal battles, and educational activities. For example, the Ongi River Movement succeeded in suspending 36 out of 37 exploration and mining licenses issued for sites along the Ongi River.[17] Another example is an international campaign, organized by a large group of students, workers, former politicians, environmental organizations, and herder activists at home and abroad, to protect Noyon Uul, one of the sacred mountains in Mongolia.[18] Since 2014, the group has been organizing protests against the government and a Canadian mining company, Centerra Gold. In May 2017, the Primary Court decided to suspend Centerra Gold's four mining licenses; therefore, the company cannot operate at Noyon Uul until further decisions are made.[19] Although the anti-mining movements in Mongolia have been peaceful, they have the potential to turn violent, as was demonstrated in a case in the southeastern Mongolian province of Dornogovi. In April 2010, a local herder was run over and killed by an employee of Yan Te Uul, a Chinese mining company. The incident occurred during a land dispute between locals and Yan Te Uul security guards.

In addition to land conflicts between Mongolian herders and mining companies in the countryside, land disputes in residential areas surrounding Ulaanbaatar are an emerging issue. The growing urban population has increased demand for residential land in the capital city, leading to the adoption of Resolution A/726 restricting the allocation of land for ownership by people who moved from rural areas.[20] Illegal encroachment of plot boundaries, combined with occasional survey errors, have contributed to the increase in land disputes. The number of land disputes brought to the Capital City Administrative Court increased from 156 cases in 2011 to 269 cases in 2016 (figure 1).[21] Land disputes often arise due to overlapping land ownership, land acquisition without compensation, and multiple sales of land.[22] They are also fueled by confusion and manipulation of land-use application information and the absence of clear zoning laws.[23]

Urban crime and violence

Over two-thirds of the Mongolian population now lives in the capital city, Ulaanbaatar, and other provincial centers,[24] and crime and violence in urban areas have become a growing concern. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) noted that Ulaanbaatar had the highest homicide rate among Asian cities.[25] Although the rate of homicides in Ulaanbaatar has declined since 2011 (figure 2), National Police Agency statistics show that overall incidents of crime in the capital city increased by 4.3 percent between 2014 and 2015.[26] As Mongolia's urban population is growing, the city administration of Ulaanbaatar has temporarily halted inward migration from rural areas. It is important for the national and local government to adopt effective urban development strategies that include appropriate violence-prevention measures to reduce crime in urban areas.

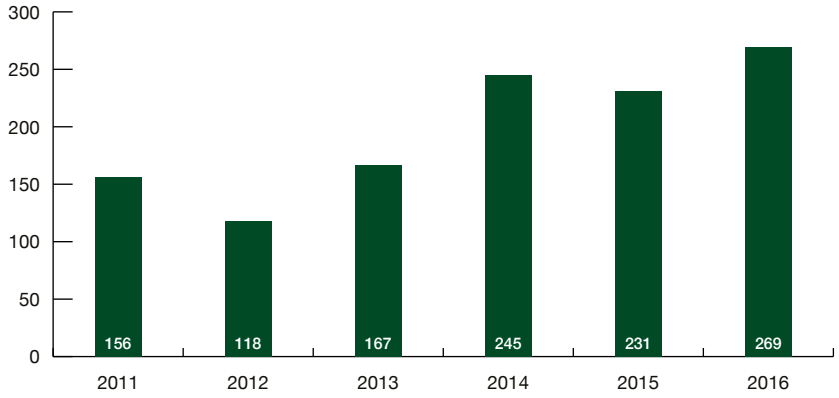

Figure 1. Land dispute cases at the Capital City Administrative Court
Source: Capital City Administrative Court [27]

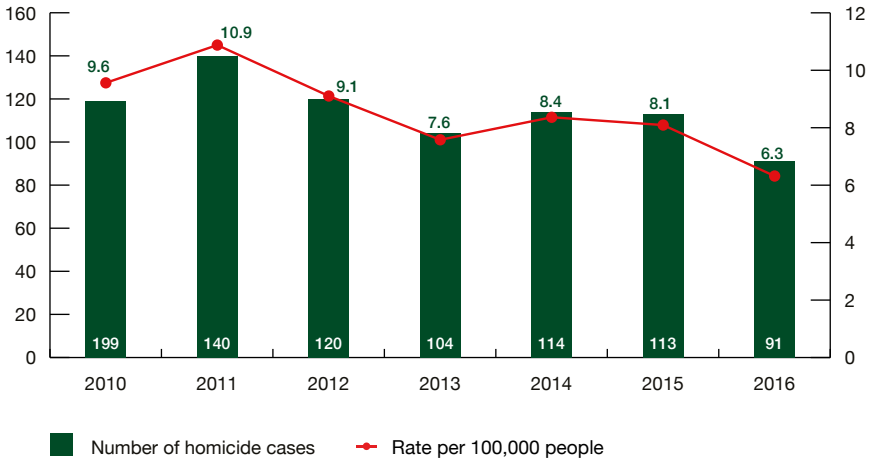

Figure 2. Number and rate of homicide cases in Ulaanbaatar (2010–2016)
Source: Prepared from crime and population statistics provided by the National Statistics Office (NSO) and the National Police Agency (NPA)[28]

Domestic and gender-based violence

Mongolian women and girls face many forms of gender-based violence, including domestic violence, rape, and human trafficking. Domestic violence is widespread in the country. The number of domestic violence cases has increased sharply in the past few years (figure 3). The National Police Agency recorded 1,449 criminal cases associated with domestic violence in 2016, a 6.9 percent increase over 2015.[29] Despite the increase in reported domestic violence cases, victims are often reluctant to discuss incidents, as they are regarded as a private, family matter. In December 2016, the 2004 Law to Combat Domestic Violence was amended to make domestic violence a criminal offense for the first time in the country's history.[30] The amended provisions prescribe the roles and responsibilities of government agencies so that they can coordinate their efforts more effectively to provide protection and support to victims and hold perpetrators accountable.

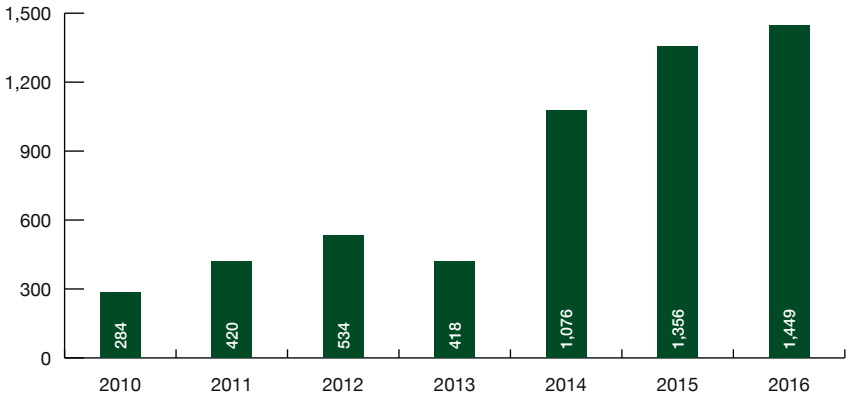

Figure 3. Number of domestic violence cases in Mongolia (2010–2016)
Source: Prepared from crime statistics provided by the NSO and NPA[31]

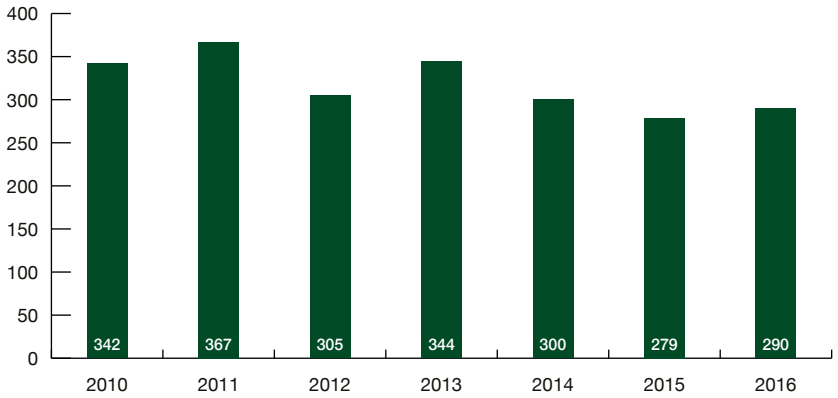

Figure 4. Number of rape cases in Mongolia (2010–2016)
Source: Prepared from crime statistics provided by the NSO and NPA[32]

Ulaanbaatar has the highest homicide rate among Asian cities

Based on police records, the overall number of rape cases reported has declined since 2013 (figure 4). In 2016, the NPA received 290 reports of rape, a slight increase from 279 reports the previous year.[33] One in two victims of rape or sexual violence is under 18 years old.[34] Although rape is illegal in the country, only a fraction of rape cases are reported to the authorities. Spousal rape is particularly underreported. Social and cultural norms as well as stressful police and judicial procedures further discourage victims from reporting these crimes.[35]

Human trafficking is also a growing concern in Mongolia. Men, women, and children are subjected to forced labor in Turkey, Kazakhstan, Israel, Norway, and Sweden and to sex trafficking in China, Hong Kong, Japan, Macau, Malaysia, and South Korea as well as Belgium, Germany, Sweden, Turkey, and the United States.[36] Mongolian women and girls are also subjected to commercial sexual exploitation in massage parlors, hotels, bars, and karaoke clubs in the country. Due to increased urban migration, women and girls from rural and poor economic areas are particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation in Ulaanbaatar and border areas. A survey conducted by the International Labor Organization (ILO) and the NSO found that 95.6 percent of sexually exploited girls became victims when they were 16 years old.[37] According to the U.S. State Department's 2016 Human Rights Report, NGOs reported cases where teenage girls were kidnapped, coerced, deceived, and forced to work as prostitutes.[38] Factors contributing to human trafficking and sexual exploitation of teenage girls and children include poverty, poor living conditions, child abandonment, and domestic abuse. Many orphaned and runaway children find themselves in highly vulnerable situations.

Notes

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1948

1948
Myanmar, then known as Burma, gains independence from the United Kingdom.

1962
General Ne Win seizes power in a coup, turning Myanmar into a one-party military dictatorship. Rangoon University students protesting the coup are shot and killed.

1948
Civil war erupts between the Myanmar military and the Communist Party of Burma (CPB), killing 17,600 over four decades. Many ethnic armed organizations (EAOs) emerge over the next 20 years.

1982
Citizenship Law denies citizenship to Muslim Rohingyas, who have lived in Rakhine State for generations.

1988
The 8888 Uprising sees the emergence of Aung San Suu Kyi as a prodemocracy leader. The government reacts by killing 3,000 protesters, and Suu Kyi is placed under house arrest.

1989
The CPB splinters along ethnic lines and is defeated by the Myanmar military. Key EAOs emerge from the splintered party.

1990
Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) wins parliamentary elections, but the military rejects the results and arrests several NLD leaders.

2003
Suu Kyi, released from house arrest, joins NLD tour in upper Myanmar. Attacks by progovernment militias kill 70, and Suu Kyi is arrested again.

2007
Former students and Buddhist monks lead a series of antigovernment protests called the Saffron Revolution. A military crackdown kills 200.

2008
Undemocratic new constitution grants the military 25 percent of seats in parliament and control over key ministries. The constitution bars Suu Kyi from becoming president.

2010
The military-backed USDP party wins a predetermined victory in parliamentary elections.

2011
New president Thein Sein launches reforms, releasing political prisoners, lifting restrictions on the media, and renewing peace efforts with EAOs.

2010
Aung San Suu Kyi released from house arrest.

2011
Fighting erupts in Kachin state as a 17-year-old ceasefire collapses.

2012
After a rape and murder by three Rohingyas, riots and revenge attacks kill at least 192. Almost 120,000 are displaced. Anti-Muslim riots and violence spread to other parts of the country the following year.

2015
NLD wins historic landslide in general elections. NLD's Htin Kyaw will be Myanmar's president but, in practice, Suu Kyi will run the government.

2012
Suu Kyi's NLD wins parliamentary by-elections.

2015
Eight EAOs sign the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement, but many groups fail to sign, and fighting continues in Shan and Kachin States.

2016
Harakah al-Yaqin, a Rohingya guerrilla group with international ties, attacks Border Guard Police in Rakhine State, killing nine officers.

2017
A second round of political dialogue is held, but progress is slow, and ethnic violence continues.

2016
Government retaliation in Rakhine leads to widespread reports of human rights abuses. Seventy-four thousand people flee to Bangladesh and 20,000 are internally displaced.

2017
Insurgent attacks on police posts in Rakhine lead to renewed military operations. Hundreds of thousands flee over the border to Bangladesh.

2016
Most EAOs attend round one of the government's 21st Century Panglong political dialogue.

2017

Myanmar

At a glance

National civil war
Absent

Communal/ideological conflict
High

National political conflict
Decreasing from high to low

Local political and electoral conflict
Low

Transnational terrorism
Low with potential to rise to medium

Local resource conflict
High

Separatism and autonomy
High

Urban crime and violence
Low

** Rankings are based on the last 15 years and are relative to other Asian countries.*

Overview

Conflict and violence in Myanmar are longstanding, rooted in the lack of legitimacy and capacity of successive military regimes to address contested visions of what constitutes the nation state among the country's ethnic groups and political factions. Several decades of authoritarian military rule, marked by brutal suppression of democracy movements and ethnic autonomy, have resulted in protracted armed conflicts between government security forces and ethnic armed organizations (EAOs). Since 2011, the civilian government has initiated several efforts to reach peace agreements with EAOs. In 2015, eight EAOs signed the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement with the central government. However, many of the largest armed groups have not signed, and progress in moving towards implementation has been slow. Armed clashes still continue in several areas, such as Kachin and Shan States. Intercommunal violence, in particular in Rakhine State with military involvement, has led to massive displacement. With the military maintaining a strong influence and significant roles in Myanmar's governance, it remains to be seen how the newly elected government under Aung San Suu Kyi's leadership will move the peace process forward and manage ongoing subnational conflicts.

Myanmar

National level

National civil war

Civil war between the central government in Myanmar and the Communist Party of Burma (CPB) began immediately following independence in 1948 and lasted for 41 years. Intense fighting between the Myanmar military, known as the *Tatmadaw*, and the CPB's armed forces caused at least 17,600 fatalities between 1948 and 1988.[1] Prior to its defeat in 1989, the CPB was the country's largest multiethnic insurgent group. The party disintegrated after ethnic units mutinied against the CPB's mostly Burman leaders. Key ethnic armed groups emerged from the CPB, most notably the powerful United Wa State Army (UWSA), which can mobilize around 30,000 troops, and the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance (Kokang). Both have strongholds along the Chinese border.

National political conflict

From independence in 1948, the military has played a central role in national politics. Following a split within the ruling Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League, General Ne Win led a military coup in 1962 that turned Myanmar into a one-party military dictatorship. Military rule was marked by war and the suppression of ethnic minorities and opposing political groups.

Following the military coup in 1962, soldiers shot and killed a number of Rangoon University students who were protesting against the coup. Since then, the military has attacked and killed protestors on a number of occasions. During antigovernment riots in August 1988, known as the 8888 Uprising, which saw the rise of Aung San Suu Kyi as a leader of the democratic movement in Myanmar, around 3,000 protestors lost their lives.[2] After the riots, Suu Kyi was put under house arrest. The student demonstrators who survived the massacre in Rangoon picked up arms and formed the semi-insurgent All Burma Students Democratic Front (ABSDF). Low-intensity fights between the ABSDF and the Tatmadaw continued from 1990 to 1994, resulting in at least 100 deaths.[3] It is estimated that at least 4,000 civilians, including political opponents, demonstrators, and ethnic minorities, were killed by the government armed forces between 1991 and 2012 (figure 1).

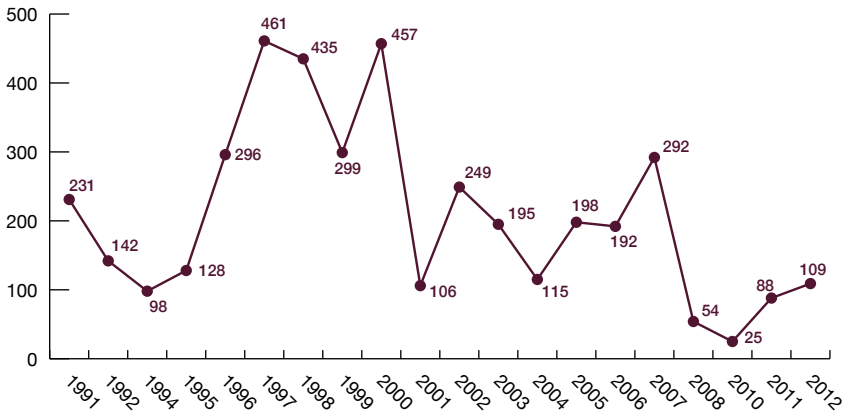

Figure 1. Number of civilian fatalities in one-sided violence (1991–2012)
Source: Eck and Hultman, "Violence Against Civilians," and Melander et al., "Organized Violence."[4]

Suppression of the democratic movement continued with the military's rejection of the National League for Democracy's (NLD's) victory in the 1990 election and the subsequent arrest of several NLD leaders. When Suu Kyi was released and joined an NLD tour in upper Myanmar in May 2003, the party's convoy was attacked by progovernment militias. As many as 70 people were killed in the violence.[5] Suu Kyi was arrested again, along with several NLD members. Similar state violence against civilians occurred in 2007, when students from the 88 Generation, who were involved in the 8888 Uprising, and Buddhist monks led a series of antigovernment demonstrations across the country that became known as the Saffron Revolution. The military crackdown took the lives of up to 200 demonstrators.[6]

After the 2010 election, in which the military backed the predetermined victory of the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), a civilian-led government was formed. In late 2010, Aung San Suu Kyi was released from house arrest. When President Thein Sein took office in March 2011, he launched a series of political reforms, including the release of hundreds of political prisoners and the easing of restrictions on the media and civilian political activity. The NLD and Suu Kyi were allowed to resume political activities, which resulted in opposition wins in the 2012 by-elections.

The year 2011 marked a transition to a military-civilian hybrid government, with the NLD triumphing in general elections in November 2015. National politics took a broadly positive turn with regard to democratization and liberalization, but there were still fears that reforms might be reversed. In the past, the military had attempted to improve Myanmar's image by releasing political prisoners, allowing elections, and increasing liberties. However, whenever the military felt threatened by the NLD and civilian support for democracy, authoritarian rule strengthened. Since 2011, reforms have been much more substantive, but barriers remain. In addition to giving the military one-quarter of parliamentary seats, the undemocratic 2008 constitution gives the military control of three powerful ministries: defense, home affairs, and border affairs. The constitution also bars Aung San Suu Kyi from becoming president,[7] and it is very difficult to make constitutional amendments.

The fear of returning to authoritarian rule has significantly decreased since the NLD's historic landslide in the 2015 election. The party secured an absolute majority in Parliament and achieved similar results in state and regional legislatures. The elections were peaceful and generally viewed by observers as "free and fair."[8] However, more than a million people in Rakhine State who self-identify as Rohingya—considered illegal immigrants from Bangladesh despite having lived in Myanmar for decades—were disenfranchised. Thousands of people in ethnic areas such as Shan and Kachin States were also unable to vote due to ongoing conflict and protracted displacement, and elections were cancelled in 3.4 percent of village tracts and wards across the country.[9]

The NLD-led government faces various challenges in civilianizing the government, given power-sharing arrangements with the military that stem from the 2008 constitution. The military still controls significant parts of the bureaucracy and 25 percent of seats in the Union, state, and region parliaments. The NLD has taken a conciliatory approach towards the military and cooperated to ensure a peaceful power transfer. Previous agenda items for Suu Kyi, such as reforming the constitution to reduce military power or allow Suu Kyi to become president, have been downplayed. Instead, Suu Kyi's trusted friend, Htin Kyaw, became president in March 2016. In practice, Suu Kyi has run the government.

Transnational terrorism

Anti-Muslim violence, and the mistreatment of self-identified Rohingyas by the Myanmar government and Buddhist groups, have triggered statements from transnational Islamist and jihadist groups in the region, such as the Islamic State (IS),

Ethnic armed groups present in

1/3 of townships

al-Qaeda, and Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan.[10] There has been little evidence that Myanmar is their operational priority. However, the local Muslim insurgent group in Rakhine State, Harakah al Yaqin (Faith Movement, HaY), which changed its name to the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA), is reported to be linked with international jihadist groups. Considering ARSA's tactics of guerilla warfare and the use of crude explosives, the group appears to have cooperated to some degree with international groups, and to have received some assistance such as training and funding. Members of ARSA have confirmed that their leaders are well connected in Bangladesh, Pakistan, and, to a lesser extent, India.[11]

Subnational level

Separatism and autonomy

Myanmar is a country of great ethnic and cultural diversity. The country officially recognizes 135 ethnic groups, each of which has its own language and culture, and many of which have a history of autonomous self-governance both before and during the colonial period. They are primarily concentrated in the mountainous border areas of the country. Added together, ethnic minorities account for one-third of the country's population.

Several ethnic groups, such as the Karen, Mon, and Rakhine, took up arms to struggle for sovereignty immediately following independence. Other ethnic groups have fought against such insurgencies as part of the national army. However, by the 1950s and '60s, ethnic groups originally aligned with the government, such as the Shan, Chin, and Kachin, were also in open revolt. Their motivations varied, from seeking greater autonomy and fair representation to outright secession. After the military coup in 1962, the junta tried to control ethnic opposition by employing the "Four Cuts" strategy, designed to eliminate four main links—food, funds, intelligence, and recruits—between insurgents, their families, and local villagers. This effort forcibly displaced a large number of people.

It is estimated that there are now at least 21 EAOs along with many militia groups, including an estimated 396 in Shan State alone.[12] Approximately 118 of Myanmar's 330 townships, containing more than 12.4 million people, are affected by conflict and tensions between EAOs and the government. In 2016, over 100,000 people resided in long-term camps in Thailand, and a further 100,000 were internally displaced within Shan and Kachin States.[13]

KACHIN
CHIN
SHAN
Naypyidaw
RAKHINE
KAYAH
Yangon
KAYIN
MON

Much of the heavy fighting between EAOs and government forces has taken place in the country's eastern and northern border areas, such as Karen (also known as Kayin), Kachin, and Shan States. Armed conflict in Karen State, one of the longest-running internal conflicts, caused at least 18,000 fatalities between 1949 and 2013.[14] Kachin and Shan States have also long been battlegrounds in the central government's wars with EAOs. The intense, violent clashes in Kachin and Shan States resulted in 16,878 and 10,236 deaths, respectively, between 1949 and 2015, figures that probably underestimate the true death toll.[15] In recent years, most of the fighting between government forces and EAOs has been low intensity, except during 2011 and 2012, when fighting erupted between the Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO) and the government after a 17-year-old ceasefire agreement collapsed (figure 2).

In the 1980s and '90s, the government pursued ceasefire deals with several armed groups, leading to many giving up their weapons and integrating into the Border Guard Force. The central government has made other special arrangements to subsume and co-opt the militants, but ceasefire interruptions and armed clashes still recur sporadically.

After 2011, President Thein Sein's government tried to negotiate peace deals with most major EAOs. In late 2013, 16 EAOs formed the Nationwide Ceasefire Coordination Team (NCCT),[16] which represented its members in multilateral negotiations with the government team, known as the Union Peacemaking Working Committee (UPWC). After several meetings, the NCCT and the UPWC signed a final draft of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) in March 2015. However, this draft was rejected in June 2015 by key EAO leaders, who demanded further amendments to the final document, reorganization of its negotiation team, and inclusion of three EAOs fighting against the government in Kokang, an area of northern Shan State. The government rejected the demand, insisting that all groups must enter a bilateral ceasefire with the government before joining the peace talks. More talks were held the following July and August, resulting in a slightly revised ceasefire agreement.

In October 2015, only eight EAOs signed the NCA, making it neither nationwide nor inclusive. Six EAOs were not allowed to sign the agreement because three of them, the Arakan Army (AA), the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA), and the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA), were still engaged in violent skirmishes with government forces, while

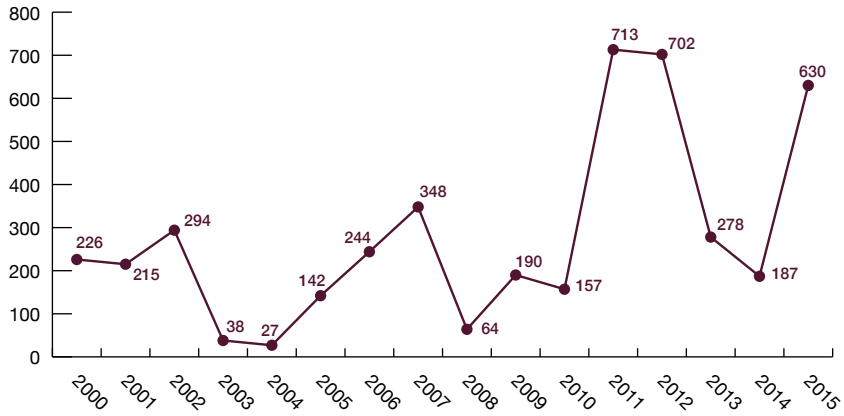

Figure 2. Number of fatalities in separatism conflicts (2000–2015)
Source: Melander et al., "Organized Violence"[17]

the other three, the Arakan National Council (ANC), the Lahu Democratic Union (LDU), and the Wa National Organization (WNO), lacked significant troop strength.[18] The remaining groups postponed their decision to sign the agreement. This led to some tensions between signatory and nonsignatory EAOs.

The new administration led by Suu Kyi has inherited a peace process that was in stasis during the 2015 elections and the lengthy handover period, and she has indicated that achieving peace will be a top priority for her government. After the election, she stated, "The peace process is the first thing the new government will work on. We will try for the all-inclusive ceasefire agreement.... We can do nothing without peace in our country."[19] The Union Peace Conference–21st Century Panglong, named for the historic Panglong Conference of 1947, was first held in the early fall of 2016 with representatives from nearly all major EAOs except the AA, MNDAA, and TNLA, which had not entered a bilateral ceasefire with the government.[20] The government has expressed its intention to hold such peace conferences every six months, and the second conference was held in May 2017. In March 2017, Suu Kyi announced that five more EAOs, including the ANC, LDU, WNO, Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP), and New Mon State Party (NMSP), would sign the NCA, but this announcement may have been premature.[21]

In the meantime, violence continues, particularly in Kachin State and northern parts of Shan State. In 2015 and 2016, there were 1,022 clashes between the government and EAOs in 63 townships.

Large-scale communal and ideological conflicts

Myanmar has a long history of communal mistrust between Buddhists and Muslims. Religious and ethnic tensions have grown in the past few years, with deadly consequences. In particular, intercommunal violence has intensified in Rakhine (Arakan) State between the Rohingya Muslims, who constitute one-third of the state population, and the Rakhine Buddhists. Although Rohingyas, who originated in part of Bengal (current Bangladesh), have been living in Rakhine State for generations, they are denied citizenship under the 1982 Citizenship Law, and are severely persecuted. Following the rape and murder of a Rakhine Buddhist woman by three Rohingya men in June 2012, riots and violent retaliation broke out across Rakhine State. According to the Rakhine Inquiry Commission, established by President Thein Sein, a series of violent clashes that took place in 2012 killed 192 people, injured 265 others, and destroyed over 8,500 houses.[22] Nearly 70 percent of those killed were Rohingyas. Almost 120,000 people were internally displaced.[23] Since then, Rakhine State has experienced growing tensions and sporadic violence between the Buddhist and Muslim communities.

The security situation in Rakhine State grew increasingly volatile after attacks on the Border Guard Police in October 2016, which killed nine police officers. ARSA, formed by members of the persecuted Rohingya minority, has been blamed for the deadly attacks. The government's response, cracking down on Rohingya insurgents, has led to widespread reports of serious human rights abuses and a temporary suspension of humanitarian services in northern Rakhine State. The United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has documented allegations cases of extrajudicial killings, arbitrary detention, forced disappearance, brutal beatings, rape, and other human rights violations against Rohingya populations, including women and children, by government security forces in the northern part of the state.[24] The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reported that approximately 74,000 people fled to Bangladesh, and 20,000 were internally displaced in Rakhine State, in October 2016.[25] While humanitarian services resumed in some areas, an estimated 30,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) had no access to humanitarian aid because of security operations by the government.[26] In August 2017, violence broke out after ARSA fighters attacked police posts in Rakhine, leading to a military response. With violence ongoing, UN officials stated that more

2012
2016
2017

Rakhine violence displaced hundreds of thousands

than 270,000 Rohingya fled to Bangladesh and more than a thousand may have been killed in the first two weeks after the violence erupted, with these numbers increasing since then.[27]

Since the 2012 riots in Rakhine State, anti-Muslim violence has spread to other parts of the country. In March 2013, violence flared up between Buddhists and Muslims in Meiktila, Mandalay Region, following a dispute between a Muslim gold-shop owner and Buddhist customers. The brutal killing of a Buddhist monk escalated the situation, resulting in widespread destruction of Muslim neighborhoods and leaving at least 44 people dead, including 22 students and several teachers massacred at an Islamic school.[28] Anti-Muslim riots continued for another six months in other parts of Myanmar, where Buddhist monks and rioters torched several mosques, Muslim boarding schools, and houses and killed Muslims with machetes, chains, bricks, and stones. A state of emergency and curfews were announced in six states/regions, including Ayeyarwady, Bago, Mandalay, Rakhine, Shan, and Yangon. Anti-Muslim sentiments and violence grew with the rise of the 969 Movement, led by prominent Buddhist monks including Wirathu and Wimala.[29] The movement preaches intolerance and advocates boycotting Muslim businesses. Wirathu denied that the 969 Movement was contributing to anti-Muslim violence, but accepted that it might be contributing to greater hatred of Muslims. Isolated cases of attacks on Muslims have continued, including the destruction of a mosque in Bago Region in June 2016 and the burning of a Muslim prayer hall by a mob of 500 people in northern Myanmar in July 2016.[30]

Despite international pressure for the Myanmar government to improve the condition of Muslims in the country, the government led by Suu Kyi has failed to address the underlying causes and develop an overarching political and development strategy. With ongoing discrimination against the Muslim community by the state and society, and continuing sporadic communal violence, this conflict is likely to become more destabilizing and protracted.

Local level

Local political conflict and electoral violence

Due to the attention given to the recent political changes at the national level, local politics and governance are often overlooked. In 2012, the government of President Thein Sein passed the Ward and Village Tract Administration Law, which required ward and village tract administrators (WA/VTA) to be elected by community representatives instead of being appointed by the high-level officials of the Government Administration Department (GAD).[31] Following the enactment of the new law, the first WA/VTA elections were held in

late 2012 and early 2013. Some voting irregularities and local conflicts were reported in villages with ongoing disputes among opposing groups.[32] No specific incidents of electoral violence were reported, due to the absence of any formal election observation.

The second WA/VTA elections, in January 2016, were also largely ignored by the media, donors, and international and local organizations, as everyone focused on how the newly elected NLD government would be formed. In general, citizens viewed the national elections as more important and relevant to them than the local elections, which were considered something to be dealt with by community representatives and elders. As party affiliations became more important in the second WA/VTA elections, a political dispute between the NLD and the USDP was reported in an urban ward of Mon State.[33] The local NLD branch argued that the USDP's winning candidate did not meet the education criteria to stand for election. Local elections have become increasingly fractious since the 2015 national elections.

Local conflict over resources and community rights

Rights to and control over local natural resources have always been at the center of conflict between the central government and ethnic minorities. The 1894 Land Acquisition Act gave the central government the right to take land away from people, and the 2008 constitution upholds state ownership of all land in Myanmar. Several other laws adopted subsequently give the central government the right to accommodate foreign investment and arbitrarily confiscate land for any projects deemed of national importance. Since political reforms and economic liberalization began in 2011, Myanmar has attracted unprecedented foreign investment across the country. Megaprojects range from oil and gas production and pipelines, hydroelectric dams, and mining, to seaports and special economic zones. Many of these projects not only have generated tensions between local communities and the central government, but have led to renewed clashes between government armed forces and local EAOs in the east of the country.

By mid-2013, more than 5.2 million acres of large-sale agriculture concessions had been awarded across the country.[34] The majority of land was allocated in Tanintharyi Region (1.9 million acres) and Kachin State (1.4 million acres). Even though the government has tried to show that it is responsive to people's grievances by setting up a committee to investigate land confiscation complaints, only 5 percent of 8,478 cases filed had been settled as of February 2014.[35]

Projects involving large-scale land confiscation can also lead to violent conflict and forced displacement. In 2013, clashes flared up between government armed forces and local EAOs, including the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army, the Shan State Progressive Party, the Restoration Council of Shan State, the KIA, and the TNLA, over dam projects, gas and oil pipelines, and mining. Large-scale land confiscation has also displaced thousands of villagers.[36]

Protests against land grabs, and displaced villagers who attempt to return to their land, are often met with arrest and excessive use of force. For example, from 2012 to 2014, in a series of protests against the Monywa copper mine, more than 100 protesters were injured by government security forces and several were arrested.[37]

Urban crime and violence

Even though Myanmar remains predominantly rural, about 30 percent of the population lives in urban areas, primarily Yangon, Mandalay, and Nay Pyi Taw. Yangon Region is particularly urbanized, with 70 percent of its population living in urban areas.[38] Frontier Myanmar reported that there were 117 murder and 130 rape cases in Yangon in the first eight months of 2016.[39] Official statistics on civilian crimes unrelated to political and

After murder, rape is the most commonly reported serious crime

communal conflict is scarce in Myanmar; therefore, it is hard to determine the magnitude of urban crime and violence in cities. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Myanmar had a national intentional homicide rate of only 2.4 per 100,000 people in 2015, low by regional and global standards.[40] However, many crimes go unreported or are resolved through negotiations.[41]

Domestic and gender-based violence

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a persistent problem in Myanmar, where entrenched and normalized gender discrimination perpetuates a culture of impunity and a climate of permissiveness around violating women's human rights. Women and girls experience various forms of violence, such as physical, sexual, verbal, or psychological abuse, in their private and public lives. While statistical data on the scale and nature of GBV remains limited, a number of studies have shown that GBV is prevalent in the country.

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is deemed acceptable practice. A 2005 randomized household survey conducted in Mandalay Region reported that 27 percent of women surveyed had experienced one or more incidents of physical violence, and 69 percent had experienced psychological violence, from their intimate partners over the course of 12 months.[42] Over 90 percent of women in the survey did not seek formal action following their experience of violence. Another survey, carried out by the Palaung Women's Organization (PWO) in 2011, suggested a higher rate of IPV for women and girls among ethnic minorities, and higher still in conflict-affected areas. Ninety percent of the survey respondents, including both men and women, experienced or witnessed physical violence within families, and 62 percent of them reported that the violence in their home was a daily occurrence.[43] Three-quarters of the respondents believed that domestic violence should be solved within the home. Over half of women respondents in a survey by the Gender Equality Network (GEN) reported experiencing intimate partner sexual violence and marital rape, which was closely related to men's sexual entitlement—the belief that a husband can demand sex whenever he wants.[44]

Rape of women and girls is also prevalent in the country. Nationwide rape statistics for 2012 were the highest in five years, making rape the second-most commonly reported serious crime after murder. According to the Myanmar police, in 2012 there were 654 rape cases involving women or children. The figures for the years from 2007 to 2011 were, respectively, 471, 430, 384, 377, and 605. It is not clear if police records include rapes by military perpetrators.[45]

GBV at the hands of state and armed-group actors is reported to be a chronic problem, particularly in conflict-affected areas. Since the early 1990s, violence against women, including rape and other forms of sexual violence, has been used systematically by government security forces as a military strategy against ethnic minorities and populations associated with insurgencies.[46] Some studies suggest that sexual violence is condoned as a weapon of war by the security forces to terrorize and subjugate rebels, opposition groups, and local civilian populations.

For example, a 2002 study carried out by the Shan Women's Action Network (SWAN) and the Shan Human Rights Foundation (SHRF) found that the majority of rape cases in Shan State were committed by officers, ranked corporal to major, in front of other troops.[47] There are also cases of rape by EAOs. In most cases, sexual violence was accompanied by acts of torture, beating, mutilation, and suffocation, with 25 percent resulting in death. The dead bodies were deliberately displayed for local communities to see. Sixty-one percent of the cases involved gang rape. In some cases, women were detained and raped repeatedly for periods of up to four months. The Women's League of Burma (WLB) and its partners documented over 100 cases from 2010 to 2013, primarily in Kachin and northern Shan States, including 47 gang rapes by government security forces involving victims as young as eight years old. These reports indicate that there is continuing systematic use of sexual violence by government security forces, potentially due to the government's refusal to investigate, which results in widespread impunity for perpetrators.[48]

Notes

1 Bethany Lacina and Nils Petter Gleditsch, "Monitoring trends in global combat: A new dataset of battle deaths," *European Journal of Population* 21, no. 2 (2005): 145–166. While the best estimate was not available, the lowest estimate numbers were used to calculate the number of battle deaths. Most analysts believe that the number of deaths associated with armed conflict is significantly higher. The battle deaths dataset is available on the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) website, accessed April 9, 2017, https://www.prio.org/Data/Armed-Conflict/Battle-Deaths/The-Battle-Deaths-Dataset-version-30/.

2 "Freedom in the World (2012): Burma," Freedom House website, accessed April 9, 2017, http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2012/burma-0#.U_CMGfmSxPU.

3 Lacina and Gleditsch, "Trends in Global Combat." Data on violence, especially fatalities, is particularly unreliable, and most of the numbers reported will be significant underestimates.

4 Kristine Eck and Lisa Hultman, "Violence Against Civilians in War," *Journal of Peace Research* 44, no. 2 (2007): 233–246; and Erik Melander, Therése Pettersson, and Lotta Themnér, "Organized Violence, 1989–2015," *Journal of Peace Research* 53, no. 5 (2016): 727–742. The one-sided violence dataset is available on the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) website, accessed April 9, 2017, http://ucdp.uu.se/downloads/.

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11 Ibid.

12 The Asia Foundation, *The Contested Areas of Myanmar* (Yangon: The Asia Foundation, 2017).

13 Ibid.

14 See Lacina and Gleditsch, "Trends in Global Combat," and Melander et al., "Organized Violence." The number of deaths is calculated using the PRIO Battle Deaths Dataset's low estimates (best estimates not available) for a period between 1949 and 1988, and the UCDP Battle-Related Deaths Dataset's best estimates for a period between 1989 and 1993.

15 Melander et al., "Organized Violence."

16 The NCCT member organizations include: Arakan Liberation Party, Arakan National Council, Arakan Army, Chin National Front, Democratic Karen Benevolent Army, Kachin Independence Organization, Karenni National Progressive Party, Karen National Union, KNU/KNLA Peace Council, Lahu Democratic Union, Myanmar National Democracy Alliance Army, New Mon State Party, Pa-O National Liberation Organization, Shan State Progress Party/Shan State Army–North, Ta'ang National Liberation Army, and Wa National Organization.

17 See Melander et al., "Organized Violence."

18 Institute for Security and Development Policy (ISDP), *Myanmar's Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement* (Yangon: ISDP, 2015), http://isdp.eu/content/uploads/publications/2015-isdp-backgrounder-myanmar-nca.pdf.

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1951

1951
End of the Rana dynasty and restoration of the monarchy.

1959
New constitution establishes parliamentary democracy.

1960
First elected government falls in a coup d'état by partisans of the king.

1990
Popular movement forces the king to restore democracy and reform the constitution.

1996
Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) launches armed insurgency over long-held grievances. More than 12,000 die and 200,000 are displaced in 10-year civil war that follows.

2001
Ten royal family members are massacred in their palace, allegedly by Prince Dipendra.

2005
King Gyanendra declares himself absolute ruler and cuts off Nepal from the outside world. The king relents after a year of growing demonstrations.

2006
Comprehensive Peace Accord with Maoists ends the civil war.

2007
Mass protests and violence by Madhesi parties—the Madhesh Andolan—erupt in the Terai over long-term discrimination and exclusion.

2008
Churches attacked and priest murdered in eastern Nepal in growing Hindu-Christian violence. Church bombing in Kathmandu kills three and injures 14 in 2009.

2007
Muslim mosques and shops looted in Dang as Hindu-Muslim violence resurges.

2008
The monarchy is abolished.

2008
The first Constituent Assembly is elected, but cannot agree on a new constitution, leading to years of escalating protests and strikes.

2013
Violent clashes between the ruling coalition and the opposition lead to a caretaker government. Second Constituent Assembly elected in November.

2015
Two major earthquakes cause widespread devastation.

2015
New constitution is rapidly adopted following quakes. Forty-five die in violent protests by ethnic and minority groups opposing the document.

2015
Violent blockade of the India-Nepal border by Madhesi parties as conflict escalates in the Terai.

2017
Tensions and sporadic violence during local elections, particularly in the Terai.

2017

Nepal

At a glance

National civil war
Shifted from high to absent

Communal/ideological conflict
Medium low

National political conflict
Ebbs and flows between medium and high

Local political and electoral conflict
Low

Transnational terrorism
No violence, but terrorist presence

Local resource conflict
High

Separatism and autonomy
Shifted from medium to low

Urban crime and violence
Low

** Rankings are based on the last 15 years and are relative to other Asian countries.*

Overview

Nepal is characterized by weak governance that has led to ongoing political instability. A civil war killed almost 13,000 and displaced 200,000 between 1996 and 2006. A peace accord has led to much progress since then. The country abolished the monarchy in 2008, carried out two Constituent Assembly elections, in 2008 and 2013, integrated former combatants from the Maoist's military wing into the Nepal Army, and promulgated a new constitution in 2015. However, with parties and elites often focused on protecting their own interests, political contention is often heated, further cementing divisions, with violence sometimes the result. The continued marginalization of certain ethnic, caste, and regional populations perpetuates grievances that can be mobilized for political violence. Following the promulgation of the new constitution in 2015, violence reemerged in the Terai region between Madhesi groups and parties in Nepali government when a Madhesi-led blockade of the Indo-Nepal border exacerbated the humanitarian crisis and economic stagnation caused by the devastating earthquakes in April and May. With disagreements over the amendments to the 2015 constitution unresolved, political tensions remained high in the lead-up to three tiers of elections in 2017. The country also struggles with growing urban crime and violence in the Kathmandu Valley and pervasive gender-based violence.

Nepal

National level

National civil war

Nepal endured a civil war from 1996 to 2006 that killed around 13,000 people. The war was launched by the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) in February 1996 with the aim of overthrowing the monarchy and establishing a communist government. Nepal has historically been governed by a series of dynasties. A civil movement in 1951 ended the autocratic rule of the Rana dynasty and restored the monarchy, which then ruled with advice from political parties. A constitution was promulgated in 1959 to establish parliamentary democracy. However, the first elected government, under the leadership of B. P. Koirala, was dismissed after a royal coup in 1960, which led to three decades of absolute monarchy. In the early 1990s, political parties joined hands to launch a successful popular movement for democracy, pressuring the king to restore a multiparty parliament and reform the constitution in 1990–91. Given entrenched grievances, including severe rural poverty, caste and ethnic discrimination, endemic corruption, and the concentration of wealth and power, the dramatic political changes of the early 1990s raised popular expectations of social progress and greater equality. Following the intransigence of other parties towards reform, the CPN (Maoist) submitted a long list of demands to the government on February 4, 1996, addressing a wide range of social, economic, and political issues, and warned that an armed struggle would follow if the demands were not met. One week later, they launched an organized, armed insurgency against the state. During the ensuing years, the Maoist rebels gained significant control over rural areas, while the government retained control of the main cities and towns. Later years saw increasing and effective insurgent attacks on police and military personnel.

There were several changes in government over those years. In June 2001, ten members of the royal family were shot to death during a family party at the royal palace, allegedly by Crown Prince Dipendra, who shot himself. The dead included Queen Aishwarya, and King Birendra, who was succeeded by his brother, Gyanendra. In 2005, King Gyanendra declared himself absolute ruler, suppressing the media, restricting civil liberties, and temporarily cutting off communications with the outside world. Dissatisfaction with the monarchy grew rapidly, and following mass demonstrations throughout the country, the king reinstated parliament in April 2006. After a series of negotiations, a Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA) was signed between the

13,000
killed in civil war 1996–2006

CPN (Maoist) and the new democratic government in November 2006, marking the end of the armed conflict.[1] Under the Accord, the CPN (Maoist) was allowed to take part in government in exchange for agreeing to lock up its weapons and confine fighters to UN-monitored camps until they could be integrated with the Nepal Army.

According to the final report on the Nepal conflict published by the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNOHCHR), the government estimates that a total of 12,686 individuals, including government security forces, Maoist rebel fighters, and civilians, were killed between February 1996 and November 2006.[2] The Uppsala Conflict Data Program estimates that annual fatalities peaked in 2002 with 4,433 deaths (figure 1).[3] Civilians, killed by both government security forces and the Maoist rebels, accounted for around 20 percent of all fatalities over the ten years.[4] Up to 200,000 people were displaced by the conflict.[5] Human rights violations and abuses by government security forces and the Maoists were widespread. Both sides, but especially government forces, committed unlawful killings, torture, and forced disappearance, as well as rape and other forms of sexual violence.[6]

National political conflict

The political landscape remains volatile in postconflict Nepal. While insurgency-related violence was ended by the signing of the CPA, political protests and clashes occur frequently and at times escalate to low-level violence, often disrupting the economy and people's mobility. Political conflicts in recent years have centered on the constitution, implementation of certain aspects of the CPA, and rivalry between political parties and factions over control of national power.

A root cause of the civil war and the current political tensions is the marginalization of certain ethnic, caste, and regional populations. Even though all actors involved in peace negotiations have agreed that a more inclusive state with a federal model is required, they profoundly disagree over the design of that model. The Maoists and other groups representing marginalized populations, including the Madhesi parties from the Terai, have demanded ethnic-based federalism, while traditional political parties such as the Nepali Congress (NC) and the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist)—the CPN (UML)—along with right-wing parties have opposed

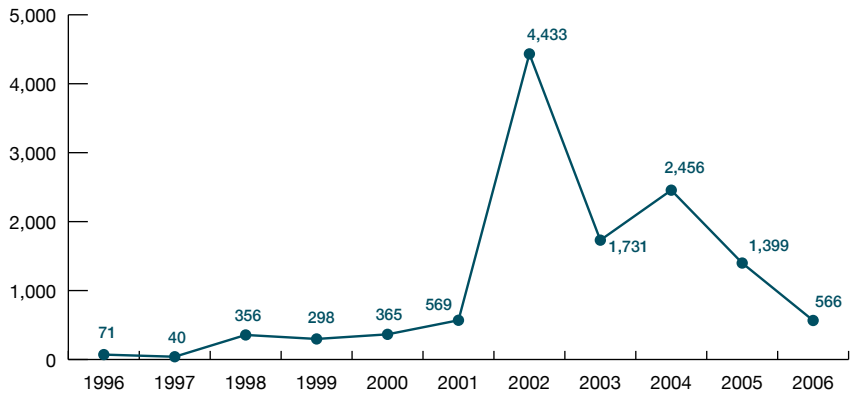

Figure 1. Number of fatalities during the people's war in Nepal (1996–2006)
Source: Prepared based on data provided by UCDP[7]

1,600+

killed in postconflict Terai 2007–2012

identity-based federalism as undermining national unity, meritocracy, and individual rights.[8] Given the extreme diversity of Nepal's current districts, including those where groups are proposing identity-based borders, there are significant disagreements. All sides are promoting federal models that serve their own interests, and limited scope for compromise has been found to date.

Between 2007 and 2015, multiple changes of government and large-scale protests took place in the country. The subsequent failure of the first Constituent Assembly (CA), which was elected in 2008, to meet the extended deadline to draft a constitution led to widespread protests and strikes in 48 districts. The main stumbling blocks were disagreements over a federal model and issues around proportional representation and forms of governance. The standoff continued, and clashes between supporters of the ruling and opposition parties broke out in January 2013 during a protest demanding the resignation of Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai from the Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), formerly the CPN (Maoist). Following the protests, an interim caretaker government was appointed in March 2013, and the second Constituent Assembly elections were held that November. The elections were disrupted by Maoist factions and allied parties, which staged transportation strikes, intimidated candidates and voters, and pillaged vote preparation centers. Two devastating earthquakes in April and May 2015 prompted the major political parties such as the NC, the CPN (UML), the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist-Centre)—formerly the Unified Community Party of Nepal (Maoist)—and the CPN (Maoist) to rapidly agree to a draft constitution in June. Despite nationwide protests by ethnic and minority parties opposing the draft and demanding greater representation in the government, the constitution was adopted in September 2015. Human Rights Watch reported that approximately 45 people were killed in the violent protests over the new constitution during August and September, almost all of which took place in the Terai region, including one incident in Tikapur that killed seven policemen and one child.[9]

Following the promulgation of the constitution, the conflict between the Madhesi parties and the Nepali Government in the Terai region escalated. The Madhesi parties launched a border blockade of goods from India in September 2015. Violent clashes quickly intensified. The International Crisis Group reported that the blockade resulted in 12 deaths between November 2015 and January 2016.[10] Nepal accused India of interfering in Nepali politics to support the Madhesi demands. The blockade caused severe shortages of fuel and medical supplies, exacerbating the dire humanitarian crisis and economic stagnation caused by the earthquakes. According to the Nepal Economic Forum, estimates suggested that the blockade resulted in daily economic losses of NPR 2 billion (USD 19.4 million).[11] Eventually, fatigue from prolonged protests, the rising prices of goods, and economic losses led to an end to the protests and the blockade in February 2016. Parliament introduced a constitutional amendment bill in November 2016 that partially addressed the dissenting Madhesi parties' demands, but unresolved grievances and exclusion issues left the southern half of Nepal a potential hotbed of renewed violence during the constitutionally mandated local, provincial, and national elections in 2017. Twelve were killed in nearly 400 violent elections-related incidents between February and June 2017.[12] Despite the violence, the three rounds of local elections held in May, June, and September were considered free and fair by most observers.

Transnational terrorism

There are no reports of organized transnational terrorist organizations in Nepal. However, the U.S. State Department has noted that Nepal's open border with India and weak border controls raise concerns that such groups could use Nepal as a transit or staging point.[13] Afghanistan, India, and Pakistan are experiencing significant terrorist violence, and terrorist groups could use Nepal as a safe haven. South Asia experts and security analysts believe that the Indo-Nepal border, particularly in the Terai region, is favorable for criminal activities such as the trafficking of people, human organs, small arms, contraband goods, drugs, and counterfeit currency, and could offer a hideout for armed criminal and terrorist groups.[14] Visas and passports are not required for Nepalis and Indians to travel between the two countries through Nepal's southern border.[15] As Indian and Nepali merchants often travel by road in large groups, it is easy for people to cross over in disguise.[16] In addition, the security situation in the Terai region has become extremely volatile since the civil war (see below). There has been concern that criminal networks such as the Pakistani militant group Lashkar-e-Taiba are exploiting these weaknesses, generating significant operating capital.[17]

Subnational level

Separatism and autonomy

Following the signing of the CPA, the Terai witnessed increased violence and the proliferation of armed groups calling for greater autonomy and political rights for the Madhesis and other ethnic minorities. The Terai is the most densely populated area outside of Kathmandu, accounting for roughly half of the Nepali population.[18] It contains a mixture of ethnic, caste, and religious groups including Madhesis, Tharus, migrants from other parts of Nepal, and many others.[19]

The Madhesis represent a significant segment of the country's population and have suffered political, economic, and social discrimination and exclusion. The failure to address long-held grievances has caused the Madhesis to turn to violence to bring attention to their plight. Between January and February 2007, the Madhesi Janadhikar Forum (MJF) launched a large-scale protest, known as Madhesi Andolan, which led to violent clashes with Maoist cadres in the region. The MJF joined forces with other Madhesi political groups to create a coalition, the United Democratic Madhesi Front (UDMF), which seeks to transform the Terai into a single, autonomous province. The UDMF thus polarized the Terai population into a Madhesi vs. Pahadi (Kathmandu Valley) dichotomy, which stigmatizes elite ethnicities and binds otherwise disparate but similarly afflicted ethnic groups together.[20] This reignited longstanding tensions between Madhesi and Pahadi communities that date back to the 1960s, when the Pahadis, who migrated from the hills to the plains for work, started to dominate local politics and the economy. The Madhesi movement also raised concerns among smaller ethnic groups that did not want to be subsumed by the Madhesi and lose their own cultural and linguistic identities. These small ethnic minority groups pressured the government by organizing strikes and protests and demanded their own autonomy and political rights, further inflaming ethnic divisions and violence in the region.[21]

During 2007, armed groups multiplied in the Terai, particularly in the east. Their number was estimated at 26 in 2011.[22] Several armed groups that emerged from the Maoist insurgency repositioned themselves as political outfits, while others have pursued criminal operations since the signing of the CPA.[23] The politically affiliated armed groups were initially perceived to share a coherent political ideology, but they have splintered into smaller criminal syndicates.

The Informal Sector Service Centre (INSEC), a Nepali human rights NGO, reported that over 1,600 people were killed in the Terai between 2007 and 2012, 90 percent of them by nonstate

armed groups.[24] Central and eastern Terai were most affected, accounting for 80 percent of the fatalities. Violence in the Terai remained high for the first two years after the civil war's end, resulting in 363 deaths in 2007 and 383 in 2008,[25] but fatalities decreased to 206 in 2012.[26] In a 2011 survey, almost half of respondents (47 percent) said they had observed a decrease in the activity of armed groups from 2010 to 2011, while 27 percent said the situation had not changed.[27] Experts believe that security has improved due to a decrease in the number of armed groups, which in turn can be credited both to increased police activity and to peace negotiations between different political groups and the government.[28]

Despite the reduction in the number of active armed groups, the promulgation of the new constitution has provoked sporadic violent protests by various ethnic groups and political parties in the Terai region since the summer of 2015 (see the section on national political conflict). Protest groups have sometimes clashed with police and security forces, resulting in casualties on both sides. Human rights groups have found that the police used excessive force against protestors.[29]

Large-scale communal and ideological conflicts

Interreligious conflict has occasionally flared up between Hindus and other religious minorities, particularly Muslims and Christians.[30] Nepali Muslims are among the most marginalized, poor, and underresourced people in the country, and historically have lived in small villages in the Terai region. Hindu-Muslim conflict, which initially occurred in Nepalgunj, Banke District, prior to the civil war in the 1990s, resurged in 2007 in Tulsipur, Dang District.[31] Several Muslim mosques and shops were looted, and houses were vandalized. This was a ripple effect of the Madhesi-Pahadi communal violence that erupted a few days earlier

in Kapilvastu, following the murder of Mohit Khan, a local Madhesi leader, in which 14 people were killed (four Madhesis and 10 Pahadis), dozens were injured, and around 300 houses were set on fire.[32] The OHCHR investigation reported that rumors about violence against Pahadis in Kapilvastu spread through Dang District, fueling attacks against Muslims.[33] Postconflict violence between Hindus and Christians manifested itself in several attacks on churches and the murder of a Christian priest in eastern Nepal in 2008. A bomb explosion at the Catholic church in Kathmandu in May 2009 killed three at Saturday morning mass and severely injured 14 others.[34] The National Defense Army, a Hindi fundamentalist organization, took responsibility for the attack and demanded that Nepal's Christians leave the country. In addition, following the vote in the CA against declaring Nepal a Hindu state in September 2015, Hindu nationalists detonated explosive devices at three churches in Jhapa District, causing minor damage.

Local level

Local political conflict and electoral violence

Nepal held local elections for the first time in 20 years on May 14, June 28, and September 18, 2017. This marks a significant step toward full implementation of the new constitution adopted in September 2015. The local elections pave the way for provincial and national elections to follow. As mandated by the constitution, all three levels of elections are to be conducted by January 2018. If elections at all levels are successful, this will mark a return to the democratic process after two decades of upheaval.

Tensions escalated in the lead-up to the local elections, particularly in the Terai region, where disputes over amendments to the 2015 constitution are unresolved. When the local elections were announced in February 2017, the Madhesis vowed to boycott and disrupt any elections in their region until their grievances were addressed.[35] The Madhesis continued to stage protests and strikes, sometimes resulting in violent clashes. For instance, violence flared in Saptari District on March 6, 2017, when the police opened fire on protesters who disrupted a political rally organized by the CPN (UML), killing five.[36] However, tensions later subsided. The last round of voting, held in September in Province 2, in the heart of eastern Terai, was comparatively peaceful.

Local conflict over resources and community rights

Competition over natural resources such as land and water is deeply embedded in Nepali history and society. At the community level, however, resource conflict is seldom violent, usually ending in amicable resolution through mediation or persisting in a state of nonviolent animosity. Poor governance and the country's highly stratified and hierarchical social structure skew access to natural resources, particularly for lower-caste and minority ethnic groups, creating tensions between individuals, families, and communities. Land ownership and use issues have been entrenched in society for decades. Since the 1960s, land reform has been an important arena for competition among political parties. Land was also a central issue in the civil war, with Maoists targeting large landowners as a symbol of Nepal's patronage-based state. With very little actual policy reform in the postconflict period, land issues remain contentious and promise to ignite violent disagreements in the future if left unattended.

Nepal has a high volume of land disputes, which constitute the largest category of court cases. The Community Self-Reliance Centre (CSRC) reported that between 2013 and 2015 there were over 124,000 land-related court cases, just 26.4 percent of which went to trial.[37] If a case goes to trial, the formal legal process is costly and time-consuming, compelling poor and marginalized people to give in to the demands of rich landlords. The poor and marginalized tend to pursue land dispute claims in other, more accessible forums, such as district land revenue offices.[38] The

most common land-related disputes involve disagreements over property lines, disagreements between tenants and landlords, disagreements among families over the inheritance of land, control of *guthi* land[39] and its revenue, encroachment on public land, and land registration and cancellation.[40] Most land disputes are resolved at the community level through local mediation by respected members of the village or Village Development Committee, and never make it to the police or the courts.[41]

Even though Nepal has abundant water, unequal access creates tensions, especially where there are competing uses (e.g., irrigation, drinking water, hydropower, and industrial use).[42] Competition to use the same water source for multiple purposes is common. A WaterAid study found that water sources were heavily used, or fully used, with no possibility of extension, in 74 percent of sites studied, while just 26 percent had surplus water and could plan for further distribution to wider communities.[43] The major cause of water conflict appeared to be the increasing scarcity of water sources. However, there were also conflicts where supplies were adequate, because community members had become protective of their water source for future use. Disputes over water also arise due to longstanding grievances about higher castes exploiting lower castes, clashes of egos, and other political disputes. In addition, Nepal's hydropower boom has provoked violent conflicts between local communities and the government and hydropower developers. For example, violence flared around the Khimti Dhaldkebar plant in April and July 2016.[44] The Armed Police Force was accused of using excessive force against community protesters, including women and the elderly.[45] Conflicts over land and water will continue to occur as long as legal frameworks and regulations are absent or unenforced.

Urban crime and violence

Nepal's continued political instability and weak rule of law after the civil war have led to the rise of violent clashes among politically affiliated armed groups and criminal activities by gangs and organized crime groups in urban areas. Even though only 17 percent of Nepal's population lives in urban areas, levels of urban crime and violence are increasing. Beyond the Terai, the Kathmandu Valley—the country's largest urban agglomeration, which includes Kathmandu, Lalitpur, and Bhaktapur—appears to be the most insecure area in the country. In a study by Small Arms Survey, nearly 60 percent of respondents in the Valley said that the security situation had remained the same or grown worse from 2010 to 2011, compared to less than 30 percent in other urban and rural areas.[46] Research by Saferworld in 2011 found that residents' perceptions of insecurity were partly due to significant criminal activities of political youth wings and criminal gangs, flourishing organized crime such as human trafficking, illicit trade in red sandalwood, kidnapping, extortion, and money laundering, and a rise in randomly targeted crimes like theft, mugging, and burglary.[47] The metropolitan police reported Kathmandu had the most crimes in 2015–16 (4,917), followed by Sunsari (1,441), Chitwan (1,241), and Jhapa (1,196).[48] However, the national homicide rate in 2011 was low at 2.9 per 100,000 people.[49]

Youth involvement in violent activities is a growing concern. Youths age 15–29 represent 30 percent of the total population and 33 percent of the urban population.[50] As the country's population has grown younger, policymakers and regional experts have emphasized the importance of addressing issues among urban youth such as unemployment and crime.[51] Some young men are drafted by the youth wings of political parties to engage in protests, strikes, and shutdowns. They are also recruited by underground armed groups and criminal gangs to carry out violent activities that include extortion and kidnapping.[52] For some youths, joining an armed group can instill a sense of power and purpose, especially for those who are unemployed and who have migrated from rural areas. A recent study of security in the Terai reveals that violence and crime are not always the work of organized groups; they are sometimes perpetrated by unknown groups or by a handful of youths pursuing the three *m*'s—money, machines (cell phones, motorbikes), and *masti* (fun).[53]

Domestic and gender-based violence

Violence against women and girls is endemic in Nepal. Women and girls face domestic violence, physical and psychological torture, rape, trafficking, dowry-related violence, and child marriage. This is driven by social, cultural, and religious norms, compounded by years of conflict. The country's citizenship law is gender-biased: a woman's identity is derived from her father, and discriminatory legal provisions position women as the property of men.[54] Women are economically dependent, because men inherit and control most property. A combination of the immense social stigma attached to victims of sexual assault and the fear of retaliation has prevented many women from reporting crimes that occurred during the civil war, while the perpetrators walk free.[55]

Reports of crimes against women and children increased between 2003–04 and 2013–14 (figure 2). Domestic violence cases in particular have increased significantly in recent years. The Nepal Police recorded 6,835 domestic violence cases in 2013–14.[56] According to the 2011 Nepal Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS), one-third of women who had ever married had experienced emotional, physical, or sexual violence from their spouse at least once in their marriage.[57] Even though police records indicate that reporting of domestic violence cases is increasing, a culture of silence still discourages women from seeking help. The 2011 NDHS found that three in four women who experienced violence did not seek help.[58] For those who did, the most common source of help was the woman's family (52 percent) or friends or neighbors (53 percent) while few sought help from the police (4 percent), medical professionals (3 percent), or social service organizations (3 percent).[59]

Sexual violence against Nepali women and girls is prevalent. The Nepal Police reported that the number of reported rapes almost sextupled, from 154 to 912, in the 10 years from 2003–04 to 2013–14.[60] Rape is underreported due to social stigma. Nepal's criminal justice system also acts as a barrier to victims by limiting the reporting time to 35 days from the date of the rape.[61]

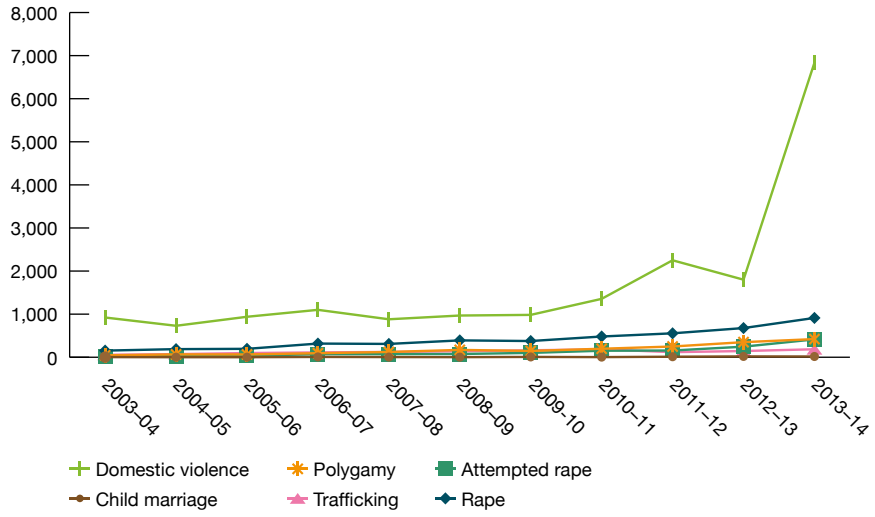

Figure 2. Gender-based crimes in Nepal
Source: The Nepal Police[62]

Notes

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1947

1947
Pakistan becomes an independent nation, comprising East and West Pakistan, following partition.

1948
Insurgency breaks out in Balochistan, the first of five.

1971
Pakistan army attacks East Pakistan. The Bangladesh Liberation War lasts for eight months; a quarter million to 3 million people die.

1977
Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq seizes power from Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto and implements Islamization policies, raising tensions between Sunnis and Shias.

1999
General Pervez Musharraf takes power and forms a military government.

2004
Fifth insurgency erupts in Balochistan. It remains ongoing.

2007
New wave of sectarian violence begins between Sunni and Shia militants.

2007
Benazir Bhutto, former prime minister, and chair of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), is assassinated.

2008
PPP wins general elections.

2010
Eighteenth Amendment to the constitution paves the way for local elections.

2013
Parliament passes the Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act.

2013
Nawaz Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League wins general elections.

2013
Church bombing in Peshawar kills more than 80 in one of the deadliest attacks on Christians.

2013
Many key Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) leaders are killed by U.S. drone strikes, leading to internal power struggles.

2014
Karachi airport attack by TTP and Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) kills 37.

2014
TTP attack on an army public school in Peshawar kills almost 150, mostly children; government steps up counterterrorism operations.

2015
Government launches National Action Plan to boost counterterrorism efforts.

2015
Suicide bombing at Quetta hospital kills 93, mostly lawyers gathered to mourn the killing of the Balochistan Bar Association president.

2015
China-Pakistan Economic Corridor agreement is signed.

2015
Police statistics report 34 percent increase in violence against women.

2016
Parliament passes anti-honor-killing and anti-rape laws.

2017
Supreme Court ousts Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, ruling that his failure to disclose his family's assets disqualifies him from holding office.

2017

Pakistan

At a glance

National civil war
Absent

Communal/ideological conflict
High

National political conflict
High

Local political and electoral conflict
Low with potential to rise

Transnational terrorism
High

Local resource conflict
High

Separatism and autonomy
High

Urban crime and violence
Medium

** Rankings are based on the last 15 years and are relative to other Asian countries.*

Overview

Pakistan's security landscape remains volatile and complex due to sectarian and ethnopolitical tensions and the intricate web of terrorist and militant groups in the country. In 2016, Pakistan saw 749 violent incidents that killed 1,887 people by various forms of violence related to politics and elections, terrorist attacks, security operations against terrorist groups and armed insurgents, ethnopolitical tensions, and sectarian cleavages. The overall number of violent incidents fell by 32 percent from 2015 to 2016, and fatalities fell by 46 percent in the same period.[1] Terrorist attacks were the most common form of violent incident reported. The decrease in violent incidents and fatalities is largely attributable to military-led operations throughout the country. Due to the heavy crackdown on terrorist and militant groups in the tribal areas, however, terrorist activities are spreading from the border region to many parts of the country.[2] In 2016, Balochistan was the region most affected by terrorist attacks, accounting for 34 percent of all attacks and 45 percent of deaths from terrorism.[3] Changing dynamics of unrest and insecurity in Balochistan indicate that the province faces a larger threat from terrorist and militant groups, as seen in Quetta and Khuzdar, than from Baloch nationalist insurgents.

Pakistan

National level

National civil war

There has been no civil war in Pakistan since the Bangladesh Liberation War, which ended in 1971 when East Pakistan became Bangladesh. The war broke out in March of that year when the Pakistani army launched a military operation against Bengali civilians, students, intellectuals, and armed personnel after the Bengali-led Awami League won a majority in the National Assembly and demanded the separation of East Pakistan from the rest of the country. The Bengali population in East Pakistan had been underrepresented in the central government and army, which were dominated by political elites from West Pakistan. In response to the Pakistani military operation, Bengali politicians and army officers declared Bangladesh independent, forming the *Mukti Bahini* (Liberation Army), which engaged in guerrilla warfare against the Pakistani army. During the war, the Pakistan army, together with religious extremist militias, committed systematic genocide and atrocities against Bengali civilians. Bangladeshi authorities claim that as many as 3 million people died, but the total may be significantly lower. World Health Surveys data collected in 2002–2003 estimates that 269,000 people died,[4] whereas other independent researchers have estimated between 300,000 and 500,000 deaths as a result of the eight-month war.[5]

National political conflict

Pakistan has a long history of political violence in which competition among political parties involves frequent clashes. The dominance of Punjab and the political, social, and economic exclusion of other provinces, particularly Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), are major drivers of political violence in the country.[6] The Pakistani military often intervenes in politics, overthrowing weak civilian governments. The country has had alternating periods of electoral democracy and authoritarian, military government since its independence in 1947. Following the Musharraf-led military government that took power in 1999, democratic governance returned in 2008 when the left-oriented Pakistan People's Party (PPP) won the general elections. The PPP government completed its five-year term, and another democratic election was held in May 2013, when the Pakistan Muslim League (PML), led by Nawaz Sharif, won the largest number of votes.

There were waves of political unrest ahead of the 2008 and 2013 general elections. Following the December 2007 assassination of Benazir Bhutto, the former prime minister and chair of the PPP, there were several attacks in KP and FATA targeting leftist politicians and political rallies in the weeks preceding the 2008 general elections. For example, a suicide attack killed as many as 31 people at a political rally for the Pashtun nationalist Awami National Party (ANP) in Charsadda, KP, on February 9, 2008, and another attack killed ten ANP activists in North Waziristan Agency on February 11, 2008.[7] Political violence continued to negatively affect security in Karachi throughout 2008, resulting in 143 deaths and 333 injuries.[8] Most political clashes in Karachi were between the Sunni Tehreek (ST), a Sunni Islam religious political organization, and the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), a liberal, secular political party. A number of criminal groups in the city, some supported by local land mafia, were also involved in violent acts with backing from political parties.

Terrorist attacks and violent clashes among different political parties during the 2013 general elections led to 298 deaths and 885 injuries between January 1 and May 15 of that year.[9] The province of Sindh—primarily Karachi—was the most affected by both terrorist attacks and incidents of political violence, followed by KP and Balochistan. A total of 148 terrorist attacks were reported across Pakistan in that four-and-a-half-month period, targeting political leaders, offices, and rallies, election candidates, and polling stations. Of the 148 attacks, 108 were perpetrated

40+

terrorist organizations operate in and from

Pakistan

by the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and its local affiliates, killing 156 people and injuring 665. Baloch nationalist insurgents were responsible for 40 attacks, which killed 14 and injured 78. The ANP and the PPP were targeted in almost every region of Pakistan, while the MQM was primarily attacked in Karachi. The 2013 elections demonstrated the lengths to which militant groups would go to manipulate political outcomes through violence, targeting secularist parties, such as the PPP, ANP, and MQM, who formed the last government.

Beyond terrorist attacks, riots and protests between political parties are also common across the country. During the same period in 2013 there were 97 reported incidents of political clashes between supporters and workers of different political parties, resulting in 128 deaths and 142 injuries.[10] Seventy-three of these incidents took place in Sindh—70 of them in Karachi alone—taking the lives of 97 people, largely leaders and workers of political parties including the ANP, the MQM, the PPP, the ST, the PML, the Mohajir Qaumi Movement-Haqqiqi (MQM-H), Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F), Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), and the People's Aman Committee. Political violence has long been a prominent feature of insecurity in Karachi; however, during the weeks preceding the May 2013 elections, incidents were also reported in other provinces.

From August to December 2014, an opposition party, the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI), held public rallies, marches, and sit-ins across the country, accusing the PML of electoral fraud during the 2013 elections and demanding the resignation of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. The PTI's protests in Islamabad prompted violent clashes between protesters and security forces, resulting in at least three deaths and hundreds of casualties.[11] Following a deadly attack by the Taliban in December, 2014, PTI decided to cancel the protest to restore national unity.

In July 2017, the Supreme Court ousted Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. The court had appointed a panel to investigate his assets after the publication of the "Panama Papers", files from a law firm in Panama that had facilitated offshore transactions for many political leaders, including Nawaz Sharif. The court ruled that he had failed to disclose his family's assets and disqualified him from holding office.

Transnational terrorism

Pakistan experiences a high number of terrorist attacks. According to the 2016 Global Terrorism Index, it is among the world's top five countries most affected by terrorism.[12] The country had over 12,000 terrorist attacks between 2009 and 2016, resulting in 16,526 deaths (figure 1). The number of terrorist attacks and consequent fatalities has been declining, however, with the exception of 2013, which saw a jump in sectarian attacks. The recent reduction in terrorist incidents can be attributed to military-led counterterrorism operations, such as Zarb-e-Azb in FATA. Zarb-e-Azb was implemented in June 2014 in response to the joint terrorist attack by the TTP and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) on the Jinnah International Airport in Karachi, which left 37 people dead, including 10 militants.[13] The government strengthened counterterrorism operations by launching the National Action Plan in January 2015, following an attack by the Taliban on the Army Public School in December 2014, which killed 136 schoolchildren and nine teachers.[14] The government also started to strengthen the National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA), which launched the Pakistan Action to Counter Terrorism (PACT) program in April 2017, aiming to enhance the capacity and technical expertise of counterterrorism efforts in the country.[15] Supported by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the program will first be piloted in KP, then expanded across the country.

Transnational terrorism is most common in areas bordering Afghanistan. Balochistan is the region most affected by terrorist violence in the last few years, followed by KP and FATA. Balochistan accounted for 34 percent of all attacks in 2016, resulting in 412 deaths and 702 injuries.[16] This included the August 8 hospital suicide bombing in Quetta, which killed 93 people, many of them lawyers gathering to mourn the killing of the Balochistan Bar Association president the day before.[17] KP was also significantly affected by terrorism in 2016, with 127 reported attacks killing 189 people and injuring another 355.[18] Meanwhile, FATA had 99 attacks, which killed 163 people and wounded 221.[19] Patterns of terrorist activity in 2016 suggest that militants who have been pushed out of the tribal regions are moving into Pakistan's urban areas, such as Karachi, Lahore, and Quetta, to carry out large-scale attacks.[20]

There are over 40 terrorist organizations operating in and from Pakistan.[21] More than 60 percent of the terrorist attacks in 2016 were carried out by the Pakistani Taliban, mainly the

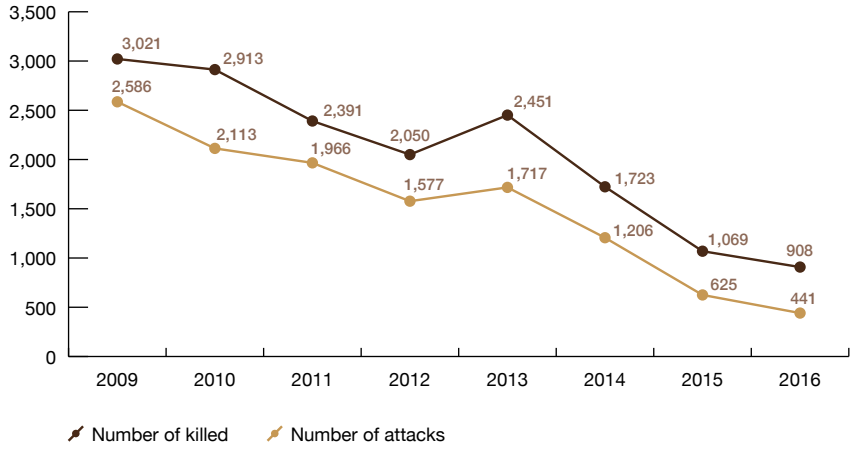

Figure 1. Terrorist attacks and related fatalities in Pakistan (2009–2016)
Source: PIPS[22]

TTP, and other groups with similar objectives, including Islamic State (IS) affiliates and supporters.[23] Since the key TTP leaders were killed by U.S. drone strikes in 2013, terrorist groups have experienced a period of power struggles, splits, and internal reorganizations. Since 2014, military-led counterterrorism operations against terrorist groups have significantly reduced the capability of militant groups, particularly the TTP. The presence of transnational groups such as al-Qaeda and IMU has also been largely eradicated. However, the geopolitical situation in the region complicates the country's approach to different terrorist organizations. The International Crisis Group (ICG) pointed out that the military still distinguishes between "bad" jihadi groups, which target the government and security forces, and "good" jihadi groups, which are perceived to promote its strategic objectives in India and Afghanistan.[24] For example, anti-India outfits, such as Jamaat-ud-Dawa (formerly Lashkar-e-Tayyaba), have not been targeted in ongoing operations in FATA, while Pakistan accuses India of supporting the Baloch insurgent movement.

Separatism and autonomy

Balochistan suffers from a history of separatist conflict. Baloch nationalists previously led four insurgencies against the federal government, in 1948, 1958–59, 1962–63, and 1973–77. These insurgencies were suppressed by the Pakistani army. The fifth insurgency, which began in 2004, is still ongoing.[25] It is estimated that nearly 1,000 people were killed by insurgent attacks between 2004 and 2015 in Balochistan.[26] Balochistan is the largest but least populous province of Pakistan.[27] It is rich in natural resources,[28] meeting more than 40 percent of Pakistan's energy needs through its gas and coal reserves and accounting for 36 percent of the country's total gas production.[29] However, Balochistan is the least economically developed of the four provinces of Pakistan. It has the country's lowest rate of economic growth, highest poverty rate, and lowest social indicators for health and education.[30]

The conflict in Balochistan is driven by a number of grievances and inequities, including lack of autonomy, lack of Baloch representation in the government and military, and economic oppression. After Pakistan became independent in 1947, it adopted a highly centralized and militarized state model, insisting on a high level of central control over its provinces and imposing a top-down conception of the federation and national identity. This became a source of tension between the federal government and multiethnic Balochistan. Each time the Balochs demanded autonomy, the central government suppressed them by force, alienating the Balochs further. The Balochs are not significantly represented in government, as Punjabis dominate the central government, the Pakistani military, and the provincial administration of Balochistan.

One of the primary drivers of the current conflict is the federal government's extraction of natural gas in Balochistan and its failure to distribute a fair share of the revenue to the local population. Balochistan's natural gas fields are a major revenue earner for the federal government, but the majority of Baloch benefit little. The ICG notes that Baloch anger over central control and exploitation of the province's economic resources reached new heights when the central government excluded them from the development of the Gwadar port, which aims to transform a small fishing village into a major transportation hub for Afghanistan, China, Central Asia, and the Middle East.[31]

In April 2015, Pakistan signed the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) agreement with China, which agreed to invest USD 46 billion in a series of energy and transport projects in Pakistan.[32] Trade through the corridor, which connects Gwadar port with China's largest province, Xinjiang, had partially begun in November 2016. CPEC aims to contribute to the development of Balochistan and connect hard-to-reach areas with other parts of the country.[33] However, it is suspected that Balochistan may not directly benefit from economic activities through CPEC, because revenue generated from ports and airports will be collected by the federal government, not the provincial government.[34]

The political and economic marginalization of the Baloch, coupled with the increased presence of Pakistani security forces in the province, have led to further resentment and resistance by the Baloch against the federal government. Alleged foreign interventions have added to the conflict's complexity. Pakistani officials claim that India has been involved in perpetuating the conflict by providing Baloch militants with training and financial support through its 26 consulates established along the Balochistan border in Afghanistan and Iran.[35] The Pakistani parliament has made some attempts to resolve the conflict, but negotiations have fallen through, and fighting has continued. Insecurity in the province is further exacerbated by sectarian-related terrorist attacks by the TTP and other militant groups.

Large-scale communal and ideological conflicts

Sectarian and ethnic violence has been a recurrent feature of Pakistan's history since 1947, in the form of both violent conflict between religious and ethnic groups, and one-sided violence against religious and ethnic minorities by the state and Islamic extremists. Home to an estimated population of over 190 million in 2015,[36] Pakistan has many different ethnic, linguistic, and sectarian groups. Ethnic composition roughly corresponds to the linguistic distribution of the population, at least among the largest groups: Punjabi 44.7 percent, Pashtun 15.4 percent, Sindhi 14.1 percent, Sariaki 8.4 percent, Muhajir 7.6 percent, Baloch 3.6 percent, and others 6.2 percent.[37] The vast majority of the population (96.3 percent) is Muslim, with much smaller minorities of Christians (1.6 percent), Hindus (1.6 percent), Ahmadiyyas (0.2 percent), scheduled castes (0.2 percent), and other religions (0.07 percent).[38]

Sectarian violence between the majority Sunnis (70–85 percent) and the minority Shias (15–20 percent) is prevalent in the country.[39] Since 2007, Pakistan has seen a new wave of sectarian attacks perpetrated by militant groups. Even though incidents of sectarian violence have been decreasing since 2013, such fluctuations in sectarian violence are common in Pakistan (figure 2). In 2016, there were 34 sectarian terrorist attacks, perpetrated mostly by banned Sunni and Shia militant groups, which killed 104 people.[40] Over 80 percent of people killed in sectarian violence in 2016 were in Khuzdar, in Balochistan, and Karachi, in Sindh.[41] While a single suicide attack at the Shah Noorani shrine in Khuzdar took 54 lives, most attacks in Karachi were targeted killings.

Tensions between Sunnis and Shias in Pakistan rose when Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq, the military dictator, seized power from Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto in 1977. His Islamization policies favored the Sunni interpretation of Islam, causing a rift between the two denominations. Sunni-based Sharia law was incorporated into Pakistani law. A Sharia court and a Sharia bench of the Supreme Court were established, leading to a demand from the Shia community to follow their own interpretation of Islamic jurisprudence. Shia leaders also strongly opposed Zia's imposition of the Islamic tax system, known as Zakat. The sectarian proxy war between Saudi Arabia (Wahhabi Sunni Islam) and Iran (Twelver Shia Islam) has helped ignite the escalation of sectarian violence

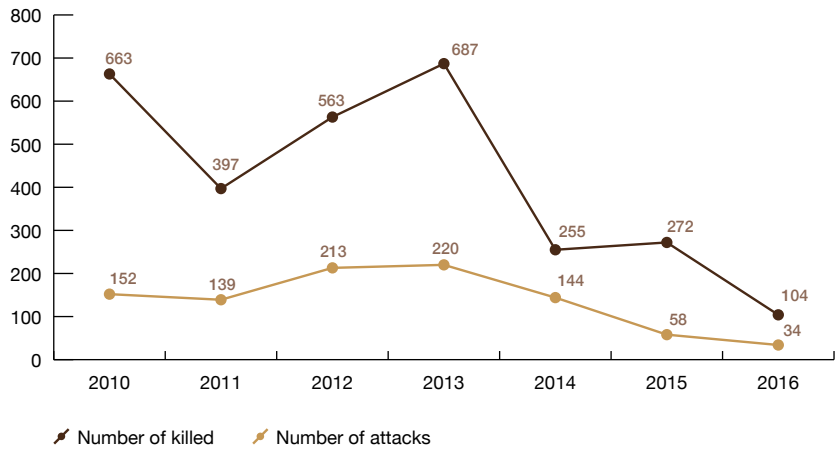

Figure 2. Sectarian violence in Pakistan (2010–2016)
Source: PIPS[42]

80% +

of those killed

in sectarian violence in 2016 were in Khuzdar and Karachi

in Pakistan.[43] Sunni and Shia militant groups have each targeted members of the other sect. The rise of the TTP in the mid-2000s, and its growing ties with militant sectarian groups such as the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi Al-Alami (LeJ-A, formerly known as LeJ), have led to more violence.

In addition to violence between Sunnis and Shias, Pakistan's religious minorities, such as Christians, Ahmadis, and Ismailis, who belong to the Shia branch of Islam, suffer discrimination and violence. For example, Jamaat-ul-Ahrar, a group affiliated with the TTP, targeted Christians in Lahore on Easter Sunday in March 2016, killing more than 70 people, including children.[44] It was the deadliest attack on Christians since the 2013 Peshawar church bombing, which killed over 80. The Ahmadis, who are considered non-Muslim under Pakistani law, also face continued attacks and persecution. On Prophet Mohammed's birthday in December 2016, a procession of around 2,000 Sunni Muslims attacked the Ahmadi mosque, injuring several people despite police resistance.[45] A massacre of Ismailis carried out by a TTP-associated group in 2015 left at least 45 people dead.[46]

Local level

Local political conflict and electoral violence

Local electoral violence has been relatively limited in Pakistan. Balochistan was the first province to hold local government elections after the Local Government Acts (LGAs) were passed by the provincial assemblies.[47] Compared to the May 2013 general elections, the first phase of the local elections, in December 2013, was held in a peaceful manner, with just over 30 people receiving minor injuries in a few violent incidents.[48] Strict security measures by the provincial government helped, as over 54,000 personnel from the army, Frontier Corps, Balochistan Constabulary, Levies Force, and police were deployed in and around the polling stations.[49] Following Balochistan, KP, Punjab, and Sindh held their local government elections in 2015. KP had 13 reported incidents of political or election-related violence, which took the lives of 25 people and injured 70 others, while as many as 19 such incidents were reported in Punjab, resulting in 11 deaths and 107 injuries.[50] Out of 30 reported incidents of political and election-related violence in Sindh, as many as 23 took place in Karachi, resulting in 26 deaths.[51] Violent incidents were also reported in the interior of Sindh, killing 18 people and injuring 99 others. The election-related violence was primarily caused by clashes between rival political groups. Over 30,000 police officers were also deployed in these provinces during the elections.[52]

Local conflict over resources and community rights

See the separatism and autonomy section on the local conflict over natural resources in Balochistan.

Urban crime and violence

Urban crime and violence are widespread in Pakistan. Between 2008 and 2016, the police recorded over 12,000 homicide cases in Karachi, the most populous city in Pakistan, with 9.8 million inhabitants (1998 census). In the years leading up to 2012, the city witnessed a steady rise in lethal violence. This increase was partially attributed to rapid and uncontrolled urbanization and ethnopolitical tensions.[53] Since 2012, the city has experienced a downward trend in the number of crimes and violent incidents. In 2016, crime statistics indicated a 91 percent decrease in targeted killings, a 93 percent decrease in extortion cases, and a 72 percent decrease in incidents of terrorism.[54] The recent crime reduction is primarily due to security operations against terrorist and criminal groups, launched in September 2013 by the Sindh Rangers.

Underrepresentation of migrants, intensifying ethnopolitical conflict, and the migration of hardline and extremist groups are key factors driving violence in Karachi. Demographic changes have significantly contributed to a sharp resurgence in ethnopolitical tensions and sectarian violence in Karachi. The ethnic composition of the city has been transformed since 1941, when Sindhis were about two-thirds of the population and Muhajir immigrants from northern India were just 6 percent.[55] Karachi today is 43 percent Muhajir, 17 percent Pashtun, 11 percent Punjabi, 6 percent Sindhi, 5 percent Balochi, 3 percent Saraiki, and 2 percent Hazara or Gilgiti. Relations between the Muhajirs and the Pashtuns have been strained by economic and political competition for control of land and resources.[56] Much of the ethnic violence in recent years has involved turf wars between rival criminal groups backed by political parties, such as the ANP, a Pashtun nationalist party, and the MQM, which represents the interests of the Muhajir community. Karachi is also a major target of sectarian violence by militant groups, such as the TTP and LeJ.

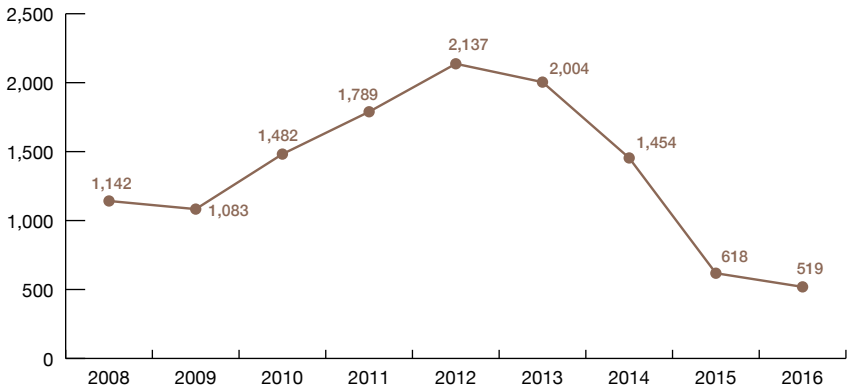

Figure 3. Number of homicide cases in Karachi (2008–2016)
Source: Crime statistics provided by the Sindh Bureau of Statistics and Sindh Police[57]

Almost 1,100

honor killings

reported in 2015

Beyond Karachi, Lahore, Peshawar, and Quetta are also operational and financial bases for various extremist groups and criminal gangs that exploit poor governance and failing law and order to establish recruitment and patronage networks.[58] These groups attempt to lure youth into their violent activities by providing services, work, and a purpose in life. Criminal gangs and jihadi networks continue to inflict violence in the big cities. Lack of political representation and the neglect of some ethnic groups have also exacerbated conflict in some cities, as seen in Balochistan.

Domestic and gender-based violence

Violence against women (VAW) is prevalent in Pakistan, due to patriarchal social norms and values coupled with customary and religious practices. Pakistan had over 53,000 reported VAW cases between 2011 and 2015 (figure 4).[59] Police statistics indicated an increase of 34 percent in VAW cases between 2014 and 2015. Punjab had the most recorded cases in 2015, followed by Sindh and KP. Crimes targeting women, such as abduction, murder, and rape, are among the most common. According to the Aurat Foundation, a women's rights organization based in Islamabad, while rates of most crimes ebb and flow, rape and gang rape are significantly increasing.[60] In October 2016, the parliament passed anti-honor-killing and anti-rape bills, which lengthened sentences and prevented victims' relatives from pardoning the perpetrators of honor killings.[61]

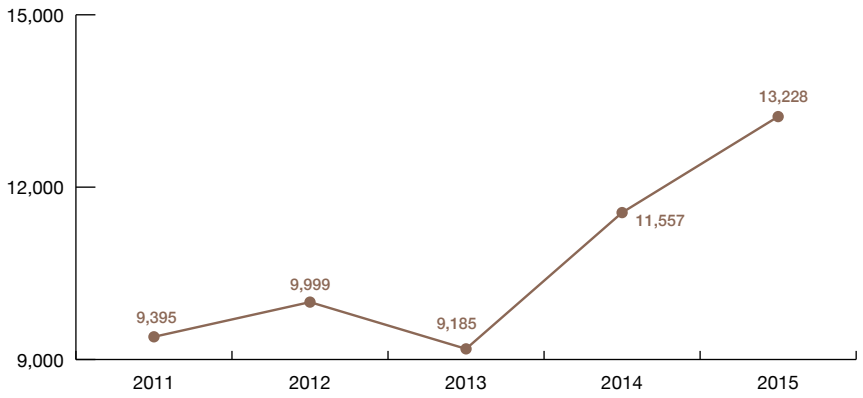

Figure 4. Cases of violence against women in Pakistan (2011–2015)
Source: Abbasi[62]

Domestic violence is an endemic social problem in Pakistan. Even though Pakistan passed the Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act in March 2013, cases of domestic violence are underreported and often not investigated thoroughly because domestic violence is considered a private matter. One study found that 85 percent of women had experienced domestic violence by their spouse since marriage.[63] The most common form of domestic violence was psychological abuse (81 percent), followed by physical violence (75 percent) and sexual violence (66 percent).[64] Sixty-four percent of women who experienced physical violence had been injured by it, including broken bones and teeth, bruises, sprains, and burns.[65] The majority of women (63 percent) who received injuries never sought medical treatment, and 35 percent of those were not allowed by their families to seek treatment.

Other forms of domestic violence—including honor killings, where women are killed because they are believed to have brought shame to their family, dowry-related violence, acid attacks, and burning—are also prevalent. The Aurat Foundation recorded nearly 4,000 cases of honor killings between 2008 and 2014.[66] A report by the independent Human Rights Commission estimated almost 1,100 honor killings in 2015 alone.[67] In a Rutgers WPF study, 34 percent of women had witnessed an honor killing within their extended family.[68] Women who had a history of honor killing in their families were more likely to experience psychological, physical, and sexual violence from their spouse than women who had not. Dowry- and family-related disputes often resulted in death or disfigurement by acid attack or burning. Women are often attacked and murdered if their husband or his family deem their dowry to be insufficient.

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1946

1946
The Philippines gains independence.

1968
The Jabidah Massacre—Moro soldiers mutiny and are killed by their Philippine army officers.

1969
Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) is founded and its New People's Army (NPA) begins a guerilla war. Over the next five decades, 43,000 will die.

1969
Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) is founded by Nur Misuari.

1972
President Ferdinand Marcos declares martial law.

1972
MNLF clashes with Philippine government forces escalate on Mindanao. In the decades-long insurgency that ensues, 153,000 will die.

1976
The Tripoli Agreement—MNLF and the government agree to Moro autonomy, but the deal collapses.

1981
Former MNLF fighters split to form the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

1986
Marcos loses a snap election to Corazon Aquino, millions join the People Power protests to force his resignation, and democracy is restored.

1987
New constitution calls for an Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), created in 1989.

1996
Final Peace Agreement with the MNLF. Its leader Misuari is elected governor of ARMM.

2000
President Estrada declares "all-out war" against the MILF. More than 750,000 civilians are displaced, and over 1,000 die.

2001
People Power II—President Estrada is overthrown by street protests in Manila backed by security forces. Vice-President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo becomes president.

2006
President Arroyo declares "all-out war" against the CPP-NPA, leading to 900 extrajudicial killings and 180 disappearances of leftist activists.

2008
Breakthrough deal with MILF declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court. Over 400 people are killed and more than 750,000 displaced in renewed fighting.

2009
The Maguindanao Massacre—Ruling family in Maguindanao ambushes political rival, killing 58 in deadliest-ever incident of electoral violence.

2010
Benigno Aquino III, son of Corazon Aquino, becomes president.

2012
Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro with the MILF outlines path to a new autonomous region on Mindanao.

2014
Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro with the MILF. Congress begins debating the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) to implement the pact.

2014
Several radical armed groups on Mindanao pledge allegiance to the Islamic State (IS).

2015
The Mamasapano Incident—44 police are killed in a botched counterterrorism raid in Maguindanao, along with 18 Moro insurgents and five civilians. Public outrage derails the BBL.

2016
Rodrigo Duterte becomes the first president from Mindanao.

2017
Radical, IS-aligned armed groups take over Marawi City, displacing 360,000 and killing over 800. Duterte declares martial law in Mindanao.

2016
President Duterte launches a war on drugs. Police kill 3,811 alleged drug dealers in the first year; thousands more are killed by unknown assailants.

2017

Philippines

At a glance

National civil war
Absent

Communal/ideological conflict
Shifted from high to medium

National political conflict
Shifted from high to low

Local political and electoral conflict
High

Transnational terrorism
Medium

Local resource conflict
Medium

Separatism and autonomy
Shifted from high to medium

Urban crime and violence
High

** Rankings are based on the last 15 years and are relative to other Asian countries.*

Overview

President Rodrigo Duterte was elected in May 2016, promising to crack down on crime and pursue peace with communist and Muslim insurgents. The main pillar of Duterte's efforts to restore public order has been the war on drugs. Since he took office, police have killed more than 3,800 alleged drug dealers. Thousands more are estimated to have been killed by unidentified assailants. The communist New People's Army (NPA) has waged a low-intensity war for decades. Peace talks restarted in 2011 but sputtered out. Duterte resumed negotiations, but they have made little progress. The parties disagree over a ceasefire and the release of detainees. On the southern island of Mindanao, the long-running peace process to resolve an insurgency waged by the Muslim minority, known as the Moros, continues. Landmark agreements on autonomy were signed with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in 2012 and 2014. Congress began deliberating a bill to implement the agreements. Yet popular support for the peace deal proved weak following an incident in January 2015 in which 67 people—including 44 police—were killed in a counterterrorism operation. Duterte supports the revised version of the bill submitted to Congress in mid-2017. Meanwhile, an array of smaller, more radical armed groups that reject the peace process have pledged allegiance to the Islamic State (IS). Despite military operations against them, these groups have been able to recruit locally and are also hosting growing numbers of foreign fighters. In May 2017, they seized Marawi, a provincial capital on Mindanao and a symbolic center for Moros.

Philippines

National level

National civil war

Not present in the Philippines.

National political conflict

Since independence from the United States in 1946, the Philippines has grown from a population of around 18 million to more than 105 million. During the first two decades of the post–World War II era, the country was relatively stable and enjoyed steady economic growth. Violence and instability increased in the late 1960s and early 1970s. A nationwide communist insurgency began, and Moros in the country's far south launched an armed resistance (see below). After a period of authoritarian rule from 1972 to 1986, the Philippines returned to democracy. However, electoral fraud, corruption, and coup attempts continue to mar national politics.

President Ferdinand Marcos was first elected in 1965 and won a second term in 1969. Allegations of fraud and campaign overspending triggered civil unrest in early 1970 (known as the First Quarter Storm). In 1972, Marcos imposed martial law to quell opposition. State security forces persecuted individuals perceived to oppose government policies, mainly on the left. Three thousand two hundred and fifty-seven extrajudicial killings and 737 enforced disappearances were registered, and approximately 35,000 were tortured and 70,000 incarcerated.[1] Martial law ended in 1981, but state violence continued. Reports of widespread corruption by Marcos and his wife further inflamed the opposition: over 20 years, Marcos reportedly embezzled around USD 10 billion.[2]

Opposition to Marcos intensified in the early 1980s. In 1986, he called a snap election, which he lost to Corazon Aquino, the widow of a leading figure of the opposition, Senator Benigno Aquino. A mass campaign of civil disobedience to force Marcos to cede power ensued. The protests gained support from the Catholic Church and the security forces, notably Defense Minister Juan Ponce Enrile and General Fidel Ramos. Marcos fled to the United States. This nonviolent popular uprising, known as "People Power," restored democracy. In 1987, Congress promulgated a new constitution which imposed a single-term limit on the presidency.

35,000 tortured
70,000 jailed
under the Marcos regime

Fidel Ramos was elected president in 1992 , succeeding Corazon Aquino. Under his leadership, the Philippines was stable and the economy grew. Ramos's vice president, Joseph Estrada, won the 1998 presidential election, buoyed by strong support from the poor. Once in office, however, Estrada lost the support of the middle class and elites as allegations of cronyism and embezzlement mounted. In January 2001, Estrada was overthrown by another broad-based, popular revolt supported by security forces, known as "People Power II." He retained the support of the poor, who protested his arrest on corruption charges in April the same year.[3] Transparency International estimated that, in less than three years as president, Estrada amassed USD 78–80 million.[4]

Estrada's vice president, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, then assumed the presidency in 2001. Her administration, too, was marred by cases of large-scale corruption, patronage, money laundering, election rigging, coup attempts, and political killings.[5] When Arroyo sought reelection in 2004, there were 189 election-related killings, and another 126 deaths were registered during the 2007 midterm polls.[6] During her nine-year tenure, press freedom declined and killings of journalists surged (107 deaths).[7] She faced two coup attempts. In 2003, around 300 Philippine soldiers staged a mutiny, briefly occupying part of the central business district of Metro Manila. In 2006, Arroyo responded to threats of a coup by declaring a state of emergency and arresting opponents in the media, military, civil society, and government.

The victory in 2010 of Benigno Aquino III, son of former president Corazon Aquino, ushered in the promise of reform and cleaner government. President Aquino targeted corruption under the previous administration, arresting Arroyo and some allies on charges of plunder in 2012, although she was released in 2016. The Philippines experienced a period of economic growth.

The 2016 presidential election was won by Rodrigo Duterte, the former mayor of Davao, the largest city in the southern Philippines and third-largest in the country. Securing 39 percent of the popular vote, he won a surprise victory as an outsider without links to the traditional patrons and money politics in the capital. He won over a wide spectrum of voters across the country, including in Metro Manila, where his anticrime message and promise to restore order resonated with a broad cross-section of voters.[8] He is the country's first president from Mindanao, and has made peace in the southern Philippines a priority.

Transnational terrorism

The Philippines' archipelagic waters, porous borders, and weak state presence in large swathes of the country's south provide opportunities for transnational terrorism. Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), an Indonesia-based network, used the southern Philippines as a training ground in the 1990s.[9] Individuals involved in the 2002 bombing in Bali, Indonesia, hid for years in Mindanao. International links such as these between domestic armed groups and international networks have persisted despite extensive foreign counterterrorism assistance, including a U.S. Joint Special Operations Task Force present in the Philippines from 2002 to 2015. Foreign extremists have been sheltered by the major insurgent organizations—including by the MILF in the 1990s and early 2000s—and by smaller groups that emerged after 2010, like Khilafah Islamiyah Mindanao (KIM) and Ansar al-Khalifa Philippines (AKP). Often foreigners swap expertise in bombmaking and armed conflict for safe haven.

The domestic armed groups that currently harbor foreign extremists reject peace talks with the Philippine government. The most prominent is the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), which broke off from the original insurgent organization, the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), in the 1990s.[10] The ASG has traditionally operated on the Zamboanga Peninsula and in the island provinces of Basilan and Sulu, though its members travel elsewhere in Mindanao and to eastern Malaysia. The ASG initially received funding from al-Qaeda, but has also relied from the start on banditry and kidnap-for-ransom to raise funds.[11] It was responsible for the 2004 SuperFerry

116 die

in the SuperFerry bombing, the deadliest single terror attack in the Philippines

bombing that killed 116 people, which it carried out with the Luzon-based Rajah Solaiman Movement (RSM) of radicalized Muslim converts. The ASG lost strength after Khadaffy Janjalani, the brother of deceased founder Abdurajak Janjalani, was killed in Sulu in 2006. Other ASG figures continued operations. They host extremists from elsewhere in Southeast Asia and draw support from communities that benefit from ransom payments.[12]

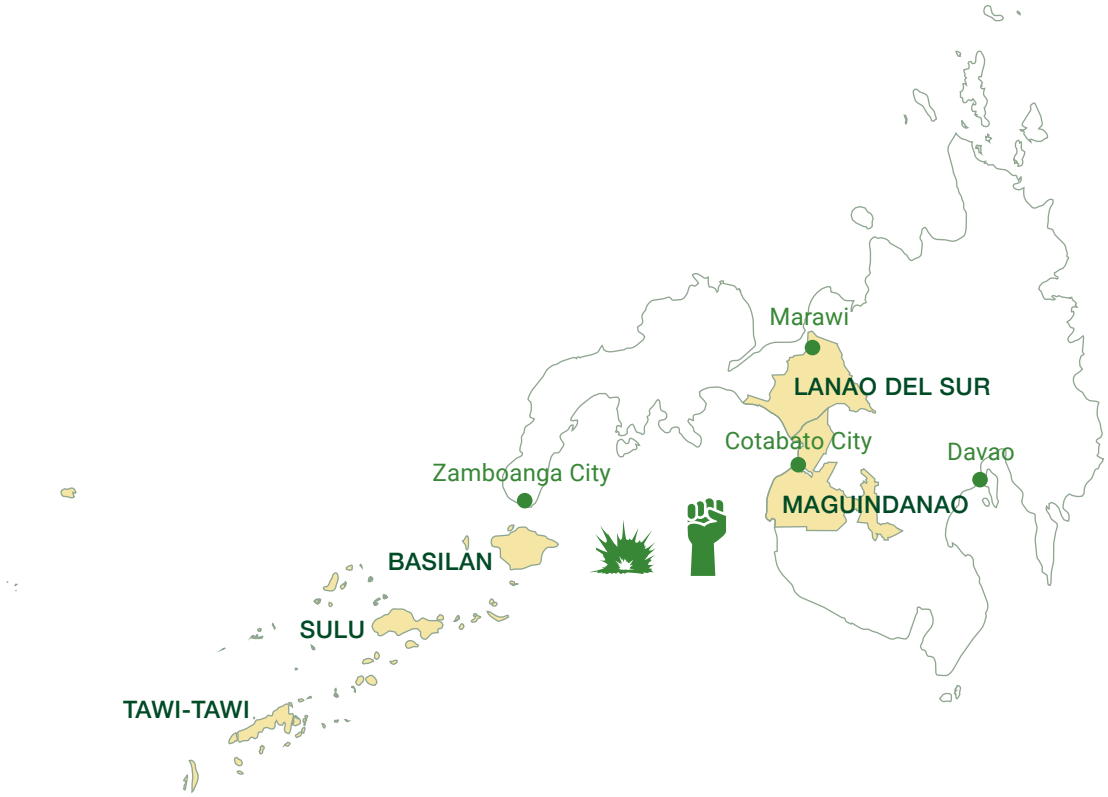
International links, as well as alliances among the smaller, more radical armed groups in Mindanao, have strengthened since the Islamic State (IS) was declared in Syria and Iraq in June 2014. Shortly thereafter, the ASG released several videos with its current leader, Isnilon Hapilon, known as Abu Abdullah, swearing allegiance to IS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. IS subsequently recognized Hapilon as its *amir* in Southeast Asia. In June 2016, IS released a video urging Southeast Asian extremists to go to Mindanao if they could not get to Syria and Iraq.[13] The video also featured the first Filipino confirmed to be in Syria, Mohammad Reza Kiram. The recognition of Hapilon's leadership has forged closer ties among other groups that have pledged allegiance to IS. Most important is the Maute Group (also called IS-Ranao), which is based in Butig, Lanao del Sur, in central Mindanao. The first joint operation carried out by the Maute Group in collaboration with ASG was the September 2, 2016, bombing of the night market in Davao—the largest city in Mindanao—which killed 15.[14]

Violence escalated dramatically on May 23, 2017, when an attempted raid by the Philippine military to capture Hapilon prompted a large-scale attack by the Maute Group in large portions of Marawi City, the capital of Lanao del Sur Province and a symbolic center for Moros.[15] The ensuing street clashes and bombing have so far killed at least 800 people as the Philippine government has tried to regain control of the city.[16] Approximately 360,000 people have been displaced.[17] Reports have emerged of foreign fighters—primarily Malaysians and Indonesians, but other nationalities as well—being killed alongside Maute recruits in Marawi.

Subnational level

Separatism and autonomy

Conflict in central and western Mindanao has sporadically pitted Moro insurgents against security forces. Since 1972, an estimated 153,000 lives have been lost. Although the Philippine government has been in stop-start negotiations with the two largest insurgent organizations—the MILF and the MNLF—for decades, a political solution to the conflict has proven elusive. State presence is weak, and provincial and municipal governments are controlled by local elites who use patronage and violence to stay in power. Poor governance, clan and ethnic rivalries, and the insurgency are deeply intertwined.



Prior to the arrival of the Spanish in the Philippines, Mindanao had a predominantly Muslim population ruled by sultans and *datus* (indigenous chiefs). When Spain colonized the majority of the Philippines in the 16th century, Muslims resisted conversion to Catholicism. Spain ceded control of the Philippines to the United States in 1898, but the Philippine public was not consulted, and the Moro population never acceded to the new arrangements. The American colonial regime passed a series of land laws[18] that favored Christian settlers and private corporations at the expense of the Moros and indigenous peoples. This, along with the implementation of land titling, anchored in a property-rights regime alien to Moro and indigenous customs,[19] led to massive dispossession of the Moro people by Christian settlers and investors. After independence, land resettlement programs accelerated, and settlers from the northern Philippines gained power and established land claims. This increased tensions between settlers and Moros due to growing land scarcity. The resettlement policy marginalized the Muslims economically and politically as settlers exploited the natural resources of their homeland.

In 1968, at least 28 young Moro military recruits were killed by their superiors when they refused to carry out their secret mission to infiltrate and foment unrest in Sabah, in eastern Malaysia. Sabah was formerly part of the Sulu sultanate and is claimed by the Philippines. The incident, known as the Jabidah Massacre, triggered more unrest and was a key motivation in the formation of armed Moro separatist groups.

Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF). The MNLF was founded in 1969 by Nur Misuari with the initial goal of fighting the Philippine state for an independent Moro nation in Mindanao. The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) brokered the Tripoli Agreement, signed in Libya in 1976,[20] which was to grant autonomy to Muslim Mindanao. However, the deal quickly

collapsed. In 1989, President Corazon Aquino signed a law that set up the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) pursuant to the 1987 constitution. The ARMM is composed of two noncontiguous areas: the provinces of Maguindanao and Lanao del Sur in central Mindanao, and the island provinces of Basilan, Sulu, and Tawi-Tawi off western Mindanao.[21] Throughout this period, infrequent armed battles continued between government and MNLF forces. The MNLF did not participate in ARMM's establishment, and peace negotiations continued.

A more significant deal was signed in 1996. The Final Peace Agreement paved the way for Misuari to run for office; he was elected ARMM governor the same year. Around 7,000 MNLF forces were to be integrated into the Philippine military and police; however, implementation was problematic. The MNLF weakened after the peace agreement, but was never disbanded. It splintered into at least four factions, some of which continued to clash with the Philippine military. Misuari has a tense relationship with the MILF leadership, which separately began negotiating with the government in 1997.

In September 2013, Misuari's supporters triggered a siege in Zamboanga City, in western Mindanao. The incident, apparently aimed at thwarting the government's peace deal with the MILF (see below), paralyzed the city of over a million residents and reduced 30 to 40 hectares to rubble. Fighting lasted for three weeks, leaving 218 dead and hundreds more wounded. Over 100,000 residents fled to evacuation centers. In October 2013, a court charged Misuari and his MNLF allies with rebellion and other criminal charges.[22] In mid-2014, the OIC convened a Bangsamoro Coordination Forum as a venue for direct talks between various MNLF factions and the MILF on the peace agreement in Mindanao.

Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). The MILF, formed in 1981 after a split from the MNLF led by Hashim Salamat in 1978, is the country's largest Muslim armed group, with an estimated 10,000 to 30,000 members.[23] It is dominated by ethnic Maguindanao and Maranao from central Mindanao, and aspires to create a new, self-governing region referred to as the Bangsamoro in Muslim Mindanao.

Clashes between the MILF and the Philippine military increased after the 1996 agreement with the MNLF. These occurred intermittently despite a ceasefire agreement that was signed in 1997. Peace negotiations, facilitated by the Malaysian government, culminated in the breakthrough Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain in mid-2008. However, the Supreme Court declared the deal unconstitutional. In the turbulence following the Supreme Court decision, some MILF elements attacked Christian villages. This prompted military retaliation; the fighting in central Mindanao, which lasted until early 2009, displaced 750,000 and killed almost 400.[24] In December 2010, one of the MILF commanders, Ameril Umbra Kato, whose fighters had initiated clashes in 2008, broke away to form the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF). Amid this sporadic violence, the Philippine government and the MILF agreed to set up a range of domestic and international mechanisms to monitor the ceasefire and investigate violations, as well as to exchange information on criminal and extremist activity.[25]

Formal negotiations between the Philippine government and the MILF accelerated after President Benigno Aquino held talks with MILF leader Al-Haj Murad Ebrahim in Tokyo in 2011.[26] Subsequent talks in Kuala Lumpur, facilitated by Malaysia and supported by the International Contact Group, made up of concerned governments and NGOs, led to the signing of the Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro in October 2012 and the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro in March 2014.[27] These peace agreements called for the abolition of ARMM and the creation of a new autonomous region in the Bangsamoro with more powers and territory, a greater ability to generate its own revenue, and new security arrangements (which would include the handover of MILF weapons). Congress began deliberating the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL), which would turn the agreements into law.

7,000 MNLF forces

integrated into the military & police

A major setback occurred on January 25, 2015, when police conducting a counterterrorism operation against a Malaysian militant clashed with MILF and BIFF fighters in the municipality of Mamasapano in Maguindanao. Forty-four police, eighteen MILF, and five civilians died in the Mamasapano incident.[28] The deaths of the police aroused widespread public anger, and deliberations on the draft BBL in Congress were suspended. Public distrust of the peace process grew, and Congress failed to pass the legislation before Aquino's term ended.

President Duterte unveiled a new approach to the peace process shortly after he took office in June 2016. He envisions the new autonomy arrangements negotiated with the MILF, and the previous arrangements negotiated with the MNLF, being subsumed under a new federal constitutional framework. A plebiscite on federalism is provisionally planned for the 2019 midterm elections.[29] At different times, government officials have suggested that the BBL will be passed in advance of federalism as a test case for regional autonomy, while others have suggested that federalism will be the first step in renegotiating that balance of powers. A revised version of the BBL was submitted to Congress in mid-2017.

Table 1. Armed groups, their forces, and firearms as of October 2014

Armed Group	Forces	Firearms
Moro National Liberation Front (rogue MNLF elements)	558	314
Moro Islamic Liberation Front	11,600	7,700
Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters	450	479
Abu Sayyaf Group	386	318
CPP-NPA-NDF	4,386	5,192

Source: Armed Forces of the Philippines

Large-scale communal and ideological conflicts

The Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) was established in 1969 and is one of the oldest communist insurgencies in the world. It aims to overthrow the Philippine government through an armed revolution using a guerrilla-style "protracted people's war." Its New People's Army (NPA) has waged war against government forces for more than four decades. Between 1969 and 2008, more than 43,000 fatalities related to the CPP insurgency were recorded.[30]

The CPP-NPA was strongest during the Marcos era. An internal split in the early 1990s cost it many supporters. Since the return to democracy, left-aligned groups have set up political parties

that have successfully stood for Congress. Leftist activists have continued to be the target of state violence. After President Arroyo declared "all-out war" against communist insurgents in 2006, approximately 900 leftists were victims of extrajudicial killings and 180 were disappeared.[31]

The NPA remains active in mountainous and neglected areas countrywide, but current estimates suggest it has fewer than 4,000 fighters.[32] The Philippine military reports that 12 out of 23 NPA guerrilla fronts are located in Mindanao, in the three Davao provinces and the Compostela Valley. These fronts have a combined force of 800 guerrillas. NPA rebels from some of these fronts operate in nearby areas such as the Caraga, North Cotabato, and parts of Bukidnon.[33] The MILF also operates in the latter two areas; the NPA considers the MILF a "revolutionary force," and the two have had a tactical alliance since 1999. The CPP-NPA also has a dedicated Moro committee.[34]

Peace negotiations between the CPP's political arm and the government have been infrequent. President Aquino attempted to relaunch negotiations in 2011, hosted by the Norwegian government in Oslo. But talks stalled at the preliminary stage, with the CPP-NPA's representatives demanding the release of detainees and the abolition of the government's peace and development programs.

In June 2016, prior to his inauguration, President Duterte resumed peace talks with the CPP in Oslo. He also extended an offer of cabinet posts to the CPP; these positions are held by members of the movement's political parties rather than the CPP itself.[35] Talks broke down in early February 2017 before being rescheduled for April in the Netherlands. Although the parties agreed to a temporary joint ceasefire, the NPA resumed its attacks on the military and the police in May after Duterte declared martial law in Mindanao in response to the violence in Marawi. Communist insurgents later agreed to suspend their offensives. However, an NPA ambush in North Cotabato in July that injured members of the presidential security group caused Duterte to cancel the next round of talks.

Local level

Local political conflict and electoral violence

Philippine elections are among the most violent in Asia. The most recent elections, in 2016, were marred by significant electoral violence. More than 230 incidents were reported,[36] with 15 murders prior to the polling and 10 more people killed on election day.[37] According to an election observation in Mindanao by the Carter Center, 17 election-related killings were documented, 11 of which were in the ARMM, from early April to June 8.[38] Overall, the polls in 2016 were more violent than in 2013, when there were 81 election-related incidents of violence in the five months before election day.[39] The 2016 violence matched levels seen in previous elections: 180 cases in 2010 and 229 cases in 2007.[40]

Mindanao is a hotspot, particularly the Moro areas, as a large number of local politicians have private armies, often funded from the public purse. The country's worst episode of electoral violence was the 2009 Maguindanao Massacre, which was rooted in political rivalry between the Ampatuan and Mangudadatu clans. The Ampatuan clan sought to prevent Toto Mangudadatu from running against them for the provincial governorship. Their private army killed 58 family members, supporters, and journalists who were en route to file the paperwork for Mangudadatu's candidacy.[41]

Rido, or clan feuding, flows from political rivalry in Mindanao. It involves recurring hostilities between families and kinship groups characterized by serial acts of violent retaliation to avenge perceived affronts or injustices. Factions can be historical (geographic, ethnic, linguistic, insurgent); rivalries are often due to personal, family, clan, or political feuds. Conflicts can erupt over

land, marriage, elections, business deals, or personal grudges and often cut across and through families, clans, and insurgent groups. Rido has wider implications for conflict in Mindanao, because it tends to interact with separatist conflict and other forms of armed violence,[42] especially when the conflicting parties are aligned with armed groups.[43] An inventory compiled by the Regional Reconciliation and Unification Commission in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao listed 228 rido cases in the region, with 64 percent remaining unresolved.[44] Survey research has shown that most people are more concerned about the prevalence of clan conflict and its negative impact on their communities than the conflict between the state and rebel groups in Mindanao.[45]

Local conflict over resources and community rights

The Philippines has a long history of agrarian unrest. The Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) began in 1988, under Corazon Aquino's presidency, and promised to redistribute public and private agricultural lands to farmers. The government claims it distributed 89.9 percent of the CARP target (8.25 million hectares out of 9.2 million hectares earmarked for redistribution) to farmers by the end of 2013.[46] However, the program has been criticized for its weak implementation and legal loopholes. There have also been numerous reports of farmers being harassed and killed by landlords who disagreed with the program. Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP), a militant movement of landless peasants, claimed that 96 farmers were killed during the Aquino administration and more than 500 were victims of agrarian-related extrajudicial killings.[47]

Another key part of the legal framework governing land issues is Republic Act 8371, known as the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act (IPRA), which took effect in 1997. It gives indigenous peoples—who comprise 10–15 percent of the total population—the right to their ancestral domains. It enables them to obtain special titles, called certificates of ancestral domain title or CADTs.

A World Bank study reported that complicated land-management structures and lack of coordination between institutions disadvantage the poor and most vulnerable. They do not understand and struggle to follow procedures intended to protect their rights. Land issues have the potential to become political and to escalate from small-scale boundary disputes to major conflict involving the military and nonstate armed groups. [48]

Climate change and natural disasters can be another cause of conflict in the Philippines. Drought caused by El Niño led to a demonstration on March 31, 2016, by at least 6,000 farmers, who blocked the Cotabato-Davao highway in Kidapawan City, demanding government subsidies including 15,000 sacks of rice. Police efforts to disperse the protestors turned violent, causing three deaths and hundreds of injuries.[49]

Urban crime and violence

The Philippines' national homicide rate in 2014 was 9.9 per 100,000 population, one of the highest in Southeast Asia. Urban crime remains a significant concern in the Philippines. Crime significantly increased in 2013, to 631,406 recorded incidents, up from 217,812 in 2012.[50] More than 25 percent of crimes were recorded in the National Capital Region, which may be due to more accurate reporting.[51] The trend continued, with a slight increase to 714,632 crimes in 2014, but later dropped by 5.34 percent to 675,813 in 2015. In 2016, amid Duterte's war on drugs, the number of crimes dropped by 13 percent from 2015, to 584,809.[52] The Philippine National Police claim that crime has decreased since Duterte took office in July 2016, with 78,941 cases reported between July 1, 2016, and March 24, 2017, compared to 158,879 cases from July 1, 2015, to June 30, 2016, under Aquino.[53] Theft remains the most common crime, followed by physical injury and robbery.[54]

Between 2/3 and 3/4 of firearms are owned by civilians

Gun ownership is high in the Philippines; the rate of civilian firearm possession—both legal and illegal—is 4.7 per 100 people. This is the second-highest rate of civilian ownership in Southeast Asia, after Thailand.[55] Over the past fifteen years, between two-thirds and three-quarters of all firearms in circulation in the Philippines have been owned by civilians rather than the government.[56]

The Philippines both consumes and produces illegal drugs. In 2015, 27 percent of *barangays* (the smallest administrative district)—more than 10,000 nationwide—were identified as drug affected.[57] The country has been identified as a transshipment point and a destination for large shipments of methamphetamine, and it is also a center of money laundering for significant proceeds from international narcotics trafficking.[58] President Duterte's public campaign against drugs has led to many killings of alleged drug dealers and users. According to the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency's official numbers on the government's antidrug campaign, 70,854 antidrug operations were conducted between July 1, 2016, and August 29, 2017, with a total of 107,156 drug "personalities" arrested and 3,811 killed.[59] Thousands more have been killed in operations that were not carried out by the police, but exact numbers are unclear.[60] Duterte also planned to bring back the death penalty, even though capital punishment was abolished in 2006. The bill to reimpose the death penalty on heinous crimes pertaining to illegal drugs was approved in the Philippine House of Representatives in March 2017, but has not progressed in the Senate.

Domestic and gender-based violence

The Philippines is the best performer in the Asia-Pacific region when it comes to gender equality, placing ninth in a global index that ranks 142 countries on their ability to close the gender gap in four key areas: economic equality, political participation, health and survival, and educational attainment. Based on the *Global Gender Gap 2014* report, the Philippines was able to maintain its first-place ranking on two indicators—education and health.[61]

Reported cases of violence against women have increased in the last decade. From 2006 to 2011, the number of reported cases increased almost threefold, from 4,954 to 12,948. One possible reason for the increase is the introduction and greater awareness of laws, specifically Republic Act (RA) 9262, the Violence against Women and their Children Law, which expanded the definition of abuse to domestic violence and physical, emotional, and economic harm. The law allows third parties to report offenses.[62]

The national increase in reporting may obscure some variation across the Philippines. The provinces with the highest ranking on the Gender Disparity Index are Maguindanao, Sulu, Tawi-Tawi, and Basilan in the ARMM. In these areas, women, especially migrant workers, are disadvantaged compared to men in terms of standard of living, educational attainment, and life expectancy. In 2014 and 2015, ARMM recorded the fewest incidents of gender-based violence of all regions in the Philippines. Given that a high level of gender inequality is often linked to higher rates of gender-based violence, incidents in Moro areas may be underreported.[63]

Notes

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19 This is the Regalian doctrine, which was first introduced during the Spanish colonial period and became the basis for all land laws, as established in the 1935, 1973, and 1987 Philippine Constitutions. It stipulates that all lands of the public domain and other natural resources belong to the King of Spain and, later, to the state as his natural successor.

20 The OIC recognizes the MNLF as the sole and legitimate representative of the Bangsamoro people, while insisting that any agreement respect the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Philippines.

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1948

1948
Sri Lanka gains independence from the United Kingdom.

1948
Citizenship Act denies citizenship and voting rights to Indian-born Tamils.

1956
Sinhala Only Act makes Sinhalese the official language.

1965
Marxist movement Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) is formed.

1971
First JVP insurrection begins. Ten to twenty thousand die in the ensuing government crackdown.

1972
A new constitution establishes national religious and language preferences that significantly disadvantage Tamil citizens.

1976
The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) is founded by Velupillai Prabhakaran.

1977
The United National Party (UNP) government writes a new constitution creating an executive presidency.

1982
Referendum extends the term of the UNP-led parliament, without elections, until 1989.

1983
Deadly ambush by the LTTE on Sri Lankan military ignites anti-Tamil violence known as Black July, and war begins. Over 70,000 will die in the civil war which lasts until 2009.

1987
Sri Lanka and India sign a peace accord to resolve the conflict with the LTTE.

1993
The LTTE assassinates President Ranasinghe Premadasa.

1987
Second JVP insurrection begins, lasting three years and killing 30,000–60,000.

2002
Sri Lankan government and the LTTE sign a ceasefire which is later broken.

2005
Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) led coalition wins elections. Mahinda Rajapaksa becomes president.

2006
Peace talks with the LTTE collapse, and the civil war enters its most violent phase.

2009
War ends with defeat of the LTTE and the death of its leadership.

2010
President Rajapaksa wins a second term, jailing his defeated opponent.

2009
The 18th Amendment to the Constitution strengthens presidential powers and removes two-term limit on the presidency.

2013
Chief justice of the Supreme Court is impeached, continuing a crackdown on dissent.

2014
Anti-Muslim violence in the southwest kills four and displaces 10,000.

2015
Maithripala Sirasena defeats SLFP in an upset presidential election and forms coalition with the UNP.

2015
Sri Lanka cosponsors a UN Human Rights Council resolution on reconciliation and transitional justice.

2016
Government initiates consultations on constitutional reform.

2017

Sri Lanka

At a glance

National civil war
Shifted from high to absent

Communal/ideological conflict
Medium

National political conflict
Medium

Local political and electoral conflict
Medium

Transnational terrorism
Not present

Local resource conflict
High

Separatism and autonomy
Shifted from high to absent

Urban crime and violence
Decreasing from high to low

** Rankings are based on the last 15 years and are relative to other Asian countries.*

Overview

Despite the government's victory over the Tamil separatist movement in 2009, tensions among ethnoreligious groups continue in Sri Lanka. The resurgence of Sinhalese Buddhist nationalism is increasing ongoing communal tensions and sporadic clashes between Buddhist extremists and ethnoreligious minority communities. While discrimination against the Tamil community persists, Muslims are also targeted by the majority Sinhalese Buddhists, as seen in the anti-Muslim riots that took place in June 2014. Following the 2015 presidential election, which removed President Mahinda Rajapaksa after 10 years of semi-authoritarian rule, the coalition government led by President Maithripala Sirisena initiated a reconciliation process to address the legacy of war and Tamil grievances, particularly through provincial devolution of power and constitutional reform. Due to slow progress, however, tensions persist in the northeast, where the military remains present.

Sri Lanka

National level

National civil war

Since independence in 1948, Sri Lanka has been marked by conflict between its two principal ethnolinguistic groups, the Sinhalese and the Tamils. The majority Sinhalese, who are predominantly Buddhists, make up 75 percent of the population, while the mostly Hindu minority of Sri Lankan and "upcountry," Indian-origin Tamils represent 15 percent of the population.[1] The desire of mainly Sri Lankan Tamils for an independent state for themselves spiraled into a civil war that lasted from 1983 to 2009.

Divisions between the Sinhalese and the Tamils can be traced back to policies from before and after independence. During the colonial period, large numbers of Indian Tamils were brought by the British to Sri Lanka to work "upcountry" on the tea plantations in the central parts of the island. Under British rule, mainly Sri Lankan Tamils occupied prominent positions in business and state administration. After independence, the balance of power shifted, and the Sinhalese-led government enacted several laws that restricted the rights of other ethnic groups. In the same year, the Citizenship Act was introduced, which denied citizenship and voting rights specifically to Indian-born Tamils. This was followed by the Sinhala Only Act, making Sinhalese the only official language, in 1956.[2] Land reform and development projects in the north, where most Sri Lankan Tamils lived, aimed to change the demographic composition of these areas. Tamil groups called for the devolution of power and equal linguistic status. Although the Tamil Federal Party and the Sri Lankan government signed a pact in 1957 that assured Tamils of greater regional autonomy, it was opposed by conservative Sinhalese Buddhists.

Post-independence, in an attempt to reverse colonial imbalances, several policies were enacted by the Sinhala-majority government that increased tensions. These included the religious preference given by the 1972 constitution to Buddhism, a system of ethnic quotas for university admissions, and a Sinhala-language requirement for public positions. These measures significantly reduced the number of Tamils serving in government and their access to jobs and careers in law, medicine, and science. As separatist movements led by Tamil youth began to campaign for an independent sovereign state in the mid-1970s, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) formed in 1976. The LTTE started gaining support for violent militancy after anti-Tamil riots in 1977, 1981, and 1983 and a constitutional amendment making it illegal to call for a separate state.

70,000+

died in LTTE conflict 1984–2009

The conflict between the government and the LTTE began in July 1983, and ended in May 2009 when LTTE leader Vellupilai Prabakaran and the rest of the group's leadership were killed by the Sri Lankan military. The conflict began with a deadly ambush on the Sri Lankan army by the LTTE, which killed 13 soldiers and triggered anti-Tamil pogroms and riots in response. Over 70,000 people lost their lives in the conflict between 1984 and 2009.[3] The number of fatalities dropped after the government and the LTTE signed a ceasefire in 2002 (figure 1), but increased again dramatically after the peace process collapsed in 2006. More than 22,000 people on all sides, one-third of all fatalities in the long-running civil war, died during the last four years of the conflict.[4] Other Tamil armed groups besides the LTTE fought against the government, such as the Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization and the Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front. However, these Tamil and LTTE splinter groups turned against Prabakaran, the LTTE leader, due to internal disagreements.

Since the defeat of the LTTE, and particularly since the 2015 election (see below), some progress has been made towards addressing Tamil grievances and the legacy of the war. The coalition government led by President Sirisena initiated a process of constitutional reform in early 2016, which is to strengthen devolution to the provinces. There is, however, little agreement on devolution among political elites.[5] In 2015, the government cosponsored a UN Human Rights Council resolution calling for the country to establish a judicial mechanism to investigate abuses of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law, with support from the Commonwealth and other foreign judges.[6] Progress, however, has been slow, and the government has been reluctant to allow international involvement in investigations into war crimes allegedly committed by security forces at the end of the war. Meanwhile, tensions remain high in the north and east, where problems such as continued military presence, conflicts over land, and resettlement of displaced Tamils and Muslims persist. Since the end of the conflict, there have been several reported cases of enforced disappearance of former Tamil militants and local activists.[7]

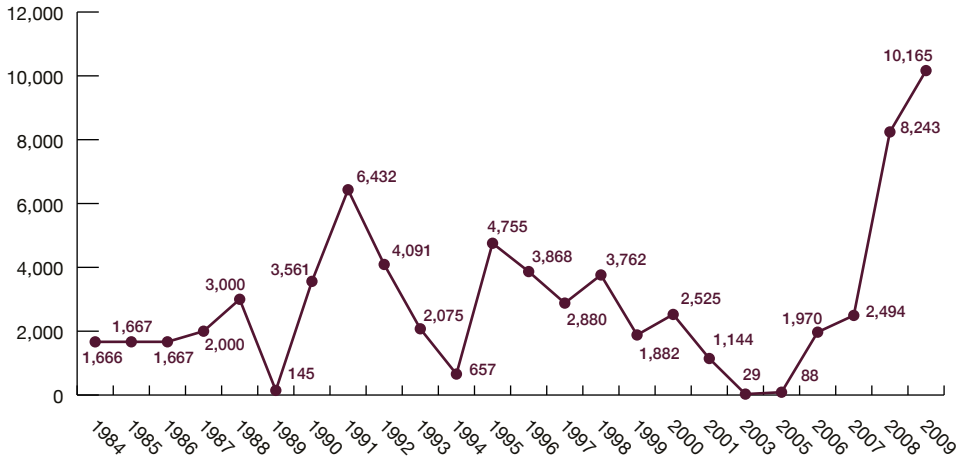

Figure 1. Number of fatalities in separatism conflict (1984–2009)
Source: Lacina and Gleditsch, "Monitoring trends in global combat," and Melander et al., "Organized Violence"

National political conflict

Sri Lanka's long history of democracy has been marred by electoral violence and periodic misuse of government power to suppress political dissent. Since independence, political power has alternated between two main political parties, the United National Party (UNP) and the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP). Violence among political parties has become a common occurrence since the mid-1960s, particularly during election periods. The 1977 general elections saw postelection violence on an unprecedented scale, resulting in 62 deaths.[8] The UNP, which won a majority in the 1977 elections, wrote a new constitution establishing an executive presidency above the prime minister. The UNP leader, J. R. Jayewardene, became the first executive president under the new constitution in 1978. After winning the presidential election in 1982, Jayewardene won a referendum extending the term of the 1977 parliament until 1989 instead of holding a regular parliamentary election.

Subsequent changes to the electoral system in 1978 and the extension of parliament's term increased tensions among political parties and their supporters. The 1989 elections took place during the JVP's second insurrection, which led to 669 people being killed, primarily by the

Marxist Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) and paramilitaries of the regime.[9] As the conflict in the north and east continued, the LTTE assassinated President Ranasinghe Premadasa in 1993. In the following year, the SLFP-led People's Alliance (later known as the United People's Freedom Alliance, UPFA) won the parliamentary and presidential elections, ending nearly two decades of UNP rule. Electoral violence between the SLFP and the UNP, and LTTE attacks on voting stations, resulted in 12 deaths during the 1994 general elections and eight deaths during the 1999 presidential elections.[10]

Due to intense fighting between the LTTE and the military, the parliamentary elections in 2000 and 2001 resulted in 73 and 83 murders, respectively.[11] The political climate in the country became increasingly polarized following the election of a president and a prime minister from different parties in 2001. President Kumaratunga and the SLFP resisted accommodating Tamil demands, while Prime Minister Wickremasinghe and the UNP favored a federal solution to the conflict.[12] After the ceasefire agreement was signed in 2002, the 2004 parliamentary and 2005 presidential elections were more peaceful.

An SLFP-led political alliance spearheaded by President Mahinda Rajapaksa, who was elected in 2005, divided opposition parties and their supporters, cracked down on antigovernment activists, and used military means to end the war against the LTTE in 2009. Before the 2010 presidential election, the 18th Amendment to the Constitution was passed in September 2009, removing the bar on the president serving more than two six-year terms, and granting the president final authority over all appointments to the civil service, judiciary, and police.[13] President Mahinda Rajapaksa won his second term against the former army general Sarath Fonseka. Following the election, General Fonseka was arrested, without substantive evidence, for attempting to overthrow the government in a military coup.[14] The government's crackdown on political dissent continued with the impeachment of the country's chief justice in 2013.

President Rajapaksa was defeated in the 2015 presidential election, as voters grew dissatisfied with corruption and nepotism and constitutional reform that gave excessive power to the president. Despite fears of violence, the 2015 presidential election was largely peaceful, with only one murder reported during the election period.[15] Maithripala Sirisena, a candidate of the UNP-led coalition who was the former health minister and general secretary of the SLFP, won a surprising victory. Defeated president Rajapaksa then attempted to become prime minister in the parliamentary elections held later the same year, but lost to the UNP-led coalition. The polls were mostly free and fair, despite 316 reported incidents, which were mostly related to intimidation and threats at voting stations.[16]

A coalition government between President Sirisena's SLFP and Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe's UNP, with support from the Tamil National Alliance (TNA), provides a chance for constitutional reforms to further devolve power to the provinces; however, progress has been very slow. President Sirisena also promised other political reforms to restore judicial independence, improve the electoral system, and address corruption and misuse of power by politicians and government officials. Several steps have already been taken, including the 19th Amendment, which reinstitutes term limits on the president. However, Sirisena's ambitious political reforms are expected to take much longer than the current government's tenure.[17]

Transnational terrorism

Sri Lanka currently does not have transnational terrorists of foreign origin operating inside the country. There have been some unconfirmed media reports of a few Sri Lankan nationals fighting for the Islamic State (IS) and of suspected IS members in Sri Lanka. The Sri Lankan government remains concerned that foreign cells of the LTTE may still be active in countries like India, Malaysia, France, Norway, Canada, and the United Kingdom.

Subnational level

Separatism and autonomy

On the Tamil separatist movement, see national civil war section above.

Large-scale communal and ideological conflicts

The government's inability to respond to an economic crisis during the 1960s contributed in part to the growth of Marxist movements such as the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP), which was formed in 1965. They found support among educated, unemployed Sinhalese Buddhist youth and the rural poor, as opposed to English-speaking elites based in Colombo. Around 1970, the movements became militant and elevated their goal to a socialist revolution. Younger generations angered by the erosion of their economic, political, and social opportunities were drawn to the movement. JVP-led attacks in 1971 and 1987–1990 caused nationwide infrastructure damage and killed an estimated 80,000 people.[18]

The first insurrection broke out in March 1971, when JVP plans to seize government power were uncovered, leading to the detention of 4,000 suspects, including JVP leader Rohana Wijeweera. In April 1971, JVP members attacked 92 police stations and government buildings across the country. Telephone and power lines were cut and roads blocked. The militants managed to control almost all areas of the Southern Province. The Sri Lankan government announced a state of emergency and suppressed the insurrection in less than a month. An estimated 10,000–20,000 JVP members were killed in the crackdown.[19]

The second insurrection took place between 1987 and 1990, by which time the JVP had become increasingly Sinhalese nationalist. In 1983, the JVP, along with the Communist Party (CP) and the Nawa Sama Samaja Party (NSSP), had participated in the anti-Tamil violence known as Black July. The government subsequently banned all three parties, but the JVP later resumed its operations with the CP, the NSSP, and other leftist parties. The 1987 peace accord between Sri Lanka and India, which attempted to resolve the conflict with the LTTE by accommodating certain Tamil demands within a unitary Sri Lankan state, drove the JVP to adopt an anti-India tone in its campaign and to gather arms for another insurrection. The second insurrection lasted until 1990, when the JVP leader was killed. This time around, the JVP resorted to subversion, assassinations, raids, and attacks on military and civilian targets, with an estimated 30,000–60,000 killed.[20]

JVP
attacks
in 1971 and 1987–1990
killed 80,000

Despite the end of the civil war, the majoritarianism of Sinhalese Buddhists continues to affect politics in Sri Lanka. Tamils fear that their areas are going to be colonized by the Sinhalese Buddhists, as they witness an exponential rise in the number of Buddhist statues, stupas, and shrines built by troops still present in Tamil areas. Other religious minorities, such as Muslims and Christians,[21] also face sporadic discrimination and violence. In June 2014, anti-Muslim riots took place in the coastal southwest of the country, the worst communal violence since the 1983 anti-Tamil riots. A hardline Buddhist group, Bodu Bala Sena (BBS), instigated violent attacks against Muslims, resulting in four dead, 80 wounded, and more than 10,000 temporarily displaced.[22] Christian communities also experience religious persecution in the country, as some in the Sinhala Buddhist community believe that Christians are forcibly converting Buddhists through material and spiritual inducements.[23] Over 200 violent incidents against Christians were recorded between 2013 and 2014, leading to destruction of church properties, attacks on their members, and desecration of religious objects.[24] The recent violence is a continuation of communal tensions and frequent low-level violence between the majority Buddhists and religious minorities.

Local level

Local political conflict and electoral violence

Local politics in Sri Lanka is intimately linked to national politics, as local politicians are mostly members of the national political parties. Therefore, local political conflict and electoral violence often reflect the political climate at the national level. The last local elections, which were held in three phases in March, July, and October of 2011, were marred by interparty and intraparty violence. In the lead-up to the first phase of the local elections, over 400 violent incidents were recorded between January 27 and March 15, resulting in two deaths.[25] Election day, on March 17, witnessed 56 violent incidents, including one murder, a grenade attack, assaults, and intimidation at voting stations.[26] The lead-up to the second phase of the local elections was also marred by violence, and election day, on July 23, had several violent incidents, including the killing of a UPFA supporter in an intraparty clash.[27] Despite various reports of election violations, such as vote buying, voter intimidation by armed groups, and confiscation of polling cards, the war-affected north had a high voter turnout. The conflict within the UPFA intensified in the third phase of the 2011 local elections, resulting in at least four deaths.[28] The next local elections, which have been postponed for two years, are planned for early 2018.

Local conflict over resources and community rights

Land has fueled conflict between the Sri Lankan government and local communities. Particularly in the war-affected northeast of the country, disputes over land exist among the Tamils, Sinhalese, and Muslims.[29] Some of these tensions are historical. During the 1950s, the government of President Bandaranaike launched several development projects that escalated ethnic tensions between the majority Sinhalese and ethnic minorities in the northeast. For example, a large-scale irrigation scheme known as Allai Extension, in Trincomalee District, favored Sinhalese farmers, who received the upstream land, over Tamil and Muslim farmers, who were given the downstream land. This was perceived as ethnicizing entitlements, and caused disputes between upstream and downstream farmers over the allocation of water.[30] More recently, Muslims have been accused of illegal encroachment and settlement in the Wilpattu Nature Reserve and surrounding forest reserves.[31] From the Muslims' point of view, these are their lands, where they lived for more than 100 years before they were displaced by the war. After decades of conflict and displacement in the north and east, ownership of and access to land is highly politicized.

Despite the government's postwar effort to resettle more than 430,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs), primarily Tamils and Muslims, a sense of mistrust and grievance endures among Tamils and other ethnic minorities due to the government's continued, heavy military presence, justified by demining operations and the need to prevent the return of Tamil militancy.[32] Many IDPs have returned to find their land confiscated for military projects. The expanding military presence has occupied large agricultural and fishing areas, depriving local populations of their livelihoods. Even though several protests have been organized to express local grievances against this land confiscation, the military under the Sirisena administration continues to take additional land for new camps, and land concessions have been awarded to outside developers.[33]

Urban crime and violence

Sri Lanka's urban population has grown relatively slowly,[34] but urban crime is still frequent. The Colombo metropolitan region has experienced a higher level of urban crime and violence than other cities. According to the Sri Lanka Police, the capital city and its suburbs, such as Nugegoda, Kelaniya, Mt. Lavinia, and Gampaha, had the highest number of reported crimes from 2009 to 2016. Home burglary, theft, and robbery are the most common crimes in these cities. When it comes to homicide, however, Colombo had one of the lowest rates of any city in Sri Lanka, with just 0.9 per 100,000 people in 2016. Ampara, a city in the Eastern Province, and Kandy, which is located in the Central Province, had the highest homicide rates, at 11.1 per 100,000 people, followed by Jaffna (9.4), which is the capital city of the Northern Province, and Gampaha (8.1), which is one of the major cities in the Western Province (figure 2). Since the end of the conflict in 2009, homicide rates in Sri Lankan cities have declined significantly.

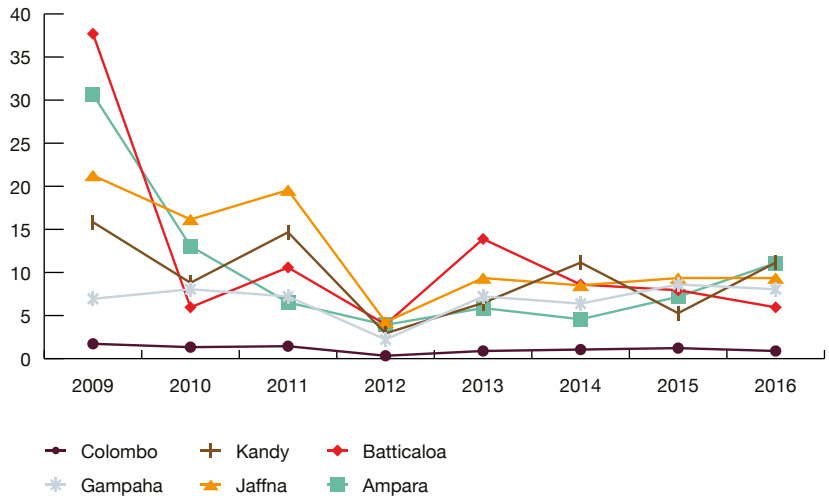

Figure 2. Homicide rates in urban areas (2009–2016)
Source: Sri Lanka Police statistics and 2012 census[35]

Domestic and gender-based violence

Domestic and gender-based violence remain prevalent in Sri Lanka. The Sri Lanka Police recorded over 33,000 cases of violence against women and children between 2005 and 2016. Incidents of rape and incest recorded by the police have increased by 40 percent in the last ten years, from 1,463 cases in 2006 to 2,036 in 2016 (figure 3).[36] It is difficult to determine the nature, extent, and magnitude of the problem, however, because women and girls who experience gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual violence, are less likely to report to the police due to stigma and fear of reprisal from perpetrators.

Perpetrators of domestic and gender-based violence enjoy a culture of impunity in Sri Lanka. Of the 15 percent of Sri Lankan men in a 2013 United Nations survey who had committed rape, nearly 65 percent had done so on more than one occasion,[37] and 60 percent had committed intimate-partner rape.[38] The survey findings revealed that over 95 percent of Sri Lankan men who committed rape against women or girls faced no legal consequences.[39] In Sri Lanka, marital rape is not recognized as a crime under existing law unless the wife and husband are legally separated. In addition, the Sirisena administration has done very little to end impunity for military and police personnel who committed acts of sexual violence during and after the conflict.[40] Lack of gender sensitivity and limited understanding of laws against sexual violence among police officers, as well as lengthy court procedures, further discourage victims from pursuing legal action against their abusers.

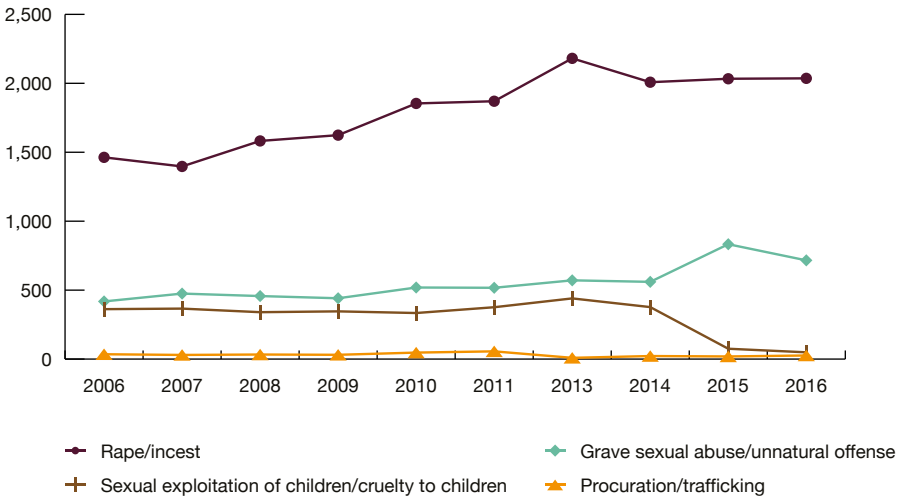

Figure 3. Gender-based violence cases recorded by the Sri Lanka Police (2006–2016)
Source: Sri Lanka Police[41]

Notes

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1932

1932
Absolute monarchy is abolished. Over the next 85 years, Thailand sees 20 charters and constitutions, 12 coups, and 34 years of military control.

1948
Militant separatists in the country's Deep South start resisting perceived forced assimilation of the Malay Muslim population.

1973
Army opens fire on students protesting 26 years of military rule. Seventy-seven are killed and 800 injured.

1974
Communist Party of Thailand (CPT) begins armed insurgency, costing 3,415 lives by 1982.

1976
Protests at Thammasat University against former military dictator Thanom Kittichorn end in carnage when security forces and ultra-right-wing groups kill 45 students.

1982
CPT armed insurgency draws to a close.

1992
Black May protests against Suchinda Kraprayoon's premiership. He resigns when the king intervenes.

2001
Thaksin Shinawatra is elected prime minister. He will be the first Thai premier to serve his full term, and to win reelection.

2004
Coordinated attacks in the Deep South mark new wave of Malay Muslim insurgency. Nearly 6,500 are killed between 2004 and 2016. Over two-thirds are civilians.

2006
Military overthrows Thaksin Shinawatra following massive street protests by the Yellow Shirts. He goes into self-imposed exile.

2007
Thaksin's People's Power Party (PPP) wins the first post-coup elections.

2008
New Yellow Shirt protests again bring down the PPP government. Constitutional Court orders PPP disbanded.

2010
Pro-Thaksin Red Shirts occupy Bangkok's business center demanding new elections. Protests and a military crackdown kill at least 91 and injure more than 2,000.

2011
Thaksin's sister, Yingluck Shinawatra, is elected prime minister in fresh elections.

2013
Yellow Shirts take to the streets for six months calling for Yingluck to step down.

2013
First attempt at dialogue with Barisan Revolusi Nasional (BRN) insurgents in the Deep South. Talks fail the following year.

2014
Military seizes power from Yingluck Shinawatra amid increasingly violent protests.

2015
Bombing of the Erawan Shrine, in the heart of Bangkok, by transnational terrorists kills 20 and injures 125.

2016
A new constitution, written under the military regime, is adopted by referendum.

2016
Coordinated attacks by Malay Muslim insurgents in seven provinces, including popular seaside tourist resorts, raise fears that the Deep South conflict is entering a violent new phase.

2016

Thailand

At a glance

National civil war
Absent

Communal/ideological conflict
Absent

National political conflict
Shifting between low and medium

Local political and electoral conflict
Low

Transnational terrorism
Low

Local resource conflict
Low

Separatism and autonomy
High

Urban crime and violence
Medium, moving toward low

** Rankings are based on the last 15 years and are relative to other Asian countries.*

Overview

From 2004 to 2014, Thailand experienced a national political crisis leading to intermittent violence, regular street protests, and unstable governance. Many observers have described the conflict as a contest for power between traditional elites and supporters of the populist former prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra. During this period, political tensions were high, and national politics were deeply polarized. Tensions culminated in a military coup d'état in May 2014, the country's twelfth. The coup restored stability to Thailand, but it came at the cost of increased restrictions on political activities and civil liberties. Despite the current calm, there are clear signs that political tensions remain high, and the deep polarization of national politics that fueled previous crises has not gone away. In August 2016, a new constitution was approved by referendum, though open debate on the text was restricted, leading many to criticize the process. With the promulgation of the new constitution in April 2017, the government has begun a process that will lead to elections, though the timing is unclear. Thailand is also affected by an ethnonationalist insurgency in its southern border provinces, a region known as the Deep South, which is currently the deadliest in Southeast Asia. The conflict is grounded in historical grievances of the Malay Muslim majority community toward the Thai Buddhist state. Despite the current military government's dialogue with some separatist factions, violent attacks and counterinsurgency operations remain frequent. The conflict has resulted in nearly 6,500 deaths since 2004.[1] Gender-based and local political violence, as well as local contention over community rights, also affect large numbers of people and deserve more attention.

Thailand

National level

National civil war

Not present in Thailand since 1777.

National political conflict

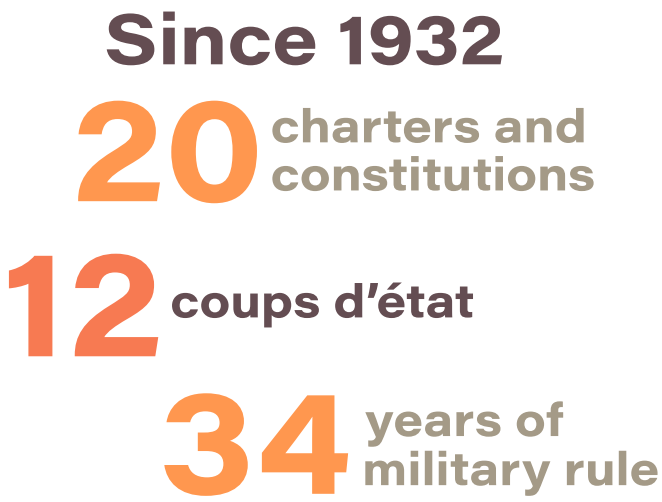
Since the abolition of absolute monarchy in 1932, Thai politics have been characterized by a high level of instability as new and old elites jostle for power, with the army frequently stepping in to seize control. Since then, the country has had 20 charters and constitutions, 12 coups d'état, and 34 years of military rule. Since the 1980s, Thailand has seen longer stretches of democracy, while military interventions have become less frequent. During the past decade, however, street politics have returned to center stage. There has been protracted conflict between an alliance of groups commonly known as the Red Shirts,[2] which includes supporters of the controversial former prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra, many of whom hail from rural, northern and northeastern Thailand, and political parties linked to him (e.g., Pheu Thai), and an alliance of groups known as the Yellow Shirts, which includes traditional elites, the urban middle class, and some leaders from other parties (e.g., the Democrat Party). Thaksin's political parties have won every election since 2001, although since 2005, every elected government has been forced out of office. Both sides have used mass protests to achieve their goals, plunging the country into gridlock. Between 2008 and 2014, 127 people were reported killed and around 3,500 injured in the resulting clashes.[3] This situation has led to two military coups since 2004, the most recent of which installed the current military regime.

After World War II, Thailand experienced 26 years of military dictatorship, from 1947 to 1973. During that period, the armed forces established themselves as a major part of Thailand's political establishment. They forged a strong alliance with the civilian bureaucracy and sidelined politicians, turning the country into a bureaucratic state and presiding over a period of economic development and modernization. However, demands for democratic government, and antimilitary sentiment, increased over the years.

By the early 1970s, the democracy movement had begun to take shape. In 1973, there was a surge in student protests calling for the military government to step down and for a new constitution. It ended in tragedy as the government ordered the army to open fire on protestors, causing 77 deaths and over 800 injuries.[4] The military regime was eventually overthrown, and a new constitution was promulgated in 1974. In 1976, another mass demonstration at Thammasat University, opposing the return from exile of the former military dictator Thanom Kittikachorn, led to another government crackdown. The crackdown led to a massacre involving ultra-right-wing groups and security forces that claimed at least 46 lives.[5] The ensuing crisis was used to justify a coup, which brought the military back into power.

From the 1980s to the mid-2000s, the country returned to democracy, except for a brief period of military rule in 1991 and 1992. The Black May protests, organized in 1992 against Suchinda Kraprayoon's premiership, left at least 52 demonstrators dead.[6] After the intervention of King Bhumibol Adulyadej, Suchinda resigned as prime minister. From 1992 to 2004, the country enjoyed a decade of civilian rule and genuine democratic participation.

Beginning in 2004, Thailand once again experienced political turmoil. Thaksin Shinawatra, a former police officer and telecommunications tycoon, was elected prime minister in 2001 and became the first democratically elected premier to serve a full term, winning reelection in 2005.



While Thaksin presided over a rapid recovery of the Thai economy, still suffering from the 1997 Asian financial crisis, the traditional elite and a large part of the broader public became frustrated with him, accusing him of populism, corruption, and abusing political power. The Yellow Shirts[7] organized massive street protests between 2004 and 2006, leading the country into political gridlock that paved the way for a military coup that overthrew Thaksin in September 2006. His party was outlawed, and Thaksin went into self-imposed exile to avoid a prison sentence on corruption charges, but he continued to influence Thai politics from abroad. His People's Power Party (PPP) won the first post-coup elections in 2007, leading to seven months of renewed protests by the Yellow Shirts in 2008. Yellow Shirt protestors occupied key government offices and closed Bangkok's international airport for several days. Over the seven-month period, eight people were killed and 737 injured, the result of anonymous grenade attacks and clashes with security forces and the Red Shirts. Two Constitutional Court rulings eventually disqualified Prime Minister Samak Sundaravej from office and later disbanded the PPP. The opposition Democrat Party formed a government in December 2008. In response, the Red Shirts adopted the same strategy of street politics, occupying the main business areas of Bangkok to pressure Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva to step down and announce an immediate election. Unlike previous protests by the Yellow Shirts, the Red Shirts were met by a military crackdown, and at least 91 people were killed and more than 2,000 injured in street clashes in April and May 2010.[8]

Fresh elections in 2011 once again brought Thaksin's party to power, with his sister Yingluck Shinawatra becoming prime minister. The Yellow Shirts[9] once more took to the streets, this time led by former Democrat Party member and former deputy prime minister Suthep Taugsuban. Protests lasted from November 2013 to May 2014, and resulted in 28 deaths and over 700 injuries.[10] Assassinations of protest leaders on both sides, sporadic shoot-outs, grenade attacks, and occasional mobilization of Red Shirts, all prompted fears of escalation in an increasingly polarized society. This served as justification for Thai Army leaders to step in and seize power once again.

With military rule now suppressing political activity, the cycle of street protests and political violence has subsided. There have been arrests and summonses of people joining public gatherings or expressing opinions against the junta on social media. A new constitution was adopted by voters in a referendum on August 7, 2016, in a context where the government barred opposition groups from openly campaigning against it or monitoring the referendum. Sixty-one percent voted in favor, with only 59 percent of the electorate turning out to vote. The new constitution provides considerable power to unelected bodies, weakens political parties, and strengthens military influence in politics.[11] In April 2017, the constitution was ratified by King Maha Vajiralongkorn, who had acceded to the throne after the death of his father, King Bhumibol Adulyadej, the previous October.

Transnational terrorism

Due to Thailand's weak border controls and tourist-friendly visa requirements, transnational terrorist and separatist groups have used the country as a hideout and a base to hold meetings, maintain transit routes, acquire arms, and mobilize financial support.[12] At times, terrorist networks have also attacked targets in Thailand. In 1972, the Palestinian Black September organization seized the Israeli Embassy and held six staff hostage. The Kurdistan Islamic Movement targeted the Iraqi consulate in Thailand with a C4 explosive device in 1982. In 1993, Iranian men were caught in a truck carrying explosives to the Israeli Embassy. In 2003, the Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) leader, Hambali, was apprehended in Thailand after the 2002 Bali bombings. It was reported that before the bombing, senior JI leaders had convened in Thailand in early 2002 to plan the attack. In addition, separatist operatives from South Asia, such as the Tamil Tigers of Sri Lanka and some Naga separatists from India,[13] have reportedly used Thailand as a base.

The latest high-profile transnational terrorist attack in Thailand took place in August 2015 when a bomb was detonated inside the Erawan Shrine, in the heart of Bangkok's business district, killing 20 and injuring 125. Two suspects were identified as being ethnic Uighurs from Western China's Xinjiang region. Officials claimed that the blast was carried out as an act of vengeance against Thai authorities for suppressing a network smuggling Uighur migrants through Thailand. However, it is widely speculated that the attackers were avenging the deportation of Uighur militants to China in July 2015.[14]

There has so far been no evidence of operational linkages between the Malay Muslim insurgents of Thailand's Deep South (see next section) and transnational Islamic terrorist networks such as the Islamic State (IS).

6,500

killed in the **Deep South conflict**

2004–2016

Subnational level

Separatism and autonomy

The predominantly Malay Muslim southern border provinces have seen waves of insurgency against the Thai state over the last century. Since the conflict reemerged in 2004, it has been especially violent, and Thailand's Deep South conflict is currently one of the deadliest in Southeast Asia in terms of intensity.[15] The current violence is a legacy of a century-old conflict between Bangkok and the region, which comprises the former sultanate of "Patani," which became a tributary of the kingdom of Siam (the former name of Thailand) in 1786. Since then, attempts by the local Malay Muslims to resist Siamese Buddhist rule have led to rebellions and unrest. The sultanate was annexed and internationally recognized as part of Thailand in 1909.

From 1948 onward, militant separatists started resisting what they perceived as systematic attempts by the Thai state to suppress local identity and forcibly assimilate the predominantly Malay Muslim population. They carried out attacks against government officials, public schools, and railways.[16]

The insurgency ebbed and flowed until January 4, 2004, when coordinated attacks in nine districts marked the beginning of a new wave of violence of unprecedented intensity. Attacks occurred daily and became less discriminate, with bombings and shootings in public places frequently causing civilian casualties. Between 2004 and 2016, nearly 6,500 were killed and over 12,000 were injured (figure 1); two-thirds of the victims were civilians.[17] Approximately 60 percent of the dead were Muslims, killed by insurgents or security forces. The Thai Buddhists who made up 40 percent of the victims were mainly killed in insurgent attacks. Schools, government offices, and state institutions remain the most common targets. Similar levels of violent incidents appear in all three affected provinces: Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat. Within each, however, the degree of violence differs across districts, with the five most violent districts accounting for nearly 40 percent of all incidents.[18]

Significant increases in government budgets for counterinsurgency operations and socioeconomic development in the region have so far failed to improve the situation. The Thai government has engaged in peace talks with insurgents. The first official dialogue with the most prominent separatist group, Barisan Revolusi Nasional (BRN), started in February 2013, but soon stalled. Since the 2014 coup, the government has continued informal talks with several groups, including a faction of BRN, assembled under an ad hoc umbrella group called MARA Patani.

While overall levels of violence have declined, it is unlikely that an end to the conflict is in sight. During the summer of 2016, a series of coordinated attacks in multiple locations outside the Deep South, some of them seaside resorts popular with domestic and international tourists, raised concerns about a possible shift in BRN's strategy. The attacks used improvised explosive devices, which blew up on August 11 and 12, 2016, in Trang, Hua Hin, Surat Thani, Phuket, Phang Nga, Krabi, and Nakhorn Si Thammarat. Four were killed and more than 30 were injured.[19] BRN claimed responsibility on September 9, and announced that the attacks were in response to the government's lack of sincerity in the peace talks. The move was unprecedented, as BRN and other separatist groups had never previously claimed responsibility for attacks. Their theater of operations had been generally confined to the three provinces and adjacent districts of Songkhla Province.[20]

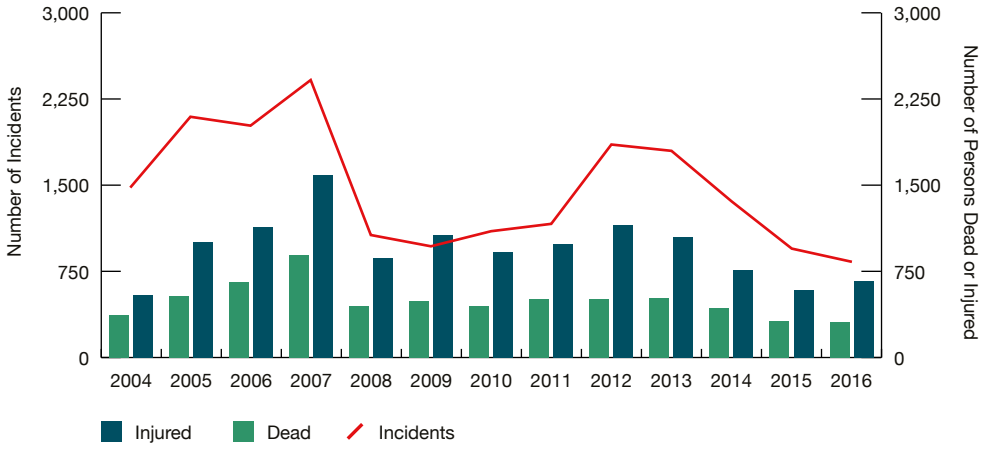


Figure 1. Yearly incidents, deaths, and injuries in the Deep South (2004–2016)
Source: Deep South Incident Database

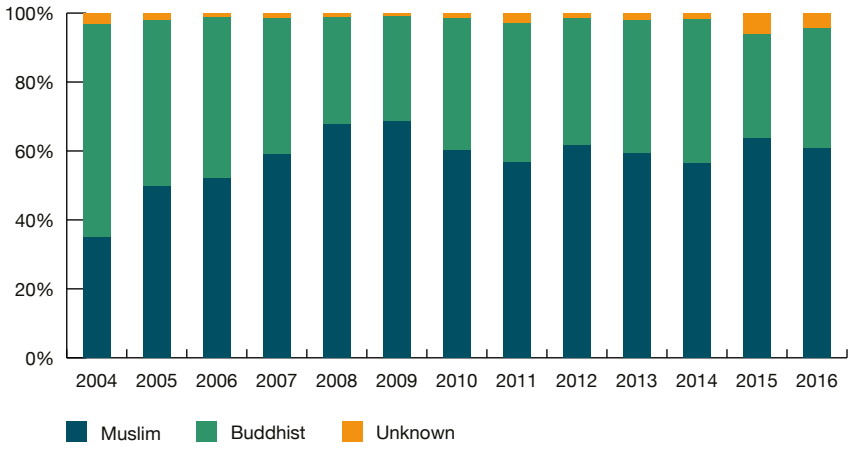


Figure 2. Share of deaths, by ethnoreligious group and by year, in the Deep South (2004–2016)
Source: Deep South Incident Database

Large-scale communal and ideological conflicts

In the 1970s and 1980s, parts of the country were affected by an armed conflict between the Thai government and the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT). It is estimated that the conflict took at least 3,415 lives between 1974 and 1982.[21] The CPT was originally formed as the Thai section of the Chinese Communist Party in 1942 and received support from China. In the 1960s, the CPT shifted its strategy toward seizing political power by force, and it increased its military activities. Armed clashes intensified in the mid-1970s. The 1976 military coup bolstered support for the CPT, especially among students, labor unionists, intellectuals, and the opposition. In addition to China, Cambodia also supported the guerilla movement in Thailand by providing funds, weapons, and training. However, foreign support decreased at end of the 1970s. Worsening relations between China and Vietnam created a rift within the CPT, causing occasional clashes between pro-Chinese and pro-Vietnamese factions. Large-scale campaigns by the Thai army hurt a weakened CPT, and an amnesty granted to rebels in 1980 led to considerable attrition. The conflict was considered over by 1982.

Local level

Local political conflict and electoral violence

Competition for political power at the local level has sometimes led to violence, but no recent studies have quantified this. A study of local political violence recorded 459 murders and attempted murders between 2000 and 2009, which resulted in a total of 362 deaths.[22] The number of victims fluctuated in the first eight years, then declined in the last two years of the study, a trend coinciding with levels of political violence during national elections. Only 86 cases led to arrests. The victims included local politicians, political canvassers, and government administrative officers. Over 40 percent of the incidents took place in Thailand's south, including 18 percent in the three southern border provinces also affected by the Malay Muslim insurgency (see section on separatism and autonomy, above), with Narathiwat registering the highest assassination rate.

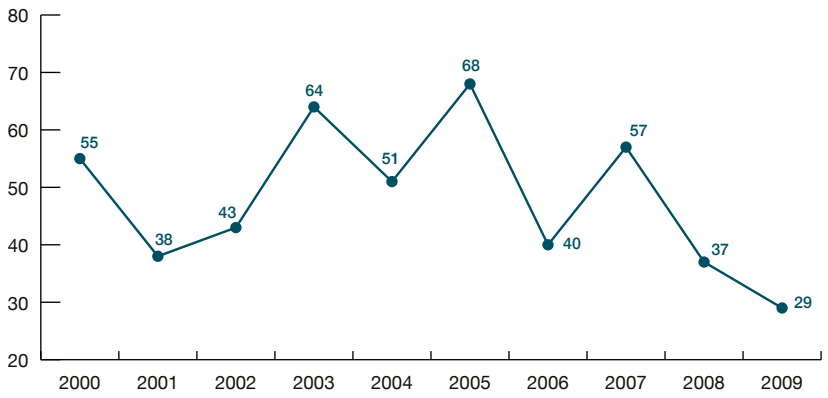


Figure 3. Victims of local political violence (2000–2009)
Source: Vititanon (2010)[23]

Local conflict over resources and community rights

Conflicts over natural resources, community rights, and the resettlement of populations displaced by public and private investments such as dams, power plants, or mining operations occur frequently in Thailand. Although the 1997 and 2007 constitutions upheld the right of affected communities to review and approve infrastructure projects affecting them, in practice they are seldom consulted, and protests often lead to violent clashes. Activists face legal charges, and in numerous cases have been victims of assault or murder. Over 35 have been killed in the last 19 years.[24]

In northern Thailand, forest and water use is often contested between hill tribes, such as the Hmong, Karen, and Lahu, and lowland Thai farmers.[25] The lowland farmers resent the impact of slash-and-burn agriculture, on which hill tribes rely, which they say results in water shortages and contamination downstream. In the Chiang Mai region, simmering tensions broke out in the late 1990s due to a drought. Mobilized by environmental organizations, lowland farmers engaged in a series of protests, blockading access roads to the highlands and fencing off forested areas. Nan Province experienced similar incidents in 2000, when lowland farmers blocked the road to a Hmong village, raided Hmong lychee plantations, and burned houses that belonged to Hmong families.[26]

Tensions between the state and indigenous communities over the boundaries of traditional land have been a long-running problem in Thailand, particularly in the upland regions of the north. In 2014, the government passed a new Forestry Master Plan, which has significantly increased pressure on highland communities, particularly poor, ethnic-minority groups. There have been reports of increasing arrests for illegal logging and encroachment, along with harassment and intimidation by local authorities, park officers, and security forces during evictions.[27]

Tensions over land use and community rights also help fuel the ethnonationalist conflict in Thailand's Deep South. In 2015, plans to build coal-fired power plants in Pattani were met with protests from the Malay Muslim community, because the work would result in the forcible relocation of people, mosques, and cemeteries and expose them to environmental damage. MARA Patani, an umbrella organization for multiple factions of the separatist insurgency, expressed opposition to the plan. The dispute may have been a key motive behind the motorcycle bombings of January 19 and April 19, 2016, which killed two and injured 16.[28]

Urban crime and violence

Thailand's homicide rate was 4.8 intentional homicides per 100,000 people in 2011, the last year for which UNODC data is available. This is higher than the average rate of 2.9 in Southeast Asia, with only the Philippines and Laos having higher rates in the region.[29] The homicide rate in Bangkok, the country's capital, was only half as high (2.6 per 100,000 people).[30] Both rates have been gradually declining since 2005, when they stood at 7.3 and 4.3, respectively. Data from the National Statistical Office also show a steep decline in all major forms of crime concerning life and bodily harm between 2006 and 2015—by roughly half across all categories (table 1).

On the other hand, there has been an alarming increase in the number of crimes involving violations of the Firearms Act[31] (table 2), which rose from 18,701 in 2006 to 35,280 in 2014, an 88 percent increase.

In 2012, Reuters reported that Thailand had the most guns in civilian hands in Southeast Asia.[32] Given Thailand's history of political instability and the current high levels of political polarization, the high rate of gun possession is cause for concern.

Table 1. Crimes concerning life and bodily harm (2006–2015)

Year	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Murder	4,687	4,436	3,974	3,703	3,654	3,176	3,217	2,927	2,648	2,228
Attempted murder	7,125	6,713	5,564	5,452	4,852	4,141	4,331	4,421	4,112	4,001
Assault	25,798	22,667	18,802	18,359	16,066	12,338	13,152	12,349	12,966	15,153
Rape	5,308	5,155	4,644	4,676	4,255	3,537	3,431	3,303	2,968	2,848

Source: Statistical Forecasting Bureau of the National Statistical Office of Thailand[33]

Table 2. Reported cases of Firearms Act violations

Year	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
General weapon (gun)	18,701	21,023	22,169	25,087	21,463	23,941	28,134	34,895	35,280	31,232
War weapon	1,455	1,049	773	855	699	546	605	620	713	570

Source: Statistical Forecasting Bureau of the National Statistical Office of Thailand

Domestic and gender-based violence

Thailand passed the Protection of Victims of Domestic Violence Act in 2007. In 2005, the Ministry of Public Health created emergency One Stop Crisis Centers (OSCCs) across the country. Between 2007 and 2016, OSCCs recorded a total of 227,909 cases of women and children seeking assistance for domestic abuse.[34] Sixty percent of the victims were children and 40 percent were adult women. Violence was usually committed by those who were close to and trusted by the victims, such as spouses, boyfriends, and friends. Eighty-three percent of cases involved physical violence, and 5.9 percent involved sexual violence.[35]

Even though the number of rape cases reported to the police has declined since 2007 (figure 4), the Thai Development Research Institute estimates at least 30,000 cases remain unreported each year, amounting to one case every 15 minutes.[36]

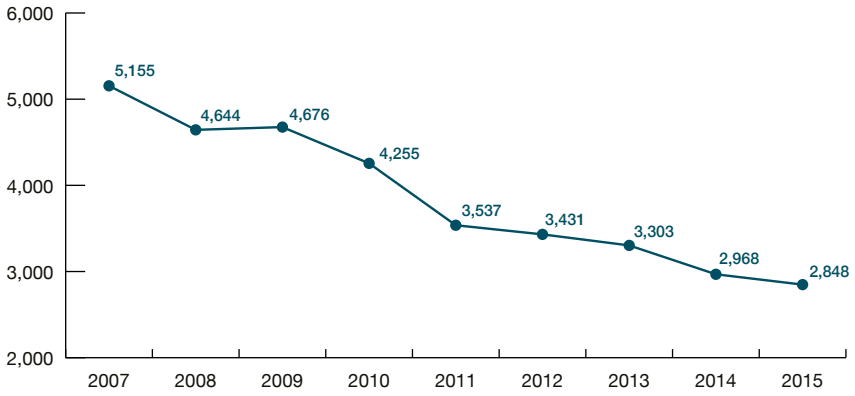


Figure 4. Reported rape cases (2007–2015)
Source: Royal Thai Police[37]

Notes

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1975

1975
East Timor declares independence from Portugal. Indonesia invades the country, occupying it for the next 24 years. Over 100,000 are killed or die from famine or disease during the occupation.

1975
Repressive Indonesian rule strengthens Timorese nationalism. Resistance is led by FRETELIN and its armed wing, FALINTIL, which conduct guerilla warfare against Indonesian security forces.

1991
The Santa Cruz massacre—Indonesian forces fire on pro-independence marchers, killing between 150 and 270. International pressure builds as Indonesia is accused of systematic human rights abuses.

1998
The collapse of Indonesia's Suharto regime following the Asian economic crisis give Timor's independence movement momentum.

1999
Pro-Indonesia militias attack civilians during a national referendum on independence. Nearly 75 percent of the population is displaced, and 200,000 flee into West Timor, but almost 80 percent vote for independence.

1999
As a multinational UN force arrives in Timor, the last Indonesian soldiers leave the territory.

2002
East Timor officially becomes the independent Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste.

2006
Regional resentments fueled by the dismissal of 600 soldiers from the Timor military trigger a violent political crisis. Over 150,000 are displaced by armed clashes between protesters, security forces, and street gangs throughout the country.

2006
Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri resigns, and a UN mission is dispatched to restore peace.

2006
Communal violence erupts in Ermera and rapidly spreads to the capital, Dili, as martial arts groups (MAGs), street gangs, and local communities battle for territory and control of illegal activities. Clashes continue at about 50 per week through 2007.

2007
Political rivalry between FRETILIN and the National Congress for Timorese Reconstruction (CNRT) causes violent clashes during the parliamentary election. Xanana Gusmão becomes prime minister and Jose Ramos-Horta becomes president.

2008
An assassination attempt against President Ramos-Horta and an armed attack on Prime Minister Gusmão raise fears of a coup, as old resentments continue to fuel political violence.

2011
Fearing gang violence during the 2012 elections, the government temporarily bans MAGs. When the ban is lifted in 2013, violence resumes, and several MAGs are permanently outlawed.

2012
CNRT wins a majority in the election and forms a coalition government that excludes FRETILIN, sparking clashes between angry supporters and the police.

2012
Parliament passes a land law, but President Ramos-Horta vetoes it. The land law remains unsigned, and land disputes remain a significant source of local conflict.

2015
Gusmão steps down, paving the way for a FRETILIN prime minister, and an alliance between CNRT and FRETILIN is formed.

2017
Francisco Guterres, backed by FRETILIN and CNRT, wins the presidential election.

2017

Timor-Leste

At a glance

National civil war
Absent

Communal/ideological conflict
Decreased from medium to low

National political conflict
Decreased from high to low

Local political and electoral conflict
Medium

Transnational terrorism
Absent

Local resource conflict
Medium

Separatism and autonomy
Absent

Urban crime and violence
High

** Rankings are based on the last 15 years and are relative to other Asian countries.*

Overview

After a political crisis in 2006, Timor-Leste has stabilized in the postindependence period. Yet the aftermath of the 2006 crisis continues to significantly shape the political landscape and security conditions. Growing rivalry between the former resistance movement, Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor (FRETILIN), and the National Congress for Timorese Reconstruction (CNRT) resulted in violent clashes between political parties during the 2007 parliamentary election. An alliance between FRETILIN and CNRT in early 2015 changed the political landscape to one with reduced political opposition ahead of the general elections in 2017. The 2006 crisis—driven by perceptions of inequality between easterners and westerners in the military, which were manipulated for political gain—also triggered widespread communal conflict. Communal conflict in Timor-Leste often takes the form of gang violence among different martial art groups (MAGs). The government made multiple attempts to reduce MAG-related violence when it escalated after 2006. A temporary ban was imposed on all MAGs for a year before the 2012 election to limit their involvement in politics and electoral violence. As MAG-related violence resurfaced with the lifting of the ban, the government permanently outlawed a few of the major MAGs that were responsible for most of the violence. The primary drivers of communal conflict are land and access to resources. Such disputes continue to cause friction and violence throughout the country due to the absence of an effective legal framework to determine ownership or usage rights. A draft land bill went back and forth between the parliament and the administration from 2003, and was finally approved in 2017. Rates of violence against women and children are very high.

Timor-Leste

National level

National civil war

Timor-Leste had a difficult road to nationhood. Within days of declaring independence from Portugal, the country was occupied and forcibly incorporated into Indonesia in December 1975. Indonesia feared that Timor-Leste (then East Timor) would fall to communism or spur secessionist movements in restive regions of Indonesia. The Indonesian government forced resettlement and imposed the Indonesian language and what were considered "Indonesian values" on the Timorese. Repressive Indonesian rule strengthened Timorese nationalism. Resistance to the Indonesian occupation, led by the Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor (Frente Revolucionária de Timor-Leste Independente, FRETILIN), persisted for 24 years, until Indonesia left Timor in 1999. FRETILIN's armed wing, the Armed Forces for the National Liberation of East Timor (Forças Armadas da Libertação Nacional de Timor-Leste, FALINTIL) carried out guerrilla warfare against Indonesian security forces during this period.

Many lives were lost during Timor's struggle for independence. The Commission for Reception, Truth, and Reconciliation in East Timor (Comissão de Acolhimento, Verdade, e Reconciliação de Timor-Leste, CAVR) estimates at least 102,800 Timorese civilians died between 1974 and 1999.[1] Approximately 18,600 of these were killed or forcibly disappeared, while 84,200 died of famine and disease. Over 100,000 households were displaced, most internally.[2] Indonesian security forces committed human rights violations, including extrajudicial executions, routine and systematic torture, massacres, and sexual violence against women. Up to 4,500 Timorese children were forcibly transferred to Indonesia.[3] The Santa Cruz massacre (also known as the Dili massacre), in November 1991, received widespread international attention. The Indonesian military opened fire on unarmed civilians participating in a peaceful, pro-independence march to the grave of Sebastiao Gomes, a young man killed a month earlier in an attack by Indonesian security forces on the Motael church, where he and other Timorese activists had taken refuge. The United Nations (UN) Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary, or arbitrary executions estimated that between 150 and 270 people were killed by Indonesian security forces at Santa Cruz; the Indonesian authorities claimed there were 19 deaths.[4]

100,000+

civilians died during Timor's struggle for independence 1974–1999

Following the massacre, international pressure on Indonesia increased, but it took Timor another decade to gain independence. The Asian economic crisis of 1997 and the overthrow of Indonesia's Suharto regime the following year allowed Timor's independence movement to gain momentum domestically and internationally. Portugal and Indonesia held talks, mediated by the UN,[5] regarding Timor's status, and agreed to let the Timorese people decide for themselves in a referendum on independence (known as the 1999 Popular Consultation). In August 1999, nearly 80 percent of the population voted for independence. In the lead up to and during the referendum, pro-Indonesia militias attacked civilians across Timor, killing hundreds and destroying property.[6] More than 75 percent of the population was displaced. Approximately 200,000 fled to West Timor and other areas, while others were internally displaced in camps in Dili and elsewhere in the country.[7] In 1999, as a multinational military force mandated under Chapter 7 of the UN charter arrived, the last Indonesian soldiers left the territory. While anti-independence militias were active throughout 1999 and early 2000, the transition occurred on schedule, and in May 2002, East Timor officially became the independent Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste.

National political conflict

As a postconflict country with weak state institutions and rule of law, Timor-Leste is vulnerable to political conflict and electoral violence. The country maintained a fragile stability for the first four years of its independence, but a political crisis erupted in 2006, resulting in some loss of life, injury, displacement, and property destruction. The crisis began when nearly 600 soldiers were dismissed from the Timor-Leste Defense Force (Forças de Defesa de Timor Leste, FALINTIL–FDTL or F–FDTL) in March 2006. The dismissals were the result of a petition submitted in January 2006 to Brigadier General Taur Matan Ruak and President Xanana Gusmão about mismanagement and perceived discrimination against westerners within the defense force. Grievances fused with rivalries and other political conflicts, leading to armed clashes between protesters, the police, and defense forces. Widespread rioting, involving armed gangs, MAGs, and youth groups, occurred throughout the country. Thirty-eight were killed and 69 injured in the violence of April and May 2006. Over half of the victims were civilians. Around 150,000 people were displaced, and over 1,600 houses were destroyed.[8] The crisis led to the resignation of Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri and the establishment of a UN Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT) in August 2006 to help restore peace and increase police presence.

The 2006 political crisis was in part a manifestation of political disputes resulting from historical competition between and within political parties during the resistance. Tensions within FRETILIN in the 1980s and 1990s, particularly between central committee members and Xanana Gusmão, then commander in chief of FALINTIL, continued into the postconflict government. In 1987, as Gusmão resigned from the FRETILIN central committee over ideological differences, FALINTIL became the armed wing of the new National Council of Maubere Resistance, formed to represent all political parties rather than a single party. FRETILIN lost absolute control over the policies of the resistance movement. FRETILIN members have continued to play central political roles since independence, and tensions between much of the FRETILIN leadership and Gusmão have continued in the postindependence era.

Enmities among ex-soldiers also flowed from the poorly implemented demobilization of FALINTIL fighters and the creation of the F–FDTL, which absorbed some FALINTIL veterans but left others unemployed, while the new police force incorporated 370 officers who had previously worked for the Indonesian police force. Rivalries between the F–FDTL and the police escalated further as the new minister of the interior, Rogerio Lobato, created two paramilitary police units, undermining the F–FDTL. A former defense minister, Lobato ensured that those loyal to him were recruited into the police, fanning resentment among veterans against the former Indonesian police. With a significant element of the police loyal to him, Lobato played a hyperpoliticized role in the 2006 crisis.

While the 2006 crisis is often attributed solely to the breakdown of the security sector, its root causes were a complex web of political, economic, and social factors. Underlying issues included a failure to define land and property regimes to settle competing claims, latent tensions between the LOROSA'E (easterners) and LOROMONU (westerners), and lingering, unresolved tensions between citizens dating back to Portuguese times. These issues were exacerbated by the stresses of resistance and occupation, the social and economic consequences of rapid urbanization in the capital, and the subsequent competition for housing, resources, and employment. Politicians, seeking to build their own support bases, manipulated the divide between the pro-independence east and the pro-Indonesia west, in the process further reinforcing it.[9]

Political tensions became further entrenched after the 2006 crisis. Intensified rivalries between FRETILIN's central committee and Gusmão's political party, the National Congress for Timorese Reconstruction (CNRT), led to violent clashes between political parties and their supporters during the 2007 parliamentary election. Violent incidents resulted in two deaths, 100 injuries, and 91 incidents of property destruction between May and August 2007.[10] Violence spiked at the end of the campaign, following the decision by President José Ramos-Horta, who won the 2007 presidential election, to authorize the Parliamentary Majority Alliance to form a new government with Gusmão as prime minister (figure 1). The 2006 crisis also led to the formation of new parties. Long-standing political rivalries, antagonisms among FALINTIL veterans, and petitioners' resentment continued to fuel violence, highlighted by the February 2008 assassination attempt on President Ramos-Horta and a separate armed attack on Prime Minister Gusmão by the rebel group led by Reinado.

While the 2012 elections were held peacefully, power remained in the same hands (the old generation), and many of the root causes of fragility persisted. CNRT won the majority with 30 seats, followed by FRETILIN with 25 seats. CNRT formed a coalition government with two other small parties, the Democratic Party (PD) and Frenti-Mudanca (FM), leaving FRETILIN as a single-party opposition. Exclusion of FRETILIN from the coalition government caused clashes

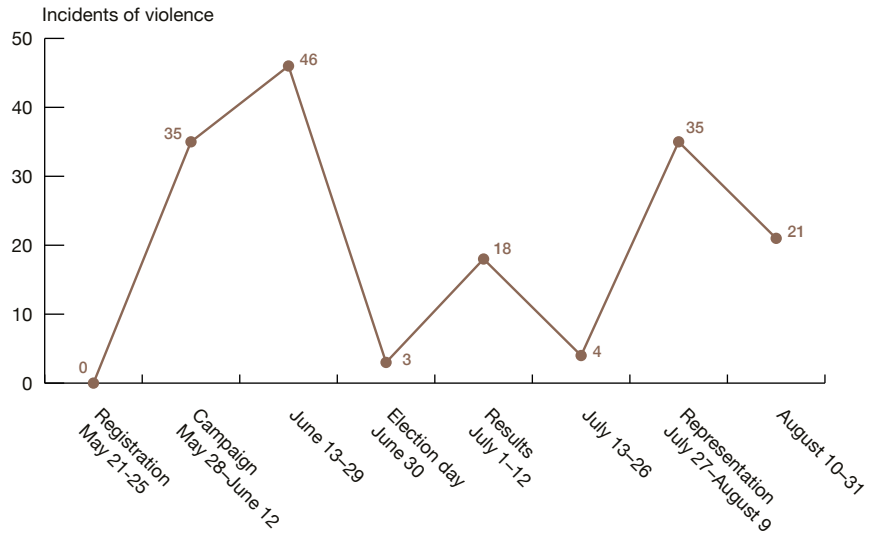


Figure 1. Violent incidents during the 2007 parliamentary election
Source: Timor-Leste Armed Violence Assessment (TLAVA)[11]

between its angry supporters and police, leading to one death and four injured police officers. Dozens of cars and properties were damaged.[12] The political landscape changed in February 2015, however, when Gusmão, who had been prime minister since 2007, stepped down to pave the way for his successor, FRETILIN politician Rui Maria de Araújo. An alliance between CNRT and FRETILIN was formed, leaving the parliament without an effective opposition. Conflict between the parliament and President Taur Matan Ruak increased.[13]

Even though CNRT and FRETLIN had formed a peaceful political union, 2015 saw political violence in Baucau district when supporters of a rebel group, the Maubere Revolutionary Council (KRM), launched attacks against police. After his return to Timor from self-imposed exile in Holland in 2013, Mauk Moruk, a former FALINTIL commander and a longtime opponent of Gusmão, formed the KRM, which was made up of disaffected veterans of the independence struggle. The KRM carried out a series of attacks contesting the legitimacy of the government. Moruk was killed in a joint operation by the police and the military in August 2015. Amnesty International reported that dozens of individuals suspected of supporting Moruk were arbitrarily arrested and tortured in the government operations.[14]

Prior to the March 2017 presidential election, nationwide polls indicated that 66 percent of respondents were concerned about electoral violence in their districts,[15] despite only a few reports of violent incidents in the 2012 elections. Research from a local NGO, Belun, however, predicted that conflicts during the 2017 elections would be small.[16] Francisco Guterres, a former guerrilla fighter backed by both FRETILIN and CNRT, won the election, sustaining Gusmão's influence in Timorese politics. FRETILIN and CNRT also gained victory in July parliamentary election, securing 29.7 and 29.5 percent of the vote respectively. Gusmão however announced that CNRT would not join the coalition government, making it more likely that FRETILIN will form a minority government.[17]

Transnational terrorism

There have been no reported activities or attacks carried out by transnational terrorist groups in Timor.

Subnational level

Separatism and autonomy

Timor-Leste gained independence in May 2002, with the majority of the population voting against autonomy within Indonesia after 24 years of Indonesian occupation (see the national civil war section for more information). There has been no separatist conflict in Timor-Leste since its independence.

Large-scale communal and ideological conflicts

Timorese society has long been divided along a number of axes. During the Indonesian occupation, society became deeply split between those involved in the resistance movement and those loyal to Indonesia. An east-west divide stretches back to at least the 1940s, when migrants from eastern and western parts of the country started competing for the control of Dili markets.[18] It became common for migrants to associate themselves with one or the other group. The 2006 crisis, which played a part in the political mobilization of this divide, emboldened youth gangs to partition Dili into territories, using their influence for both criminal activities and "protection" of their communities.[19] The general lawlessness that followed the 2006 political crisis led to widespread gang conflict among groups divided by different loyalties.

Gang-related violence was particularly heated in Dili, and continued until the end of 2007. Dili experienced 70–80 violent incidents per week during the first half of 2007, but violence dropped to an average of 54 incidents per week during the second half of 2007, and 36 in 2008.[20]

During the 2006 crisis, armed groups were organized by patronage and kinship networks centered around particular individuals. These people were usually heads of family networks or former resistance figures who acted as procurers or fixers, organizing youths into mobs to carry out violent activities on behalf of parties or businesses.[21] These groups have continued to be involved in tensions and clashes since 2006.

Each suburb of Dili is divided into neighborhoods (*aldeias*), roughly corresponding to the territories of single communities, sometimes influenced by a gang, martial art group (MAG), or political group.[22] What sometimes appears to be a gang or MAG clash is often a communal dispute between villages, as each community mobilizes its youths to defend its territory. This has been the pattern of violent incidents in Dili. Communal conflicts between families in rural districts sometimes spread to Dili, as one family uses a gang or MAG to attack another family over a property or land dispute. Gang violence often escalates, as members from other gangs or MAGs get involved, leading to cycles of retaliation.[23] For example, a communal conflict that erupted in November 2006 between an antigovernment group, Colimau 2000, and the largest MAG, Persaudaraan Setia Hati Terate (PSHT), rapidly spread from the western district of Ermera to neighboring districts and then into Dili, resulting in seven deaths.[24] The conflict between Colimau 2000 and PSHT led to the formation of an alliance among Colimau 2000, Kmanek Oan Rai Klaran (KORK), and clandestine groups such as 7-7 to fight against PSHT. PSHT's subsequent aggression for territorial dominance and control of security, protection rackets, and illegal activities prompted a wider coalition of gangs and local communities.[25] The conflict continued throughout 2007, particularly between PSHT and 7-7 after PSHT burned down the house of the 7-7 leader. According to UN Police figures, Timor experienced roughly 50 violent incidents per week during that time.[26] The two groups signed a peace agreement in August 2008.

Mutiple attempts have been made to address MAG-related violence. A temporary blanket ban of all MAGs was enforced for one year before the 2012 election to limit their involvement in politics and electoral violence. Police officers were also prohibited from joining MAGs. When the ban was lifted in 2013 and violent incidents returned, the government decided to permanently outlaw the three main MAGs—Kera Sakti, KORK, and PSHT—whose members were responsible for most of the violence.

Local level

Local political conflict and electoral violence

There was no major lethal violence reported when Timor-Leste held three *suku* (village) elections for village chiefs, subvillage (*aldeias*) chiefs, and delegates for village council (one female and one male delegate from each subvillage) in 2004, 2009, and 2016. ActionAid Australia and Small Arms Survey's report indicated that localized tensions and more subtle forms of intimidation had probably occurred during the 2004 and 2009 suku elections.[27] Belun recorded 59 incidents of electoral violence during the 2016 local elections, including 27 incidents of physical violence and 32 incidents of verbal threats.[28] The primary causes of the violent incidents included dissatisfaction with the election results, suspected irregularities in the process or results, confusion about the election process, and poor organization of the election. Based on a law adopted that July, the 2016 elections were implemented by local authorities, not by the Technical Secretariat for Election Administration or the National Election Commission as were previous elections in 2004 and 2009.

Local conflict over resources and community rights

Land and property disputes are a significant source of friction and conflict, as Timor-Leste lacks a legal basis for determining ownership of land and property beyond Portuguese freehold titles. Timor inherited a highly complex and challenging land title system, a legacy of both Portuguese colonization and Indonesian occupation. The Portuguese and Indonesian governments issued a range of ownership and usage rights that continue to form the basis of many official claims to land and property ownership. Sorting through overlapping claims has been a challenging task due to the destruction of public records and widespread illegal occupation of land and properties after the displacement that followed the 1999 referendum.

Competing land claims between individuals and between individuals and the state are common. The 2006 and 2007 violence led to more displacement, with people forcibly taking back land they felt had been stolen from them during the Indonesian occupation. The Asia Foundation's 2015 survey on community-police perceptions found that land disputes were seen as one of the principal security threats facing local communities.[29] Belun recorded a total of 137 incidents in 2016 related to land for farming and housing, 10.2 percent of all violent incidents that year.[30] The International Crisis Group notes that many land disputes are part of longstanding family or community disputes that have roots in other conflicts.[31] Many cases of gang and MAG violence are rooted in land issues. Due to the absence of a clear land title law, and limited access to police protection and the justice system, many families in rural areas encourage their youth to join these groups for protection in land disputes.

Despite the high stakes involved, the country has made only slow progress on land titling, further inflaming land disputes in communities. The National Directorate for Land, Property, and Cadastral Services, under the Ministry of Justice, started a land surveying program called *Ita Nia Rai* (Our Land), a precursor to land titling, and collected 55,000 claims between 2007 and 2012.[32] However, land surveying conducted by the Ministry of Justice's National Cadastral System, which developed from *Ita Nia Rai*, has also triggered disputes in some communities. Belun recorded 31 incidents related to surveying between 2015 and 2016.[33] In some communities, the surveying sparked tensions over land where there were previously no disputes, as people realized that land ownership was being reexamined. In some cases, the surveying was reportedly conducted without consulting local leaders about how communities address these issues.[34] Although parliament approved a land law to establish a set of criteria for land ownership, it was vetoed by President Horta in 2012. Since then, the land law has been going back and forth between parliament and the government. A package of three laws, to address land titling, territorial integrity, and expropriation, was approved by parliament and sent to the president in April 2017. The law was enacted in June 2017.

Urban crime and violence

Timor-Leste's political and socioeconomic challenges and the legacies of its past have significantly affected urban crime and violence in Dili, the most populous city in the country, with a population of over 277,000 (2015 census). Dili frequently served as a site of violence and resistance during the Portuguese colonization, the Indonesian occupation, and the 2006–2007 unrest. Although Dili has been stable since 2007, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) reported that it has the second-highest homicide rate in Asia in 2013, 11.3 per 100,000 people, three times higher than the national rate of 3.6 in 2010.[36] Between 2014 and 2016, Belun recorded over 1,000 violent incidents in Dili, 32.4 percent of the national total.[37] Belun's data indicates an upward trend of violence in the capital city (figure 2).

A wide range of factors make Dili vulnerable to urban crime and violence, including rapid rural-to-urban migration, a "youth bulge," youth unemployment, the growth of gangs and MAGs,

and competition for control of markets and land. The number of migrants in Dili increased from 68,887 in 2004 to 94,349 in 2010.[38] The majority of migrants are young people between 15 and 29[39] who have moved to the capital city seeking better prospects for education and employment. However, the city suffers from inadequate urban planning and a lack of jobs and resources to accommodate them. With the majority of its population under 30 years old, youth unemployment is a serious problem in Dili. The 2010 census reported an unemployment rate of 40.2 percent for urban youth 15–19 years old, compared to 22.8 percent for rural youth.[40]

High rates of unemployment and rural-to-urban migration, compounded by the youth bulge, generate frustration and tensions among youth. According to the 2015 Asia Foundation survey on community-police perceptions, youth issues are the highest security concern in Dili (35 percent).[41] The main provocateurs in MAG-related violence are males between 15 and 25 years old. Gangs and MAGs offer youth companionship, status, protection, services, and a source of income.[42] As some MAGs struggle with bad reputations and restrictions on their activities, organized crime groups have been increasing their recruitment of youth to carry out illegal activities such as theft, prostitution, and other violence.[43]

Domestic and gender-based violence

Women and girls in Timor-Leste experience widespread gender-based violence, particularly domestic violence. Data from the National Police of Timor-Leste (PNTL) for 2010 through 2014 show an upward trend in reports of domestic violence (figure 3). Based on the PNTL's 2014 data, more than 80 percent of reported incidents of gender-based violence are about domestic violence. According to The Asia Foundation's 2016 report on violence against women and children, 59 percent of women aged 15–49 who had ever been in a relationship had experienced physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner at least once in their lifetime.[44] Seventy-seven percent of female respondents who had experienced any form of physical violence by their partners experienced severe acts of violence, and 81 percent experienced physical violence many times in their lives.[45] The study found that the rates of physical and sexual intimate partner violence were consistently higher in urban areas, particularly in Dili, than in rural areas.[46]

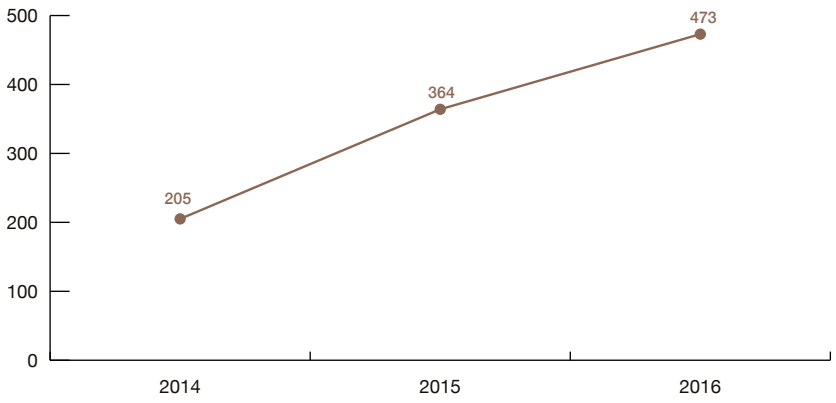


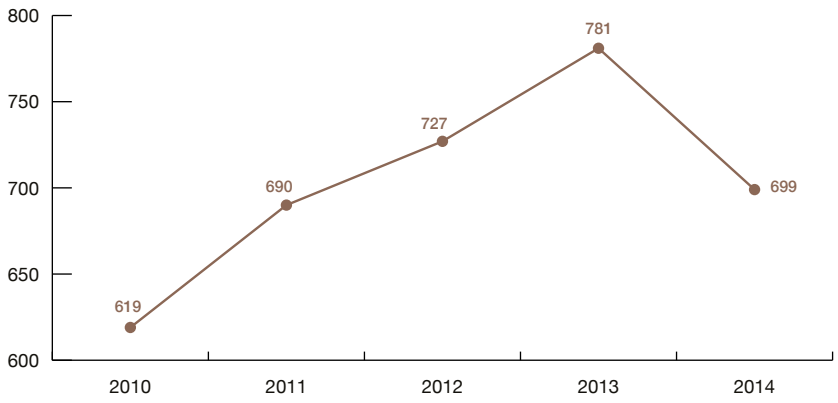
Figure 2. Violent incidents in Dili (2014–2016)
Source: Belun

Domestic violence is often regarded as a private matter in Timor-Leste, and is therefore underreported.[47] The 2009–10 Timor-Leste Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) found that just 24 percent of women who had experienced violence from their partner reported it to anyone.[48] Women most often sought help from their own family (82 percent), their in-laws (27 percent), and friends or neighbors (14 percent). Only 4 percent of women sought help from the police, and just 1 percent from social service organizations.

According to The Asia Foundation's 2016 study, 14 percent of all women between the ages of 15 and 49 years had been raped by someone other than a husband or boyfriend (nonpartner rape) in their lifetimes, and 10 percent said this had happened in the previous 12 months. Three percent of women had been raped by more than one man at the same time (gang rape). These figures are higher than any of the 16 countries where the WHO or UN Multi-Country Study survey methodology has been used in the past. Child abuse rates are also the second highest in the Asia-Pacific after Papua New Guinea. Seventy-two percent of women and 77 percent of men had experienced at least one form of physical or sexual abuse before age 18.[49]

Patriarchal culture and traditional practices reinforce gender inequalities and heavily influence how women and girls are treated and regarded within the household and in the community. Many studies and surveys indicate that there is a high degree of tolerance for violence against women within intimate relationships, and both Timorese men and women often believe that some forms of physical and sexual violence are not violence, but discipline. The 2009–10 Timor-Leste DHS found that 86 percent of women believed a husband is justified in beating his wife if she burns the food, argues with him, goes out without telling him, neglects the children, or refuses to have sexual intercourse with him.[50]

The weak formal justice and security sectors exacerbate the problem. Amid rising concern over domestic violence in the postindependence period, the parliament passed the Law Against Domestic Violence in May 2010. However, appealing to the formal justice system in domestic violence cases is still uncommon. Victims are often referred back to their community leaders to solve the problem. Courts often treat domestic violence cases lightly, and tend to suspend a prison sentence or substitute a fine.[51]



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Essays on The State of Conflict and Violence in Asia

Violence and Regimes in Asia: Capable States and Durable Settlements

Sana Jaffrey
Dan Slater

It is common in academic and policymaking circles to argue or assume that democracy should be correlated with positive outcomes, such as peace, development, rule of law, and equality, while authoritarianism should be associated with all their negative opposites. But no serious observer of Asian politics—whether East, Southeast, South, or Central—would ever propose such a blunt causal connection, especially with regard to the outcomes that occupy our attention in this volume: peace and violence. Examples abound in Asia of countries where democratization has appeared to be associated with an increase in violence, as well as dictatorships that have at least seemed adept at fulfilling basic human desires for physical security, if not individual and collective freedoms. Trumpeted as they always are by autocrats and their most vocal champions, such examples give rise to the opposite conclusion: authoritarianism generally fosters peace, while democracy—especially the rocky process of democratization itself—tends to increase violence, at least until democracy ages, consolidates, and matures.

The fact that both of these opposing perspectives can plausibly coexist suggests that no definitive, absolute correlation between regime type and violence actually exists. Nevertheless, one can still discern some striking patterns linking regimes and violence across Asia. First, as a matter of *regime type*, democracies and dictatorships can both be either peaceful or violent, but for different reasons. Most simply put, authoritarian peace rests on *capable states*, while democratic peace rests on *durable settlements*. The greatest dangers therefore lie where state incapacity is married to authoritarianism—as in the Philippines under the Ferdinand Marcos regime and potentially again under Rodrigo Duterte—and where political settlements break down in a democracy, whether a democracy as old as India or as young as Timor-Leste.

Second, *regime transitions* can create a range of outcomes with regards to large-scale violence. As predicted in the literature, political liberalization in Indonesia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Pakistan, and Nepal has been accompanied by the escalation of large-scale violence. However, the roots of these conflicts and the initial formation of the rebel organizations at the center of contemporary violence can be traced back to authoritarian rule that preceded democratic change. Furthermore, Asian countries show that transitions to democracy provide exceptional

Authoritarian peace rests on capable states, while democratic peace rests on durable settlements

opportunities for negotiated settlement of these conflicts. Such opportunities for peace may not be perceived as readily available in long-standing democracies such as India and Sri Lanka.

Finally, *regime evolution* over time affects the forms of violence that predominate, particularly in maturing democracies. Counterintuitively, a higher level of democratic consolidation does not necessarily lead to lower levels of violence. However, it is often accompanied by a shift in the form of violence, especially with regards to communal conflict. Evidence from India, Bangladesh, and Indonesia shows that democratic consolidation is associated with a concurrent decrease in large-scale riots and a rise in localized vigilante violence. Affirming the key lesson that peaceful democracies rest on durable settlements, vigilantism is typically directed against those minorities whose standing in a nation's foundational political settlement is least secure.

Regime type and violence

The great variation in regime type and violence within Asia provides an ideal setting for engaging with competing theoretical claims. Proponents of the "domestic democratic peace" theory argue that democratic institutions tend to reduce violent conflict in diverse societies by structuring fair contestation over diverse preferences through inclusive participation. Commitment to representative institutions can incentivize political elites to resolve their differences through negotiation and compromise by allowing for wider participation in the decision-making processes.[1] Others claim that electoral competition can generate deep contention over distribution of resources, leading to mobilization of nationalist sentiment that increases the likelihood of armed conflict in democracies.[2] Especially in ethnically diverse and economically less developed societies, it has been suggested that authoritarian rule can bring the institutional strength necessary for economic growth and social stability.[3]

Empirical evidence from Asia does not lend consistent support to either of these claims. Table 1 compiles and color-codes the conflict outcomes discussed in this volume's country chapters, and correlates them with each country's Polity score.[4] If democracies were systematically more violent than dictatorships, or vice versa, a clear pattern would be visible in which lighter (less violent) cells would separate from darker (more violent) cells along the vertical axis. One need not employ sophisticated estimation techniques to see that in the 14 Asian cases covered here, no clear association between regime type and violence—even when we disaggregate violence into its many different types—can be ascertained.

Table 1 also presents some clear surprises for perspectives that link regime *quality* with violence. Some have argued that semidemocracies, or "anocracies," are most likely to experience violence compared to harsh autocracies or consolidated democracies.[5] A glance at Table 1 casts doubt on this claim. Two of the region's oldest democracies, India and Sri Lanka, are quite similar to their younger counterparts such as Indonesia, the Philippines, and Bangladesh in both levels

Regime type is not a good predictor of violence in Asia

and varieties of violence. Intriguingly, Timor-Leste and Mongolia are new democracies that are more peaceful than countries with far more experience in democratic governance.

Even when we compare two countries that have experienced the most regime instability in the region, Pakistan and Thailand, it is clear that they differ vastly in their experience of violence. Despite having undergone similar regime cycling between military-led interventions and short periods of democratic rule, Pakistan fares much worse than Thailand on virtually all categories of armed conflict, including terrorism, national political conflict, and sectarian violence.

The argument that authoritarianism helps cement societal peace and political order is also belied by the fact that some of the worst acts of mass violence in the world have been committed by autocrats in Asia. The Khmer Rouge's systematic genocide led to the death of at least a million people, while Indonesia's New Order regime came to power on the back of a massive anticommunist campaign in which the military and citizen militias killed perhaps half a million people. Even where authoritarian regimes manage to avoid committing mass violence, they engage in high levels of state repression characterized by arrests, assassinations, torture, and forced displacements.[6] Although autocracies tend to be most violent during their founding years—as arguably is true of democracies as well—this does not mean that the long-term consolidation of authoritarian regimes necessarily yields increasingly peaceful outcomes. To the contrary, repressive measures may cumulatively result in rising national tensions, as currently observed in Cambodia and Malaysia, both of which have been consistently dominated by an authoritarian ruling party for decades.

Regime type is thus not a good predictor of violence in Asia. What then explains the observed variation in violent conflict across cases compiled in this volume? In any political system, levels of violence are a function of *state capacity* more than regime type. It is no coincidence that this volume, focused on analyzing violence across the region, sees no need to cover either Asian democracies such as South Korea and Taiwan or authoritarian regimes like Singapore that have historically possessed highly capable states.

Recent research suggests that authoritarianism is no panacea for social violence. Dictatorships with fragmented and poorly organized coercive apparatuses engage in more "high-intensity violence" than stronger authoritarian states that can target their enemies more precisely and, in many cases, legally and without bloodshed.[7] Among cases considered here, the Philippines under Marcos and Myanmar under military rule serve as examples of authoritarian regimes with fragmented coercive capacity that deployed high levels of violence to subdue multiple popular challenges.[8] In contrast, the New Order regime in Indonesia developed highly sophisticated mass-surveillance systems that could engage in more targeted repression of dissidents, reducing the likelihood of violent counter-mobilization.[9] All else equal, the Philippines should enduringly provide more sites of stateless sanctuary for sympathizers of transnational terrorist organizations such as Islamic State (IS) than will Indonesia.

This does not mean, however, that high state capacity is the only route to peace *in democracies*. Statebuilding does not have to precede democratization for peace and stability to take hold.[10] Authoritarian regimes indeed require state capacity to maintain order in a setting of relatively limited electoral consent. However, democracies can forge peaceful settlements across groups even when state capacity is unimpressive, as has been the case in Mongolia and Timor-Leste. In Pakistan and Sri Lanka, on the other hand, the state has developed higher levels of coercive

capacity after fighting external and internal foes for decades. Yet democratic politics in both of these countries have been marred by turmoil due to a lack of durable settlements on fundamental features of the polity. Although it might flirt with tautology to say that democratic peace is a result of political settlements, it is an improvement on existing perspectives that portray levels of violence as a direct product of regime type or as a predictable side effect of economic underdevelopment or inequality.

Regime change and violence

Let us now turn our attention to another common claim: one that depicts vulnerability to armed conflict as a temporally bounded feature of regime *change*. This largely quantitative literature assesses the likelihood of armed conflict onset with respect to the timing of transitions to and from democratic rule.[11] As noted above, transitions to new authoritarian regimes in Cambodia and Indonesia produced some of the deadliest mass violence Asia has ever witnessed. This section focuses on violence in transitions to democracy, not because they tend to be more violent than transitions to authoritarianism, but simply because Asia has experienced more democratic transitions than breakdowns in recent years. When a region births more democracies, naturally it experiences more cases where democracy and violence coincide.

On the surface, several countries discussed in this volume correspond with the finding that periods immediately following democratization are moments of high risk for mass violence. In Indonesia, for example, momentous political change has always coincided with extraordinary periods of violence. Multiple rebellions erupted across the archipelago soon after a newly independent Indonesia convened its first democratically elected parliament in 1955. Indonesia's most recent democratization process was also beset with escalation of three preexisting insurgencies, in Aceh, Papua, and East Timor, as well as communal violence across multiple parts of the country that collectively claimed an estimated 22,552 lives between 1998 and 2003.[12]

Pakistan's turbulent history follows a similar trajectory. The country's two, short-lived experiments with democratic governance were marked by a separatist war that resulted in Bangladesh's independence in 1971, and then by a surge in sectarian violence since 1989 that continues to this day. Even the current regime transition that commenced in 2009 has been met with an increase in terrorist-related attacks and escalation of separatist violence in the restive Balochistan province (see country chapter in this volume).

While most of the literature emphasizes the risk of violence *after* a regime transition has taken place, evidence from two additional Asian countries shows that initial attempts at political liberalization can also trigger violent mobilization. In Nepal, the Maoist insurgency only gained ground after the *Jana Andolan* movement successfully managed to place constitutional constraints on the country's powerful monarchy. Similarly, ethnic and separatist violence in Myanmar began to escalate in some long-standing trouble zones in 2011. This was before fully competitive elections were held, but after political prisoners were freed and the regime softened restrictions on public gatherings and the media, signaling deeper democratic reforms.

Transitions to new authoritarian regimes have produced some of the deadliest mass violence

Asia's two oldest and least interrupted democracies, India and Sri Lanka, have most consistently sought military solutions to settle their internal conflicts

These cases support the claim that the risk of armed conflict can rise in periods of political liberalization. Yet they also challenge the most commonly proposed causal link between democratization and violence. Scholars have often claimed that transitions to democracy create incentives for political elites to fan nationalist sentiments. By defining a clear "other" in ethnic terms, elites can improve their chances of gathering popular support needed to win elections. Stoking communal hatred for instrumental reasons after a transition can also lead to mass mobilization for armed conflicts.[13] The history of armed conflicts across Asia problematizes this purely instrumentalist perspective. While violence may have escalated in the immediate aftermath of political liberalization, the actual grievances at the heart of these conflicts and the initial formation of rebel organizations long predate democratic transitions.

For example, the causes of three separatist civil wars in Indonesia can be located in the way that resource-rich provinces of Aceh, Papua, and East Timor were integrated into the nation-state, as well as the discriminative social and economic policies adopted by the New Order regime. The Acehnese played a pivotal role in the Indonesian nationalist struggle, but disagreements about the role of Islam in the newly independent state prompted a nationalist movement in the province that evolved into the separatist Free Aceh Movement (GAM) in 1976.[14] Long before the democratic transition in 1998, GAM had waged two unsuccessful guerilla wars in the province during the '70s and the '80s. Similarly, armed rebellions in Papua and East Timor were launched after these provinces were forcefully annexed to the Indonesian state under authoritarian rule. This initial elite discontent with Jakarta's domination in these provinces took on a more popular character when the New Order regime developed a highly centralized governance strategy that shifted a large proportion of natural resources from these regions to the densely populated island of Java.[15] As in Indonesia, regional rebellions in Thailand, Pakistan, the Philippines, and Myanmar typically began during, continued throughout, and persisted after protracted periods of authoritarian rule.

The fact that the intensity of violence in these conflicts only escalated during the democratization process is not entirely surprising given that, by definition, authoritarian regimes are able to mobilize high levels of repression to suppress challengers. The process of democratization, on the other hand, often occurs in the context of the state's coercive retreat.[16] This can reduce the perceived risk of the use of violence by rebels, who have amassed the necessary organizational infrastructure under authoritarian rule. More than instrumental instigation by electoral elites, escalation of violence in these separatist conflicts indicates rebels' increased ability to fight back as violent state repression abates following a democratic transition.

Moments of democratization also provide opportunities to renegotiate structural features of the polity, such as the influence of the armed forces, center-periphery relations, and the state's redistributive policies. These structural openings appear to have a dual effect. First, they can incentivize preexisting rebel organizations to use violence in order to obtain more favorable concessions from the process. Because opportunities for this kind of renegotiation are more limited during transitions to authoritarian rule and the risk of state repression is higher—and because coup-makers try to time their intervention for when they expect resistance to be limited—popular mobilization after military coups, such as those observed frequently in Pakistan and Thailand, is relatively rare. Instead, authoritarian takeovers often correspond with state-led crackdowns on rebel groups and political dissidents.

While democratic openings can provide incentives for escalation of violence in long-standing conflicts, they also appear to provide unique opportunities for reaching negotiated settlements with rebel groups. Indeed, transition cases with long-standing separatist movements, most notably Nepal and Indonesia (Aceh), have made concerted efforts to resolve these conflicts through negotiated peace agreements that include extraordinary autonomy concessions, guarantees of free political participation of former rebels, and even full-blown federalism (in Nepal). Even where separatist conflict has not been fully resolved, such as the Philippine island of Mindanao and Indonesia's restive Papua province, a series of local-autonomy and revenue-sharing concessions after the democratic transition have prevented a serious escalation of the conflict by undercutting elite support for rebel organizations. Although it is quite early in the process, Myanmar appears to be navigating a similar path towards regional autonomy in a fledgling electoral democracy. In contrast, it is striking that Asia's two oldest and least interrupted democracies, India and Sri Lanka, have most consistently sought military solutions to settle their internal conflicts.

Democratization processes in Asia have clearly opened opportunities for arriving at political agreements with rebels. They also heighten the risk of violence in the short term, however, as both sides use more force while they can to help them establish a more favorable fait accompli for the negotiations. More research is needed to understand why transitioning democracies in Asia have been more effective at negotiating peace agreements with rebel groups than have long-standing democracies, and whether it is the case in other regions as well.

As a starting point, here are three preliminary thoughts. First, a behavioral explanation is that older democracies have little practice in negotiating with rivals who refuse to follow the rules of constitutional order. As a consequence, they have sought outright military victory over rebel groups, and with very violent consequences. In contrast, elites in transitioning democracies accumulate the necessary negotiation experience to engage in dialogue on difficult issues to reach a mutually agreeable settlement.

Second, the structural environment also matters. Moments of democratic transition put fundamental questions about political life on the table. As such, they provide opportunities for horse-trading of concessions between different parties[17] in ways that may not be available in long-standing democracies, where fundamental features of the polity are no longer up for renegotiation.

Third and finally, the most reliable political pathway for reaching peace settlements in new democracies may very well run through decentralization. Political leaders are more likely to seek a negotiated settlement for protracted armed conflicts once they are sure that their "reputation" for making concessions to one rebel group will not encourage other groups to make similar demands.[18] Given that it often goes hand in hand with democratic reform, devolution of power may serve to reduce the overall perceived risk of future separatist demands. This makes leaders more likely to reduce military deployment and seek a negotiated settlement for preexisting conflicts.

Regime evolution and violence

Overall, neither regime type nor regime transitions in Asia have a direct bearing on levels of violence. However, democratic consolidation appears to create a perceptible shift over time in the particular *forms* of violence used in these conflicts. Although ethnocommunal fault lines run through virtually all Asian countries, the mode in which they are expressed seems to evolve with the level of democratic competition.

In developing democracies, where electoral competition is beginning to open up, communal conflicts often take the form of riots that cause large-scale loss of human life, economic damage,

and displacement. In its early transition period, Indonesia experienced multiple communal riots against the ethnic Chinese minority in its urban centers. Christian-Muslim riots that lasted for months in the country's eastern provinces were very much rooted in local anxieties about how the advent of free elections for the first time in three decades might reshuffle the deck of political power.[19] Likewise in India, Hindu-Muslim riots peaked during the mid-to-late '90s when the country was transitioning from decades of Congress Party dominance towards a genuine multiparty democracy. In India as in Indonesia, local electoral considerations played a key role in determining subnational patterns of violence.[20]

The consolidation of competitive, multiparty democracy in these cases corresponds with a gradual decline in the incidence and impact of riots. But it is also correlated with the emergence of vigilantism as a more prominent form of communal violence. In India, vigilante attacks on individuals accused of eating beef by members of "cow protection groups" have been on the rise since 2010.[21] Although the immediate issue in these attacks is to prevent the consumption of beef and the sale of cows for slaughter, in effect most of its victims have been members of India's vulnerable Muslim minority.

This trend is mirrored in Muslim-majority Indonesia, where vigilante groups have increasingly sought to police communal boundaries through violent attacks on non-Muslim houses of worship and deadly crackdowns on activities of sects within Islam that they deem "deviant." Criminal suspects, alleged sorcerers, and homosexuals are also frequent targets of vigilante violence. During Indonesia's current democratic consolidation phase, the number of victims of vigilante violence is estimated to be three times higher than casualties from other forms of large-scale violence such as riots and group clashes.[22]

Vigilantism in these consolidating democracies is similar to riots in the sense that both target groups that lack clear political standing in foundational political settlements.[23] Even though Hindu nationalists in India did not win their initial constitutional battle against secularists in the Congress Party, they have continually and vociferously called into question the "loyalty" of Indian Muslims with reference to the protracted insurgency in Kashmir and during multiple military confrontations with Pakistan.[24] Indonesia's Christian and Chinese minorities have faced similar stigmas. Despite being guaranteed equal constitutional rights in the Muslim-majority country, these groups are often denounced as colonial accomplices and beneficiaries of the repressive New Order regime.[25] Riots contest these political settlements by eliminating or displacing minority groups as a collective, as most tragically seen in recent pogroms against Myanmar's Muslim-minority Rohingya population. Vigilantism, on the other hand, forces minorities to adjust their behavior, by punishing individual infractions of a dominant communal order.

Democratic consolidation produces two sets of changes that explain this concurrent decline in riots and rise in vigilante violence. First, strengthening of democratic institutions brings about an improvement in the rights of ethnic and social minorities as well as a heightened level of accountability for government officials in terms of protecting vulnerable groups. This can, ironically, increase violence against these newly protected groups by conservative elements in the majority who resist and reject the extension of minority rights.[26] At the same time, these developments are associated with greater civil society scrutiny and growing judicial oversight of state agents, making large-scale riots a risky strategy for reasserting dominance.

Second, the increase in electoral competition can create incentives for using vigilantism as a form of violent lobbying to push back on some of these "liberal" reforms. This lobbying can work in two ways. In countries with a long history of communal violence, frequent episodes of religiously charged vigilantism create fears of escalation into larger conflagrations. State agents often manage these fears by appeasing vigilantes with stricter regulation and enforcement of those offenses that vigilantes seek to punish. Violent punishment of beef eaters in India has spurred

a host of local government regulations that ban the sale of cows for consumption. Similarly, in Indonesia, rising vigilante action has rolled back many of the key human rights achievements from the transition era, as both local and national politicians continue to issue legislation that restricts minorities' freedom to worship and regulates social behavior such as dress code and sexual preferences. Even in Bangladesh and Pakistan, recent attempts by democratically elected governments to reevaluate religious (*sharia*) regulations have triggered a spate of vigilante attacks against atheists and alleged blasphemers, making future reform difficult.[27]

Vigilante groups often lack the numerical strength to affect electoral outcomes, as they represent the extreme wing of a conservative voting bloc. However, in situations where multiple vigilante organizations exist and electoral competition is high, vigilantes can provide a coercive advantage to candidates from major, mainstream parties.[28] During election campaigns where religious identity is a factor, vigilante organizations can boost the credentials of certain candidates and damage others through mass mobilization on religious issues.[29] In others they can provide "insurance" against possible use of violence by other candidates. Maintaining strategic alliances with elected representatives, especially local chief executives, enables vigilante groups to access state resources. It also allows them to shape public policy in ways that serve their ideological agenda. This helps explain why a majority of new religious and moral regulations in Indonesia have been enacted by elected officials from mainstream rather than Islamist parties.[30]

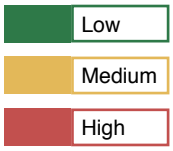
Conclusion

One of the most significant political features of any country is its regime type. It is therefore unthinkable that patterns of violence would not in some way be connected to regime features. In this report, we have argued that regime *types*, regime *transitions*, and regime *evolution* all have identifiable effects on patterns of violence. Yet these cannot be reduced to any simplistic correlation between levels of democracy and levels of conflict. Nor are these regime features the most important factors in shaping violent vs. peaceful outcomes.

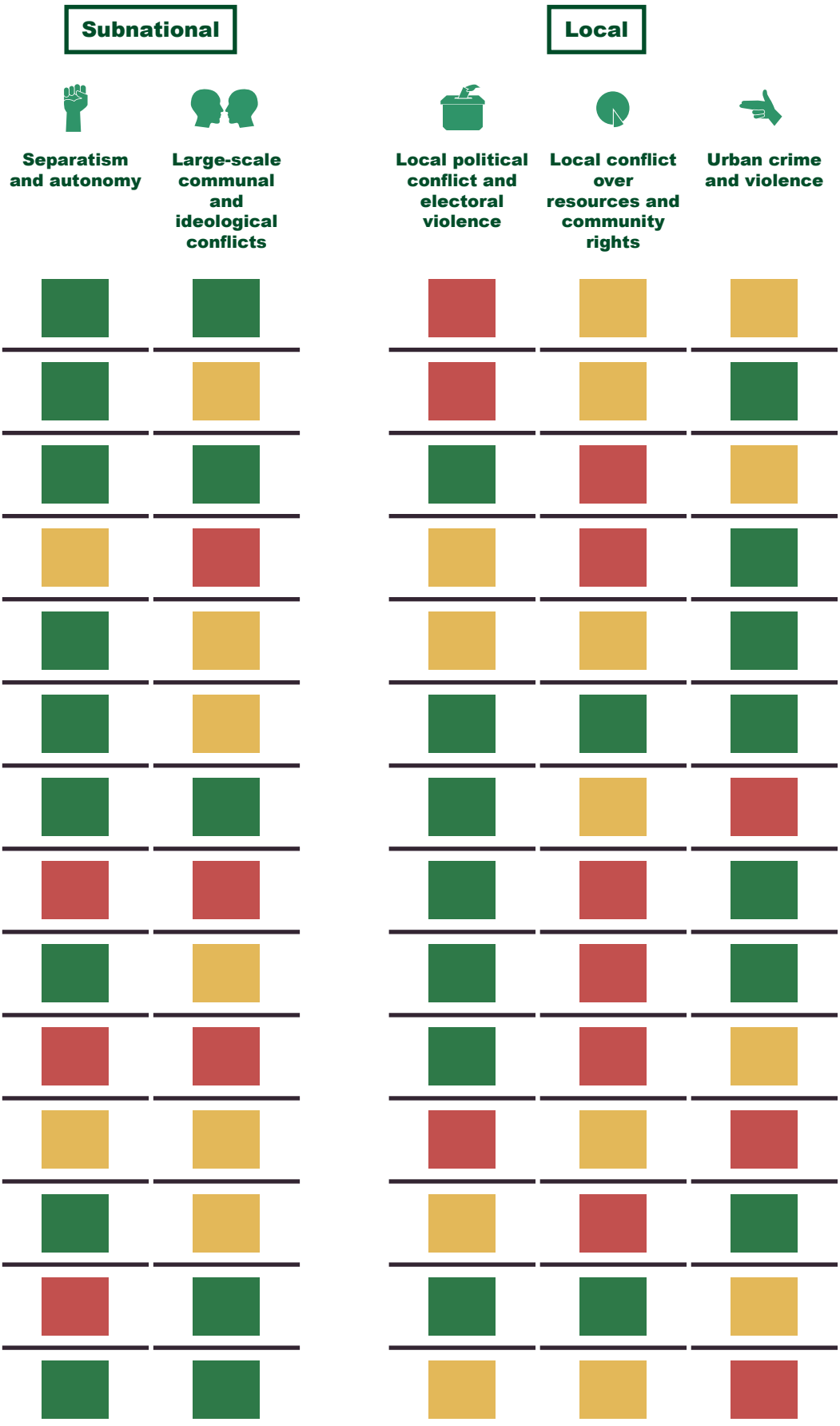
Democracies do not become violent because they are democracies per se, but because they are not always accompanied by the kind of political settlement necessary for establishing and sustaining peace. Similarly, dictatorships do not sometimes attain impressive stability because they are dictatorships per se, but because they have either built or inherited the kind of state capacity necessary to govern through a mix of performance and coercion instead of through freely given electoral consent. Furthermore, democratic transitions have double-edged implications for violence, opening opportunities both for new settlements and for violent tactics to shape those settlements' terms.

Finally, older democracies might, counterintuitively, become more violent over time due to a lack of recent experience at negotiating with rebels and bringing them out of the cold and into the aegis of a democratic constitution. As democracies consolidate, they also seem to become increasingly vulnerable to quotidian forms of violence such as vigilantism, even as large-scale riots become relatively rare.

Table 1. Regime types and levels of violence and conflict in Asia



	Regime characteristics		National/transnational		
	Recent PolityIV classification	Type of authoritarian regime	National civil war	National political conflict	Trans-national terrorism
Afghanistan	Open anocracy (2)	Soviet occupation-theocracy			
Bangladesh	Democracy - open anocracy (6-4)	Military			
Cambodia	Open anocracy (2)	Single party			
India	Democracy (9)	None			
Indonesia	Democracy (8)	Military-dominant party-personalistic			
Malaysia	Open anocracy (5)	Single party			
Mongolia	Full democracy (10)	Single party			
Myanmar	In transition (-88)	Military-dominant party			
Nepal	Democracy (6)	Monarchy			
Pakistan	Democracy (6)	Military			
Philippines	Democracy (8)	Military-personalistic			
Sri Lanka	Democracy - open anocracy (6-4)	None			
Thailand	Democracy- open anocracy (6-4)	Military			
Timor-Leste	Democracy (8)	None since independence			



** Rankings are based on the last 15 years and are relative to other Asian countries.*

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Conflict and Antiminority Violence

Chris Wilson

Introduction

Fighting between two ethnic or religious communities, often called "communal violence," continues to afflict many parts of Asia. In some areas, minorities face attacks by militant organizations claiming to represent the national majority. Colonialism and other historical legacies have left some regions prone to violence, yet the incidence of attacks has waxed and waned with political contestation, the vagaries of economic development, and extremist ideologies. As a result, substantial variation exists in the incidence and lethality of communal violence across different regions of Asia and over time. In what follows, I examine why some areas have been prone to protracted, antiminority violence, making particular reference to three arenas: anti-Shia violence in Pakistan, anti-Muslim violence in northeast India, and anti-Muslim (anti-Rohingya) violence in Myanmar, with additional cases cited for comparative purposes.[1] These three arenas are states with Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist majorities, respectively, illustrating the susceptibility of all societies to radicalism and communal violence. I find that four overlapping phenomena explain the violence in these areas: historical legacies, extremist ideologies, competition over land and resources, and political contestation.

The violence

In the past three decades, Pakistan has been the scene of numerous sectarian clashes between the Sunni majority and the Shia minority. The main perpetrators have been the (Sunni) Pakistan's Army of the Prophet's Companions (Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan, or SSP) and the (Shia) Pakistan's Shi'a Movement (Tehrik-e-Jafaria Pakistan, or TJP). More recently, the most notorious contemporary anti-Shia organization has been Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (L-e-J), an offshoot of SSP. While assassinations, attacks against mosques, and the bombing of processions and other gatherings affected both communities in the 1970s and 1980s, the majority of incidents over the past decade have targeted Shia.[2] Sectarianism increased markedly with the return of mujahedeen from Afghanistan, causing a rise in the number and lethality of attacks. This reflected both the military-style training gained by many in Afghanistan and the growing links between domestically focused groups such as L-e-J and more international jihadist groups affiliated with al-Qaeda.[3] Sunni extremists have assassinated Shia professionals, bureaucrats, and judges. Anti-Shia violence peaked in 2012 and 2013, with 507 and 558 killed in each year, respectively, and has declined to 137 in 2017.[4]

There are signs that the Pakistani government is taking a more forceful approach to extremism, recognizing the danger of militancy to state security. Government forces killed L-e-J

While the state is theoretically not a party to communal violence, in many cases the line between state and militant action is blurred

leader Malik Ishaq in 2015 and arrested many extremist clerics.[5] Yet, leading anti-Shia militants remain free, such as Aurangzeb Farooqi, the leader of Ahle Sunnat Wal Jammat (the renamed SSP), charged with inciting violence against and killing Shias.[6] Karachi, a leading site of anti-Shia violence, continues to lack effective policing and remains mired in high rates of sectarian, ethnic, and criminal killings.

Assam, one of the "Seven Sister States" of India's Northeast, has been the site of three large massacres of minorities since 2012 (along with numerous smaller violent incidents). Two have targeted Muslims of Bengali origin, and another struck indigenous tea laborers known as Adivasis. The main perpetrators have been militant organizations from the Bodo ethnic group, an indigenous tribe from the plains of Assam. Anti-Bengali sentiment has been prevalent in Assam since the anti-foreigner Assam Movement of the late 1970s.[7] However, the recent violence has its roots in a Bodo insurgency against Assamese dominance. Several Bodo militant groups, most notably the National Democratic Front for Bodoland (NDFB) and the Bodo Liberation Tigers (BLT) fought for a separate state within India or complete secession. While the BLT and several NDFB factions have reached a settlement with the government, one NDFB faction, Songbijit, has continued to fight. Despite a major decline in insurgency-related conflict since a 2003 agreement,[8] minorities, particularly Muslims, continue to suffer intimidation and violence. The national government appears prepared to allow communal violence to continue so long as anti-state activity is absent.[9]

The situation in western Assam has stabilized, with no large-scale communal mass killing since late 2014. NDFB–Songbijit remains at arms, but has been damaged by a security crackdown after it launched a terrorist attack against a market in Kokrajhar in August 2016. The victory of the BLT-linked Bodoland People's Front in local elections in western Assam means former militants now have little incentive to use violence. Muslims in Bodo areas remain vulnerable, but are free, for now, from large-scale violence.

The third case discussed here is violence against Rohingya Muslims in Buddhist-majority Myanmar.[10] Violence between the Rohingya and the local Buddhist Rakhine (or Arakanese) in Rakhine State has occurred periodically over the postcolonial era, and has surged since 2012 as the country politically liberalized. Since then, a series of deadly riots have killed several hundred and displaced more than 130,000 Rohingya to camps in Rakhine or across the border into Bangladesh.[11]

The current situation facing the Rohingya in western Myanmar is perilous. Security forces launched a large-scale crackdown on the community after an attack against police posts in October 2016 by a militant Rohingya organization named Harakah al-Yaqin (HaY). Since this operation began, approximately 65,000 Rohingya have fled Myanmar to Bangladesh, and another 25,000 have become internally displaced amid accounts of serious human-rights abuses by both soldiers

and Rakhine villagers.[12] Many of the approximately one million Rohingya still in Myanmar remain displaced, face the danger of further violence, and are being deprived of humanitarian aid.

As the individual country chapters demonstrate, most casualties of communal violence are civilians. The killing is often both indiscriminate and targeted: perpetrators attack men, women, and children of a particular community, leaving other groups unharmed. Local and state authorities often have not pursued cases or charges against the perpetrators; when they have, sentences have often been paltry. While the state is theoretically not a party to communal violence, in many cases the line between state and militant action is blurred. Instead of protecting victims during attacks, police and other security forces have sometimes stood back.[13] In other cases they have actively participated, as during anti-Muslim rioting in Gujarat in India in 2002 and anti-Rohingya violence in Myanmar in 2012. Leading national political figures such as Aung San Suu Kyi in Myanmar or Narendra Modi in India have failed to condemn attacks, illustrating the political sensitivities involved in majority-minority tensions in many countries in Asia. The next sections examine several factors that have played a central role in stimulating antiminority violence in Asia: historical legacies, extremist ideologies, land and resources, and politics.

Historical legacies

A range of legacies from the colonial and early independence eras play a role in contemporary violence against minorities in Asia. Colonialism and decolonization, the movement of peoples, institutional decisions by the first independence-era leaders, and past violence between communities all create divisions and tensions that help explain contemporary violence.

Pakistan and India share an important history relevant to contemporary attacks against religious minorities: the Partition of 1947. The legacy of Partition is felt most strongly in border areas. Locations such as Assam in India's Northeast (near what is now Bangladesh) and Karachi in southern Pakistan (near India's Gujarat) became the destination for many of the 20 million people displaced. In Pakistani Punjab, many unskilled Sunnis from India became laborers on the farms of Shia landowners, establishing the foundation of class division and economic resentment.[14] In Assam, the 1971 Bangladesh War of Independence drove many more refugees into the area, leading to tensions that embroiled the state with the onset of the Assam Movement in 1979.

Despite their common origins in Partition, within a decade India and Pakistan had taken different paths. This was partly a consequence of the different political situation of the two countries in 1947. The Indian National Congress already possessed deeply entrenched roots in society, but the same could not be said of the All India Muslim League in Pakistan.[15] Effectively a "government in waiting," the Congress fostered political stability and decentralized democracy in India, while the absence of a longstanding political party in Pakistan pushed it towards authoritarianism. Where democracy provided legitimacy in India, and unity was ensured through devolution to ethnolinguistic communities, in Pakistan, a lack of popular participation and a regional schism between Punjab and Bengal left few forces to unify the state. The country did not hold its first countrywide election until 1970.[16] Pakistani leaders were forced to turn to military rule and a conservative strain of Islam to generate legitimacy. This has institutionalized discrimination against minorities, many of whom were excluded from the civil service and government and faced the political use of new blasphemy laws.

It was in this context that anti-Shia violence in Pakistan emerged. Attacks were rare before Partition, but as conservative Sunnis began to demand restrictions on Shia festivals and Muharram (the month of mourning) processions in the 1960s and 1970s, violence became more common. In response, the government put restrictions on Shia processions, which led in turn to greater political mobilization and assertiveness on the part of Shia. The year 1979 was a turning

Historical legacies have left minorities vulnerable to accusations that they are proxies of rival states

point in sectarian relations in Pakistan, as it was in much of the Islamic world. The success of the Iranian Revolution gave Shia in Pakistan a renewed confidence and political identity, and provided local Shia organizations with new sources of funding. This growing influence of Iran also increased anti-Shia sentiment in Pakistan. 1979 also saw the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The Pakistani and Saudi governments provided support to jihadist militants fighting the Soviet occupation, and many of these groups went on to become leading anti-Shia militants.

India's reliance on ethnolinguistic federalism has also proved problematic, and many minorities there have also faced violent persecution. State boundaries do not fully reflect the country's diversity, and minorities have pursued further autonomy. This has particularly been the case in the northeast, where indigenous groups in Assam, Nagaland, Manipur, and elsewhere have protested and fought against state political and economic repression for much of the postcolonial period. However, migrants who moved to the region during the colonial and postcolonial periods have been the main victims of contemporary violence.

Past conflict continues to play a causal role in contemporary attacks against minorities, leaving both bitterness and proven repertoires of violence. In Assam, Muslims of Bengali origin have long been caught up in a larger struggle of the Assamese, and then the Bodos, against the Indian state. Derided as "illegal infiltrators" from Bangladesh (like the Rohingya in Myanmar), Muslims in Assam have been the main victims of a series of insurgencies in the state. This was epitomized by the killing of 2,000 people in the 1983 Nellie Massacre, part of the Assam Movement's campaign to remove the names of tens of thousands of illegal immigrants from electoral rolls.

Just as killings during Partition established precedents for later violence in India and Pakistan, past clashes and massacres between Rakhine and Rohingya in western Myanmar have engendered hatreds that resurface periodically. In the years after World War II, Muslims in Rakhine State fought a low-intensity rebellion, and tens of thousands were pushed across the border into East Pakistan (Bangladesh).

Ongoing interstate rivalry has also played its part in stimulating violence against minorities. Historical legacies have left minorities vulnerable to accusations that they are proxies of rival states. The anti-Muslim riots in Gujarat in 2002 can partly be explained by the state's proximity to Pakistan and a longstanding political discourse of terrorist infiltration across the border. Nationalists in Assam and Myanmar have similarly portrayed Muslims as Islamist extremists, acting on behalf of benefactors in Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.

Ideology

Tensions between groups at the domestic level, as well as rivalries on the international stage, have contributed to the emergence of extremist religious and nationalist ideologies. The proliferation of *madrasas* (religious schools) in Pakistan served domestic and foreign policy goals for successive governments. Many became the leading sources of mujahedeen fighting

in Afghanistan and Kashmir. Yet they also became a driver of sectarianism. Several extremist organizations with overt anti-Shia rhetoric emerged during the early 1980s. One leading group, the SSP, demanded that Shias be declared a non-Muslim minority. The group was funded by Saudi Arabia and involved in the dissemination of extremist ideology and sending mujahedeen to Afghanistan to fight the Soviet Union. Internal factionalism led to the splintering of the organization and the emergence of the more radical L-e-J, which has been responsible for some of the worst contemporary violence against Shias, including deadly bombings in Balochistan and Quetta.[17] As International Crisis Group puts it, L-e-J has "umbilical links with [Karachi's] large, well-resourced madrasas."[18]

Radical ideologies have also played a role in violence in non-Muslim countries. In India, Hindutva supremacism, associated with right-wing Hindu nationalist groups such as the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), has played a leading role in communal violence. While the RSS describes itself as apolitical, focused on the strength and integrity of the Hindu nation, in practice this leads to strident rhetoric aimed at illegal immigration and Muslims. Hindutva discourse portrays Muslims as agents of Pakistan and a threat to the integrity of the Hindu nation. This rhetoric creates a climate for violence in many areas. In 1992, the VHP and RSS led thousands of activists in the destruction of the Babri Masjid mosque in Ayodhya, considered to have been built on the old site of the Ram Temple. The demolition set off several months of violence, killing approximately 2,000 people. In 2002, riots in Gujarat killed another roughly 2,000, mostly Muslims, after VHP activists were immolated in a train carriage in Godhra.

Two Buddhist nationalist organizations in Myanmar, 969 and Ma Ba Tha (Patriotic Association of Myanmar), led by the monk Ashin Wirathu, have played a key role in advancing a virulent anti-Muslim ideology.[19] The two groups emphasize protecting the Buddhist culture and identity of Myanmar.[20] The movement has spread provocative propaganda casting the Rohingya as a physical and cultural threat and dehumanizing them as "mad dogs."[21] Buddhist extremists point to a rising Muslim proportion of the population, a claim undermined by the 2014 census, which showed Muslims comprising just 4.3 percent of the population. Ma Ba Tha helped push highly discriminatory legislation through the national parliament restricting interfaith marriage.

The violence in Assam has been driven more by ethnonationalism than religious extremism. Despite the religious difference between Bengali-origin Muslims and predominantly Hindu Bodos, it was the latter group's desire for self-determination and freedom from Assamese hegemony and military repression that led to the violence. Bodo militants see Muslims as the main demographic threat to an autonomous region won after decades of protest and insurgency. Many Bodos and other groups refer to Muslims in the region as Bangladeshi infiltrators so as to cast doubt on their claims to citizenship and rights of residence. Such claims are also made in Myanmar, where this discrimination is written into national law. Rohingya are not recognized as one of Myanmar's "national races," despite having lived in the region for generations.

Land and resources

Similar to communal violence in other regions of the world, such as Africa, ethnic groups in Asia have clashed over land and resources. Population growth and the movement of peoples have brought communities into contact and competition. Environmental degradation, the expropriation of communal land, human rights abuses associated with large-scale extraction of resources, and unequal access have been just some of the phenomena creating tension between communities in Asia. Disputes have also arisen from a disjuncture between indigenous understandings of customary ownership of land and resources and the more legalistic, bureaucratic stance taken by governments and migrant groups.

The loss of traditional land was central to the Bodo insurgency and to their more recent violence. Since independence, corporate actors and the state have stripped the Bodos of much of their traditional land for plantations, for the capital in Guwahati, and for the arrival of new migrants from Bangladesh and elsewhere in India. A desire to protect what remains of that land explains the support many gave to the recent violence. Similar dynamics are relevant to the violence against the Rohingya in Rakhine State. For many Rakhine, the Rohingya encroach on their traditional land and resources.[22] Many are concerned that if the Rohingya are recognized as one of Myanmar's national races, they will then have legitimate claims to land ownership, government assistance, and other resources. In both Assam and Rakhine, therefore, while the real sources of land expropriation lie with government, military, and corporate interests, blame has been placed on other vulnerable minorities. In urban areas, competition for resources is no less fierce. In Karachi, for example—the site of frequent anti-Shia violence—members of numerous ethnic and religious communities compete for state services, a contest often conducted through middlemen, violent militias, and criminal rackets.[23]

Politics

An extensive body of literature has demonstrated the links between communal violence and politics in South and Southeast Asia.[24] For some, riots against minorities have become "politics by other means," used to unite the majority and cow minorities into submission. Attacks against minorities often stem from competition for political power among factions of the majority. The violence between Sinhalese and Tamils in Sri Lanka in the 1950s is often seen as the exemplar of how such "ethnic outbidding" can lead to violence. The 2002 Gujarat riots, discussed above, provide a more contemporary example. Immediately after the anti-Muslim violence, the state government, led by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) scheduled a state election, winning convincingly, and performing best in areas with the worst violence.

Militant groups that conduct attacks against minorities often enjoy mutually beneficial relationships with leading political parties. In some cases, there is little separation between the militant and political wings of a movement. The Gujarat case is just one example of the close connections between the BJP and right-wing nationalist organizations such as the VHP and RSS.

In Assam, recent attacks against Muslims were carried out by ostensibly demobilized rank-and-file members of the BLT. That group's leaders hold political power in a newly autonomous region established as part of a peace agreement to bring the group's insurgency to an end. The violence quashed a challenge to this political dominance from a coalition led by Muslims. The first (and largest) of these killings occurred as preparations began for local elections, the second as it became clear the militants' party had lost a local seat in the national parliament.

These attacks against Muslims were not only connected to the local politics of the Bodo autonomous area. At the state level, the ruling party in Assam was facing a growing challenge from a political party predominantly representing Muslims of Bengali descent, the AIUDF. As Steven Wilkinson has concluded from his study of riots in India, state governments are more likely to order police to protect minorities when they support the party in power or present no challenge to it. In other states in India, where Muslims have not formed political parties to represent their interests, they have not faced such large-scale killings.

Sectarianism has long been tied to national politics in Pakistan, where both Sunni and Shia militant organizations have entered alliances with political parties. In Punjab, anti-Shia activism emerged deeply engaged in the political process. Militant groups such as L-e-J became the primary vehicle for Sunnis to challenge Shia political power.[25] Religious rhetoric became a substitute for wealth and connections, the traditional routes into politics.

For some, riots against minorities have become politics by other means, used to unite the majority and cow minorities into submission

Particularly important to the rise of conservative Islam was its use by President Zia ul Haq as a way of deflecting criticism of ongoing authoritarian rule.[26] Several policies, including the imposition of a *zakat* tax (a Quranic tax, later abandoned), blasphemy laws, and sharia-related regulations, led to large protests by Shias. This mobilization, and claims by extremist Sunnis that Shias were supported by Iran, led to increased violence. The Iran-Iraq war further polarized Sunni-Shia relations.

In addition, elements of the Pakistani government (most notably the Inter-Services Intelligence Agency, ISI) provided support to militant groups in return for assistance in pursuit of regional goals, such as retaining influence in Afghanistan and destabilizing Indian control of Kashmir. Sectarianism in Pakistan increased as militants returned from Afghanistan. The radicalization of sectarian relations that followed saw an increase in attacks against Shias and a rise in the number of fatalities. Assassinations were replaced by bombings of public gatherings.[27] While the government has disassociated itself from these groups' sectarianism within Pakistan, their utility for regional goals has deterred it from fully cracking down on them.[28]

In Myanmar, violence against the Rohingya is linked to both local politics in Rakhine and national politics in Yangon. The new space afforded by political liberalization allowed the emergence of a more militant strain of Buddhism and brought militants together with newly competing political parties. The easing of restrictions on dissent also enabled Rakhine to express frustration over decades of repressive and discriminatory treatment by the military regime in Yangon. The June 2012 violence may have been a spontaneous reaction to rumors of a rape of a Rakhine woman. The months preceding the next and far more serious outbreak of violence, however, saw meetings between militant Buddhist monks from the All-Arakanese Monks Solidarity Conference and politicians from the Rakhine Nationalities Development Party. The two demanded that the Rohingya leave the state. The political nature of prejudice against the Rohingya was again demonstrated when the group was disenfranchised in the lead-up to elections in 2015. In 2010, some Rohingya had been given temporary voting rights (through "white cards") leading to protests by Buddhist nationalists.

The anti-Muslim violence in Myanmar demonstrates the volatile nature of political transitions. Political violence can peak as a country's political system moves from authoritarianism towards democracy, and decline as the country stabilizes. There are various theoretical explanations for this. The first is that groups finally have the space to act on animosities that have been pent up during years of dictatorship. The second, more compelling, explanation is that elites manipulate the lack of democratic institutions and free media to provoke tension as a way of surviving the transition.[29] Indonesia saw a similar increase in communal violence following the 1998 resignation of President Suharto and the onset of rapid democratization, until the state stabilized around 2002.

Conclusion

Several common patterns emerge in violence against minorities in Asia. Communal violence often occurs between two communities both of which are economically and politically marginalized. Some of the leading perpetrators of violence against minorities have previously been on the receiving end of long-standing repression and discrimination. The Bodo in Assam and the Rakhine in Myanmar have both faced injustice at the hands of state and national governments dominated by a majority group.

The legacies of colonialism and decolonization, the large-scale movement of peoples, and interstate rivalry have helped provide the conditions for contemporary communal violence. Yet the variation among states in the level of violence suggests these phenomena have not established ironclad path dependencies. India and Pakistan are illustrative in this regard: both experienced Partition and ongoing state rivalry, but the latter has continued to experience much higher levels of violence against minority groups. Other factors have been influential, most notably the rapid descent into authoritarianism and the cultivation of radical Islamic groups for regional goals and domestic legitimacy in Pakistan.

Extremist ideology has provided the mobilizing tools and justification for much of the violence discussed here. Often this has been religious extremism, as in the case of Wahhabism in Pakistan and Hindutva ideology in India. In religiously divided societies, extremist rhetoric is not just useful for politicians, but increases the political and communal influence of religious leaders. As time goes on, these leaders must grow increasingly radical to avoid being superseded by younger, more vocal actors. In some cases however—attacks against Hazara Shia in Pakistan, for example, or violence against Muslims of Bengali origin in both Myanmar and Assam—ethnic tensions over land, identity, and political power have been as important as religious extremism. Several cases discussed here demonstrate that political context can determine the scale of communal violence. Some of the largest killings—Gujarat 2002, Myanmar 2012, and Assam 2014—took place against a backdrop of elections or election campaigning. Election campaigns remain a period of heightened risk.[30]

The four main phenomena—historical legacies, extremist ideologies, competition over land and resources, and political contestation—are closely interconnected, one reason why violence against minorities remains intractable in Asia. Divisions with origins in the distant past have acquired political utility in the current day. The exploitation of these divisions by political leaders further enmeshes extremism in the fabric of society. The distribution of resources remains determined by patronage along group lines, leading to the use of violence and intimidation to quash the demands of minorities. The political connections of many militants make any effective campaign against them exceedingly difficult. Any reduction in communal violence will require comprehensive national and local strategies that address all of these mutually reinforcing dynamics simultaneously.

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Notes

1 Many other groups also face violent attacks in these three countries.
2 See the accompanying chapter on Pakistan.
3 Frédéric Grare, "The Evolution of Sectarian Conflicts in Pakistan and the Ever-Changing Face of Islamic Violence," *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 30, no. 1 (2007): 141.
4 "Sectarian Violence in Pakistan: 1989–2017," South Asia Terrorism Portal, accessed June 26, 2017, http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/pakistan/database/sect-killing.htm.
5 Marvin G. Weinbaum, "Insurgency and Violent Extremism in Pakistan," *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 28, no. 1 (2017): 48.
6 International Crisis Group (ICG), *Pakistan: Stoking the Fire in Karachi*, Asia Report no. 284 (Brussels: ICG, 2017), 19, https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-asia/pakistan/284-pakistan-stoking-fire-karachi.
7 The Assam Movement emerged in 1979 in response to claims that tens of thousands of illegal migrants had entered Assam from Bangladesh and been placed on the electoral rolls. See Monirul Hussain, *The Assam Movement: Class, Ideology and Identity* (Delhi: Manak Publications, 1993).
8 According to the South Asia Terrorism Portal, insurgency-related killings in Assam peaked at 783 in 1998. There were 758 in 2000, followed by a steady decline to 354 in 2004, 174 in 2006, and 91 in 2012. This steady decline has been punctuated by high-casualty years, however, such as 2009 with 392 and 2014 with 305. "Insurgency related killings in Assam 1992–2017," South Asia Terrorism Portal, accessed June 25, 2017, http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/states/assam/data_sheets/insurgency_related_killings.htm. It is important to note that these totals include violence by non-Bodo groups such as the United Liberation Front of Assam and the security forces.
9 Bethany Lacina, "The Problem of Political Stability in Northeast India: Local Ethnic Autocracy and the Rule of Law," *Asian Survey* 49, no. 6 (Nov.–Dec. 2009): 998–1020.
10 The Rohingya are a Muslim minority concentrated in Myanmar's Rakhine State. Many are descended from Bengali laborers who moved to Burma under the British colonial administration during the 19th century, but there is also evidence that Rohingya lived in Rakhine before 1823, the Myanmar government's cutoff date for groups to be considered indigenous. In 1799, Francis Buchanan, a surgeon with the East India Trading Company, reported meeting "Mohammedans, who have long settled in Arakan, and who call themselves Rooinga, or natives of Arakan." See Francis Buchanan, "A Comparative Vocabulary of Some of the Languages Spoken in the Burma Empire," reprinted in *SOAS Bulletin of Burma Research* 1, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 40–57, https://www.soas.ac.uk/sbbr/editions/file64276.pdf. Many Muslims lived in Rakhine's Kingdom of Mrauk-U from the 15th to the 18th centuries. See Gregory B. Poling, "Separating Fact from Fiction about Myanmar's Rohingya," website of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, February 13, 2014, https://www.csis.org/analysis/separating-fact-fiction-about-myanmar%E2%80%99s-rohingya. Despite this history of residence in Rakhine, the Myanmar government, along with nationalist organizations within Myanmar, refers to the Rohingya as Bengalis. Similar terminology is used in Assam, where longtime citizens of India are also derided as illegal Bengali immigrants. This essay was written before the outbreak of violence in Rakhine in August 2017.
11 See the accompanying chapter on Myanmar.
12 United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), *Interviews with Rohingyas fleeing from Myanmar since 9 October 2016*, *Flash Report* (OHCHR, February 3, 2017), http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/MM/FlashReport3Feb2017.pdf.
13 See the accompanying chapter on Bangladesh.
14 Grare, "Sectarian Conflicts," 131–132.
15 Sumantra Bose, "Decolonization and State Building in South Asia," *Journal of International Affairs* 58, no. 1 (Fall 2004): 98.
16 Ibid., 100.
17 Grare, "Sectarian Conflicts," 130.
18 ICG, *Karachi*, 9.
19 See the accompanying chapter on Myanmar.
20 Mikael Gravers, "Anti-Muslim Buddhist Nationalism in Burma and Sri Lanka: Religious Violence and Globalized Imaginaries of Endangered Identities," *Contemporary Buddhism* 16, no. 1 (2015): 13.
21 Ibid., 14.
22 This is despite the Rohingya being disallowed from owning land.
23 ICG, *Karachi*, 5.
24 Paul Brass, *The Production of Hindu Muslim Violence in Contemporary India* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003); Stanley Tambiah, *Leveling Crowds: Ethnonationalist Conflicts and Collective Violence in South Asia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996); Steven Wilkinson, *Votes and Violence: Electoral Competition and Ethnic Riots in India* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Gerry van Klinken, *Communal Violence and Democratization in Indonesia: Small Town Wars* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007).
25 Grare, "Sectarian Conflicts," 132.
26 Zia assumed power in a 1978 coup d'état.
27 Grare, "Sectarian Conflicts," 140.
28 Ibid., 136.
29 Jack Snyder, *From Voting to Violence: Democratization and Nationalist Conflict* (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2000).
30 As the individual country chapters show, this is the case in several countries. See the chapters on Bangladesh and Cambodia for example.

Cross-Border Insurgency and Terrorism in Asia

Anthony Davis

Introduction

The ability of insurgents and terrorists to move easily across international borders and exploit gaps and tensions between national jurisdictions has been a critical element of their survival and success in post–World War II Asia. This was powerfully illustrated in the early 1950s, when the Viet Minh regiments of Ho Chi Minh were trained and resupplied in southern China; it was true in the 1980s, when U.S.-backed Afghan mujahedeen rested and reequipped inside Pakistan before returning to fight Soviet and Afghan communists. Conversely, where insurgent campaigns have been denied or failed to develop cross-border connectivity, they have typically been isolated and ultimately defeated. Such was the fate of communist campaigns in Malaya and the Philippines and ethnic revolt in Pakistani Balochistan. If its current trajectory is any yardstick, the communist insurgency in central India today will face a similar decline into political irrelevance.

Typically, the cross-border dynamic in insurgent campaigns has been facilitated by two overarching factors: the physical geography of inhospitable terrain, which impedes effective interdiction of rebel movement by state security forces; and the human geography of shared ethnicity, binding communities across borderlines often arbitrarily imposed in the age of European colonialism.

Across Asia and beyond, century-old traditions of cross-border trading and smuggling have invariably emerged from the interplay of challenging terrain and common ethnicity. For local families and clans inhabiting borderlands, natural barriers that divide nation-states serve as familiar conduits for economic connectivity and profit. In the modern era, such traditional networks have frequently developed into transnational criminal enterprises characterized by greater sophistication and extended reach. Either subsumed into or cooperating with insurgent organizations, these cross-border crime networks have often played a vital role in the movement of fighters and munitions across remote frontiers.

At the same time, patterns of cross-border insurgent activity have also been conditioned by more modern political drivers. One has been traditional conflict between hardy, often warlike, upland tribal communities and the settled agricultural civilizations of the plains that typically seek to extend their administrative writ and military security. Often playing out in border areas, both the co-opting of hill-tribe disaffection by communist insurgencies and the rise of ethnic movements for tribal autonomy or independence have been recurring leitmotifs of insurgency in Asia in the post–World War II years.

A second crucial driver of cross-border insurgency has been geostrategic competition involving both regional and global players. The willingness of nation-states to undermine and distract

The willingness of nation-states to undermine and distract rival powers by extending support across borders to domestic revolts has been fundamental to the politics of Asian insurgency

rival powers by extending support across borders to domestic revolts has been fundamental to the politics of Asian insurgency in the modern era. Typically, this dynamic has played out in peripheral regions where the administrative and military capacity of a targeted state to contain insurgent threats is at its lowest.

In contemporary Asia, there are four regions where governments confront the challenges of cross-border insurgency and terrorism at their most immediate. These are the Afghanistan-Pakistan border zone; India's northeastern borderlands with Myanmar, China, and Bangladesh; the Thai-Malaysian frontier; and the maritime, tri-border zone between the Philippines, Malaysia, and Indonesia. These topographically and culturally diverse regions illustrate many of the common issues noted above. At the same time, what differentiates them says much about how the challenge can be met and, in at least some cases, held in check.

Afghanistan-Pakistan

Since the late 1970s, the Pakistan-Afghanistan frontier zone has witnessed what can fairly be described as a "perfect storm" of cross-border insurgent and terrorist activity. Arguably nowhere else in the world have so many of the factors underlying and exacerbating persistent political violence in border regions been brought together with such extreme and far-reaching results.

Against a backdrop of harsh terrain, the cross-border dynamic in the "Af-Pak" theater of conflict has been critically underpinned—and arguably rendered intractable—by problems of divided ethnicity that have called into question the very viability of both nation-states. The 2,400 km border was first delineated in 1893. The "Durand Line" cut through some of the world's most daunting terrain, precluding the possibility of either power effectively policing the border. It also severed the lands inhabited by the fiercely independent Afghan or Pashtun tribes whose 18th century confederacy led by Ahmad Shah Durrani had conquered the territories between the Oxus and the Indus and named them Afghanistan.[1] Given a manifest inability to conquer all Afghanistan, and the utility of that country as a buffer against southern expansion of czarist Russia towards British India, the Durand Line and the bifurcation of Pashtun power made strategic sense for the British Raj. But the same logic also held the seeds of bitter geopolitical rivalries. British retreat in 1947 left behind truncated India and new-born Pakistan, an ethnically diverse state bound together only by the tenuous bonds of shared religion.

Fanned by a succession of Afghan rulers in Kabul who have refused to recognize the Durand Line, the specter of Pashtun irredentism has haunted Pakistan and fueled its insecurities ever since.[2] The Soviet Union's ill-fated intervention to prop up an embattled communist regime in Kabul in 1979 saw cross-border tensions escalate into proxy war. Seen from Islamabad as an existential threat, the Soviet invasion triggered a catastrophic chain-reaction that for both Afghanistan and Pakistan has ushered in an era of war and terror seemingly without end.

India's neighbors have seldom missed opportunities to destabilize and exhaust the subcontinent's dominant power

Between 1979 and 1989, Soviet and allied Kabul-government forces faced nationwide guerrilla resistance by Afghan Islamist factions of the mujahedeen, supported financially and logistically by the United States, Saudi Arabia, and China. However, the Pakistan military's Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate (ISI) maintained control over the flow of munitions to the various Afghan factions. And for good reason: beyond expelling the Soviets and ousting the Afghan communist regime, Pakistani strategy was driven by the need to install in Kabul a pliant regime, both Islamist and Pashtun, sympathetic to Islamabad.

The first goal was fulfilled with Soviet withdrawal in 1989; the second with the capture of Kabul by mujahedeen forces in 1992. But it was not until 1996, in the midst of a bitter civil war between ethnically divided mujahedeen factions, that ISI finally secured its third and primary objective. The Pashtun-dominated Taliban movement, backed by the ISI and thousands of Pakistani fighters from the madrasas of the border zone, finally seized Kabul. The establishment of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan promised to secure Pakistan's connectivity to central Asia and safeguard its geostrategic interests along an exposed western flank.[3]

The victory was short-lived, however. Forged in 1996, a fateful compact between Taliban leader Mullah Mohammad Omar and exiled Saudi jihadist Osama bin Laden provided the latter's al-Qaeda organization the perfect base from which to plot an escalating wave of terror attacks, which culminated on September 11, 2001, with al-Qaeda's assault on America itself.

Al-Qaeda's 9/11 attacks confounded Islamabad's Afghan strategy and marked the beginning of a process of terrorist blowback that saw Pakistan falling victim to the very jihadist forces it had sought to manipulate and control. The toppling by U.S.-backed forces of the Taliban regime and the uprooting of al-Qaeda from Kabul had as an unintended consequence the flight of foreign jihadists—Arab, Chechen, Central Asian, and Pakistani—to the sanctuary of Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). In the mountain vastness of the autonomous Pashtun belt, where Pakistan's military was unwilling to challenge tribal writ, an organizational hub and launchpad for international terror slowly took shape.

By 2008, the rise of jihadist extremism in the FATA, exacerbated by a campaign of U.S. drone strikes and the weakening of traditional tribal leadership, finally gave birth to the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). A loose but powerful coalition of FATA-based Pashtun tribal forces, the TTP sought to emulate the earlier success of their Pashtun cousins in Afghanistan and impose sharia law country-wide. In the face of at first tentative army resistance, it unleashed a savage campaign of terrorist bombings and attacks in cities across the country.

The army struck back with an unprecedented series of incursions into the tribal agencies. The conflict, still ongoing, has cost tens of thousands of lives and displaced well over one million people.[4] But even as the military has pummeled the so-called "bad Taliban" of the TTP, the ISI has continued to provide sanctuary for the "good Taliban"—its Afghan protégés—who since 2005 have staged a countrywide resurgence that now poses a critical threat to the Western-backed government in Kabul. Amidst the chaos on both sides of the Durand Line, the Pakistan military's objective of bringing a friendly Taliban government to power in Kabul remains alive and well.

Northeast India

Home to the world's most diverse web of ethnic insurgencies, India's northeast has seen persistent conflict since 1956, when the Indian army was first called in to restore government authority in the Naga Hills. Over the years, a startling proliferation of insurgent groups, seeking either secession from or greater autonomy within the Indian union, have launched violent campaigns in all seven states: Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh, and not least, the largest and most populous state, Assam.

Northeastern insurgency and its terrorist offshoots have been fundamentally rooted in the challenges of assimilating into the fabric of a new nation-state a patchwork of ethnically and religiously diverse communities—hill tribes and plains people, Christian, Hindu, and animist—alarmed by emerging demographic and social threats to their identities. Underdevelopment, unemployment, political neglect, and rampant illegal immigration have further fanned resentment, while heavy-handed counterinsurgency operations and military impunity have perennially inflamed the situation.

At the same time, however, insurgency in the northeast has been profoundly impacted by unremitting, regional, geostrategic rivalries that date back to the First Anglo-Burmese War of 1824. The region today is a far-flung territorial appendage of 255,037 sq. km connected to the Indian "mainland" by a narrow, 22-kilometer-wide corridor between Bangladesh and Bhutan. With Chinese Tibet to the north, Myanmar to the east, and Bangladesh (formerly East Pakistan) to the south and west, it has been vulnerable to a pernicious interplay of domestic tribal unrest and geostrategic power play. As insurgents have looked beyond India's borders for sanctuary and military and logistical support, India's neighbors have seldom missed opportunities to destabilize and exhaust the subcontinent's dominant power.[5]

For Pakistan, weaker in conventional military terms than its giant neighbor, stoking the fires of India's internal discords has long been a strategic reflex, not least in the northeast. From 1962 onwards, Naga, Manipuri, and Mizo rebels were all provided sanctuary, training, and weaponry in erstwhile East Pakistan. It was a tradition that independent Bangladesh, under the nationalist administrations of then-premier Khalida Zia, was to emulate. Until a crackdown imposed after 2009 by the pro-Indian Awami League government, northeastern rebels, notably the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA), were provided with safe houses and travel documents by Bangladeshi military intelligence.

Following the Sino-Indian border war of October 1962, China, too, moved to exploit India's vulnerabilities in the northeast. The first of a series of Naga insurgent contingents trekked across northern Myanmar to the Chinese border in 1967 and was given training and weaponry in Yunnan. Later, left-leaning Manipuri rebels were trained in Tibet.

Today, China is more circumspect in providing direct military training, but continues to permit several factions to maintain liaison offices in Yunnan Province and purchase arms on China's grey market. Beijing also appears to have sponsored and to some extent supported the establishment in 2015 of a new rebel alliance, the so-called United Liberation Front of West Southeast Asia (UNLFW). Based in Myanmar's upper Sagaing Division, the umbrella organization brings together a faction of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN), along with ULFA and its Assam-based allies, and an alliance of Manipuri factions known as the Coordinating Committee or Corcom.

The UNLFW's April 2015 launch was followed in May and early June by lethal, cross-border attacks on Indian security patrols in Nagaland and Manipur, in which nearly 30 Indian troops were killed. The Indian response was immediate, hard-hitting, and unprecedented: heliborne

commando assaults on two UNLFW camps inside Myanmar where between 50 and 100 rebels were reportedly killed.[6]

The Indian counterpunch appeared to serve notice on the Myanmar government—which was informed only after the event—that Indian restraint along the border could no longer be taken for granted. It marked the culmination of decades of Indian frustration over "ungoverned space" in Sagaing Division opposite Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, and Manipur. Sparsely populated by Naga tribals, the hills between the headwaters of the Chindwin River and the border, and the rugged Somra Tract further south, have provided safe haven for Indian Naga insurgents since the 1950s, while Manipuri rebels have established camps in the Kabaw Valley just inside Myanmar territory. Recent Indian ambitions to promote economic connectivity with Thailand and mainland Southeast Asia through northern Myanmar—the so-called "Act East" policy—have only made the issue of the insurgent presence more urgent.

Hard-pressed by insurgencies posing far greater threats, Myanmar's military, the Tatmadaw, has had little interest in committing the resources needed to exert effective control over upper Sagaing. Indeed, in recent years, its reluctance to make more than occasional token efforts to move decisively against Indian rebels has become a source of perennial frustration in New Delhi, raised in countless diplomatic encounters.

Inside India, the past decade has seen a relative decline in insurgency as the result of two interrelated factors: splits and setbacks suffered by mainstream organizations such as ULFA and the Naga NSCN, and a dizzying descent into criminality involving extortion and cross-border narcotics and weapon smuggling. The epicenter of the crime wave has been Manipur.

Thailand-Malaysia

For decades following World War II, separatist sentiment among the Patani-Malay minority in Thailand's southernmost border provinces has been a recurring irritant for governments in Bangkok. Driven by the failure of often aggressive attempts to assimilate a Malay community with a proud loyalty to its own culture and religion, political discontent spilled into low-level insurgent violence in the 1970s and 1980s

In sharp contrast, the current insurgency reflects a major escalation in both the intensity and persistence of the conflict. Characterized by widespread bombings, shootings, and arson across the three provinces of Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat and parts of Songkhla, the violence has claimed over 7,000 mostly civilian lives since it reerupted in 2004. It now constitutes a major threat to national security.

Beyond the failings of Bangkok's policies of assimilation and a legacy of deep Malay mistrust, the persistence of the current campaign derives primarily from the nature of the organization driving it: the Patani-Malay National Revolutionary Front, better known as BRN. After years of underground preparation during the 1990s, BRN has sustained the violence by means of a remarkable level of operational secrecy and a politico-military organization deeply embedded in a network of religious schools that constitute the crucible of local Malay-Muslim identity.[7]

The party's political and ideological roots, transmitted through many of those schools, derive largely from Indonesia. But in operational and logistical terms, it has been linkages across the eastern portion of the 646.5 km land border with Malaysia that have sustained BRN's insurgency.

At one level, ties are underpinned by strong ethnic, cultural, and linguistic affinities with Kelantan and Kedah. At another, a legacy of mistrust between security officials on both sides of

It has been linkages across the Thailand border with Malaysia that have sustained BRN's insurgency

the border has also played a role. Between 1960 and 1989, the insurgent Communist Party of Malaya (CPM) maintained secure bases in the jungles of Thailand's Betong Salient and Narathiwat, arousing persistent suspicions in Malaysia over Thai military complicity. Kuala Lumpur reciprocated by supporting the Patani United Liberation Organization (PULO), the leading insurgent faction in the 1970s and 1980s.

The surrender of the CPM in 1989, and the military collapse of PULO in 1998—when Malaysia arrested four key leaders and handed them over to Thai authorities—have repaired strained relations and effectively precluded the possibility of official support from Malaysia to BRN. However, as both governments are well aware, Malaysian soil remains important to the insurgency for sanctuary and logistical support.

Both political operatives and military commanders have benefited from sanctuary south of the border, where well over 100,000 Patani Malays are working. These have included members of BRN's eight- or nine-man Dewan Pimpinan Parti (DPP), or executive council, who reside in or regularly pass through Malaysia. Notable examples have been Sapae-ing Basor, the party's spiritual figurehead, who fled Thailand in 2004 and died in his late seventies in Malaysia in 2016; and Romli Uttarasin, who until his death in Malaysia in 2010 was the most powerful figure in the DPP and a driving force behind the revolt.

Predictably, Malaysian security and intelligence services have sought both to monitor and to manipulate their guests—and, when deemed necessary, to coerce or detain them. Efforts in 2013 to strong-arm reluctant BRN leaders into a peace process "facilitated" by the Malaysian government have not been forgotten in party circles.[8] Intensely wary of their hosts, and conscious of their own security, senior BRN leaders are unlikely to hold meetings inside Malaysia.

As an armed organization, BRN has consistently stressed a policy of self-reliance, and as far as possible sources munitions from within the Patani region, as seen in raids on government and military facilities to seize arms in 2002–2004. Nevertheless, Malaysia has played an important role in the sourcing of component parts for improvised explosive devices (IEDs), which, along with targeted killings, have constituted a core tactic of the insurgency. These components have included cheap Nokia mobile phones for remote triggering, as well as power-gel emulsion explosives (typically used in mining) and occasionally Malaysian cooking-gas tanks (used as containers for large devices of 20 kg and above).

The Malaysian side of the border has also afforded security for actual IED production, particularly during the high tide of the IED campaign in the 2007–2012 period. Doubts over this were laid firmly to rest when, in December 2009, Malaysian police raided a building in a rural area of Pasir Mas District, across the border from Tak Bai in Narathiwat, under the impression they would surprise narcotics traffickers. In the event, they found a large bomb factory and three Thai Muslims from Narathiwat.

The real danger of cross-border connectivity resides today in the likelihood of Malaysian IS cells looking to southern Thailand as a **black market**

Predictably, the rising profile of the Islamic State in the region and the emergence of IS-inspired self-starter cells in Malaysia have focused the attention of governments and news media on possible links into southern Thailand. However, BRN's own ideology and objectives militate against the forging of any such organizational links. As an organization, BRN remains fundamentally opposed to IS's Salafist ideology and terrorist tactics, while the tight-knit, clandestine nature of its military networks weighs heavily against the prospect of "rogue" elements being co-opted by IS interlopers from south of the border.

As seen by Malaysian intelligence sources, the real danger of cross-border connectivity resides today in the likelihood of Malaysian IS cells looking to southern Thailand as a black market for both readily available firearms and, no less dangerously, bomb-making expertise that over 13 years has proliferated beyond BRN's current operational networks.[9]

Philippines-Malaysia-Indonesia

Within months of 9/11 and the U.S. intervention to uproot al-Qaeda sanctuaries in Afghanistan, Southeast Asia was identified as the "second front" in the new global war on terror. Fifteen years later, the military collapse of the Islamic State's "caliphate" in Syria and Iraq is giving rise to a strikingly similar narrative, in which the region's emergence as a focus of global jihadist activity is again being assessed.

Then as now, one of the most salient challenges in countering the terrorist threat in Southeast Asia lies in the movement of terrorists and weapons in the tri-border zone that connects the majority-Muslim states of Malaysia and Indonesia with the active insurgent zones of the southern Philippines.

Vast and largely unpoliced, the tri-border region centers on two seas—the Sulu Sea, lying between the Visayas in the Philippines and Sabah in East Malaysia, and the Celebes Sea, which stretches from the Philippine island of Mindanao to Indonesia. Separating the two bodies of water is the Sulu archipelago—the Philippine island provinces of Basilan, Jolo, and Tawi-Tawi—which lies like a line of stepping stones linking the Zamboanga peninsula, on Mindanao, to Sabah.

Effective policing of the tri-border region has been complicated by three factors. First, a stark lack of state resources, both on the sea and in the air, has long been a basic constraint. Already overstretched combating aggressive, land-based insurgent threats on Mindanao and the islands of the Sulu archipelago, Manila's security forces have been essentially overwhelmed by the demands of maritime security.

Resource constraints have been compounded by longstanding political distrust and a lack of security cooperation and coordination across national jurisdictions. Only today are the slow evolution of ASEAN as a cooperative regional body and a recognition of common security challenges acting belatedly to mitigate long-standing, interstate frictions. Not least of these have been

Manila's claim on Sabah in east Malaysia—which is still outstanding—and Malaysian support for the insurgency of the separatist Moro National Liberation Front in the 1970s.

A second factor has been a history of economic and social connectivity in the tri-border region, which in recent decades has facilitated the movement of insurgents and now terrorists. In contrast to the constraints imposed on governments by concerns over resources and national sovereignty, a centuries-old tradition of sea-borne commerce between local tribal groups—Tausug, Samal, Badjau, and Yakan—has paid little or no attention to international boundaries. Recent patterns of mostly unregistered migration, involving several hundred thousand people from the southern Philippines seeking work in Sabah, only underscore the scale of the problem.

In the case of the warlike Tausugs of the Sulu archipelago, a tradition of maritime mobility has long underpinned a proclivity for smuggling and piracy and a history of fierce resistance to the impositions of Christian-run central government in Manila.[10] In recent decades, Sulu Tausugs have played dominant leadership roles in both the MNLF and its extremist offshoot, the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG).

Founded in 1991 and based mainly on the Sulu islands of Jolo and Basilan, the ASG has proven itself uniquely adaptive in bringing together insurgent, terrorist, and criminal tactics in a virulent and fluid mix. Impressive guerrilla capabilities in operations against the Philippine army have been supplemented with the bombings and beheadings of jihadist terrorism targeted on Christian communities. At the same time, the ASG has transformed kidnap-for-ransom into an enterprise worth millions of dollars annually. ASG raiders have seized high-value hostages from commercial shipping as well as from tourist resorts in Sabah, Palawan, and Davao.[11] More than any other insurgent group in the tri-border region, the ASG has alarmed and embarrassed both Manila and Kuala Lumpur, while underscoring the stark inadequacies of naval coordination between the two states.

The rise of IS as a global jihadist brand has only highlighted the social and religious vulnerabilities of archipelagic Southeast Asia to jihadist ideology, and the specific dangers posed by connectivity between Indonesian and Malaysian terrorist cells and Moro insurgents with control of territory in the Philippines. The mid-2017 seizure of Marawi City by a coalition of Philippine jihadist groups that had sworn allegiance to IS came as a sharp goad to governments to ramp up intelligence sharing and operational coordination in the tri-border zone.

The protracted siege of the city demonstrated powerfully to a region-wide audience the capabilities of a new coalition of jihadist groups that had never before coordinated operations in a well-planned, sustained campaign, and that is willing to entertain the participation of foreign fighters. It also reflected a potentially decisive shift in the insurgents' center of operational gravity from the Sulu archipelago to central Mindanao, where mountain terrain offers a far wider area of operations than Sulu.

Conclusion

Stretching from the Hindu Kush to the western Pacific, the four zones of major, cross-border insurgent activity examined here reflect obvious dissimilarities in geography, ethnicity, military culture and tactics, and, not least, the roots of conflict. Social and political forces fueling violence in the borderlands of southeastern Afghanistan and Pakistan's FATA have little in common with those underpinning the disaffection of Muslim communities on the islands of the Sulu Sea. Nevertheless, two variables emerge as drivers of a cross-border dynamic that invariably exacerbates and prolongs conflict. One is terrain, physical and social; the other, the specific nature of state-to-state relations.

Cross-border conflict is driven by **physical and social terrain**, and the nature of **state-to-state relations**

Extreme mountain terrain characterizes two of the zones examined: the Pakistan-Afghanistan frontier at one end of the Himalayas and, at the other, the borderlands of India's northeast. In both cases, the population is composed of hill tribes—hardy, independent, and often warlike. Traditionally distrustful of state power projected from the plains, and dismissive of modern borders, upland tribal peoples are by their very nature predisposed to play central or supporting roles in cross-border insurgencies.

Conversely, extreme terrain powerfully constrains counterinsurgency operations. As the Russians and Americans discovered in Afghanistan, maintaining in hostile mountains a presence aimed at interdicting cross-border insurgent movement is a hugely expensive undertaking that tends to become increasingly dependent on airpower, both for resupply and for (usually ineffective) kinetic operations. By the end of their respective wars, both superpowers had effectively given up on close-in border control.

India faces similar if less extreme challenges in the Naga Hills. Resort to drones, as pioneered by the Americans along both sides of the Durand Line, can go some way toward mitigating the problem, but will never solve it. And, in a very different geographical setting, the maritime environment of the Philippine-Malaysian-Indonesian tri-border region also poses security challenges that can be mitigated, but never entirely overcome.

In all four case studies, however, the tenor of state-to-state relations emerges as a decisive variable in the severity of cross-border conflict dynamics. At one end of the spectrum, the viscerally toxic nature of relations between Islamabad and Kabul not only precludes effective cooperation in constraining cross-border insurgent movement; it actively promotes competitive cross-border violence by proxy actors in a savage downward spiral. For decades, Pakistan's ISI has supported Afghan proxies, mujahedeen and Taliban, to advance its foreign policy objectives in Afghanistan, and it continues to do so today.

While arguably the more aggrieved of the parties, Kabul has sought to fight fire with fire, turning to its own terrorist proxies. Most recently, that has involved turning a blind eye to the activities of TTP terrorist factions such as Jamaat ul-Ahrar (JuA) on its soil as a counter to perceived Pakistani aggression. With horrific bombings of civilian targets in Kabul, Quetta, and Lahore occurring on a weekly basis, the situation has never been worse than today.

At the other end of the spectrum, the impact of cross-border insurgency and terrorism in Southeast Asia has been significantly constrained by ASEAN's cooperative and collegial framework. Indeed, in the case of the Patani conflict, it would be difficult to find another insurgency with an important cross-border dynamic that has had less negative impact on state-to-state relations. Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur have learned simply to side-step the conflict in the interests of a far broader and mutually beneficial relationship. While the Malaysian government has neither the capacity nor the desire to "close down" BRN activities south of the border, it has made clear it has no intention of covertly supporting the revolt. Unspoken ground rules are well understood by all three parties: Kuala Lumpur, Bangkok, and BRN.

Notwithstanding the diplomatic baggage of Manila's claim to Sabah, a similarly cooperative relationship exists between the three states confronting the cross-border dynamics that support insurgency on Mindanao and, potentially, terrorism region-wide. ASG depredations, the battle for Marawi, and wider international alarm have all acted as powerful catalysts for expanding security and intelligence cooperation. The risks to stability are today simply too big to ignore.

It is worth stressing, however, that in the modern era these cooperative impulses have not been a given in Southeast Asia. Thailand has had a long tradition of accommodating or supporting foreign insurgents from across all its borders, the Malaysian frontier included; while in the 1970s, covert Malaysian backing for the MNLF fueled a bitter war with Philippine government forces in Sulu and Mindanao. Previously, Kuala Lumpur also tolerated on its soil the activities of Patani-Malay insurgents from Thailand, in a manner that would be unthinkable in the context of the common threats posed by jihadist terrorism today.

The difficulties faced by India along its exposed northeastern flank reflect perceptions of risk in New Delhi and Nayptidaw that are notably less balanced. Against the backdrop of deteriorating relations with China, a revived and more cohesive cross-border insurgent threat in the shape of the UNLFW poses potentially serious risks for New Delhi. It threatens both stability and development in the northeast and hopes for overland connectivity and trade with Southeast Asia. For Myanmar's military, however, the calculus is altogether different. Resource-costly campaigns to expel Indian insurgents from rugged terrain in the far northwest offer few if any strategic returns. Meanwhile, notwithstanding Indian raids that briefly but pointedly violated Myanmar's sovereignty, the wider relationship remains cordial and largely cooperative, conditioned in both capitals by the need to balance the rising power of China.

Anthony Davis

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Conflict in Asia and the Role of Gender-Based Violence

Jacqui True

Gender-based violence (GBV) against women and girls is a major societal problem across Asia.[1] It is imperative that we identify and analyze its patterns and trends in order to adequately respond to the problem. Due to the historical impunity of perpetrators, however, we are only beginning to understand the scale and forms of GBV in Asia. Many countries in Asia have no consistent definition, baseline data, or systematic documentation of types of GBV against women and girls.[2] There are few official reports to state agencies, and these barely scratch the surface of actual violence, as indicated by recent UN and World Health Organization (WHO) surveys. These surveys show high levels of self-reported GBV, such as spousal violence, and sexual violence including nonpartner rape and gang rape, perpetrated overwhelmingly by men against women.[3] At the same time, the extremely low conviction rates for GBV in Asia, and the slow adoption of specialized services, policies, and legal reforms, perpetuate the culture of impunity for this violence. Paradoxically, one of the starkest indications that GBV is widespread in a society is the presence of gender norms that prohibit or constrain its reporting or recording.[4]

In order to better understand GBV against women and girls, it is important to define and conceptualize what is included in the term. The UN's Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), General Recommendation No. 19, defines GBV against women and girls as "violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately."[5] It addresses a range of forms of violence as defined in the UN General Assembly's 1993 Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (DEVAW). There are four types of GBV—emotional, physical, economic, and sexual. Mapping GBV, as defined, is difficult in Asia due to the limitations of existing data.

First, there are few datasets designed to record GBV, and those that do are not comprehensive, but rather focus on one particular type of GBV. For example, country-level demographic and health surveys include questions only about intimate partner violence,[6] and only in fewer than half the countries in Asia, while a database covering 1989–2009,[7] recently added by the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP),[8] collects data only on conflict-related sexual violence. Second, there are reporting biases related to the reliance on just a few data sources,[9] and the different conceptualizations of GBV across the countries in the region prevent comparative analysis. Third,

there are significant issues with the quality of available data, given the significant underreporting by victims in societies that have, until recently, failed to recognize GBV as a criminal offense or a public-policy problem. As such, data may not reflect *which* groups of women are most vulnerable to GBV or the specific obstacles to reporting violations they may face.

Analyzing GBV amid ongoing conflict and political violence in the region presents further challenges. Asia has some of the most protracted conflicts in the world.[10] Conflict and military violence negatively affect women's social and economic rights in Asia as a result of displacement, which disproportionately affects women compared with men.[11] In the Asia-Pacific, there were 3.2 million new internally displaced persons (IDPs) at the end of 2013, fleeing armed conflict, violence, and human rights violations as well as disasters.[12] The great majority of all IDPs are women and children.[13] Protracted displacement places women at greater risk of intimate-partner violence as well as conflict-related sexual violence. Displacement is also associated with higher proportions of female-headed (single-parent) households, which generally have higher rates of poverty and malnourishment, with poor access to water, food, housing, education, and livelihoods.[14] In conflict and displacement in Asia, GBV severely affects minority women and girls, who are often doubly vulnerable: as members of a subordinate ethnic, religious, or political minority group, and as the subordinate gender within that group.[15]

This paper has three parts and draws on examples from India, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Indonesia, and the Philippines. The first section highlights gaps in prevailing analyses and proposes analyzing GBV as a cross-cutting problem interrelated with other types of violence. The second section illustrates some key connections between conflict dynamics and GBV in Asia. The third section considers state responses to GBV, highlighting approaches in the region that have worked to address it.

Mapping levels of violence

The complexity of subnational conflicts in Asia often masks the gendered dimensions of violence. The Asia Foundation's *The State of Conflict and Violence in Asia* examines GBV at the local level, positioning it, along with electoral violence and urban crime, outside of subnational conflict (separatism, autonomy, and large-scale communal conflict) and national conflict (interstate and civil war). This positioning does not adequately reveal the contexts in which GBV occurs. We need to conceptualize the national and subnational as well as the local aspects of GBV, even in domestic and intimate-partner situations. For example, there is a national or subnational context to GBV when there is a high degree of structural gender inequality at a national or regional level—inequality of access to resources or to public space and voice, legal discrimination in civil and family status, and societal attitudes that condone violence against women. Research shows that structural gender inequality is the most significant risk factor for GBV.[16]

A GBV lens can help us see how forms of violence are connected, from the interpersonal to the intergroup and overtly "political" types of violence. The power of GBV compared with other types of violence lies not in the physical acts of violence themselves, but in the shame and social stigma that victims suffer. Physical, psychological, sexual, or economic GBV intends to denigrate and silence the victims and, by association, their families or communities. It both exploits and reinforces stereotypes and oppression based on gender, ethnicity, class, caste, sexuality, or other identities. Thus, GBV and conflict or violence at various levels play into and affect one another.

The symbolism and stigma of GBV have a specific, catalytic effect on political and intrastate conflict. For example, in Myanmar, Tatmadaw soldiers have immunity from civil prosecution, and can perpetrate GBV with impunity. That threat is very real to the Kachin people in northern Myanmar,[17] and threats of sexualized GBV against Kachin women and girls, which aim to

oppress and shame the entire ethnic group, may be used to mobilize group members to fight in the subnational conflict with the Burmese state.[18]

GBV is underreported everywhere in the world due to gendered stigma, but reliable data is especially scarce in Asia, where demographic and health surveys are comparatively infrequent and national reporting systems are relatively underdeveloped.[19] Underreporting of GBV is affected by the low level of public awareness; the scarcity of institutions to report to or their inaccessiblity in rural, conflict, and displacement settings; the lack of protection for victims or others reporting GBV due to ineffective or gender-biased law enforcement and justice systems; and institutional incapacity to record and analyse GBV data. These problems compound the underreporting of GBV, even with more rigorous efforts to gather better data through surveys or incident reporting. Thus, it is crucial to address the causes of this underreporting at the same time as we seek to improve the tools for data collection and analysis.[20]

Conflict dynamics and GBV in Asia

GBV has been documented in several conflicts in Asia since 1945, and is frequently heightened in conflict-affected situations.[21] Women and girls' severe lack of access to social and economic resources in conflict-affected and displacement situations affects their vulnerability to violence. However, differences are discernable in GBV patterns across countries, based on official and unofficial reports.

Awareness of GBV against women and girls is nascent in the region, and where awareness is low there is lower reporting. In Myanmar, GBV awareness was triggered by the presence of international actors in the context of regime change, and by reports of conflict-related sexual violence that have captured the attention of the global media.[22] Sexual violence perpetrated against civilian women by uniformed men is highly controversial and socially more contested than incidents of intimate-partner or domestic violence, which are often seen as "normal" or acceptable and therefore are not reported. True and Davies observe that reports of GBV, including domestic violence perpetrated by civilians, began to escalate at the same time as the increased reporting of conflict-related sexual violence and the opening of the country after Cyclone Nargis in 2008.[23]

In Rakhine State, however, GBV against Rohingya women is extremely underreported.[24] Conflict broke out in Rakhine in 2012, 2016, and 2017 between the Myanmar border police and military and the Rohingya minority, with deaths and human rights violations, including sexual and physical GBV, recorded by the UN.[25] Restricted humanitarian access has limited the reporting of GBV, as have fears of retaliation and mistrust of health services, which continue to report GBV to the police (though this is no longer required under the 2014 Emergency Treatment of Patients Law). Recourse to justice, given the immunity of the Tatmadaw, is also nonexistent,[26] and there is no voice or civil society organization within the Rohingya community to represent women and girls who are GBV survivors.[27] Qualitative study of the Rakhine case suggests that GBV is widespread and systematic, and that the paucity of reporting does not reflect actual levels.[28]

How a conflict ends has implications for the reporting and underreporting of GBV. In Sri Lanka, GBV is widely referred to in government reports; however, there are only a few official reports of sexual violence.[29] The nonrecognition of wartime GBV and the lack of institutional capacity to respond to postwar GBV reflect a self-reinforcing cycle of acceptance of this violence. Women in the Northern and Eastern Provinces appear to experience the highest levels of GBV, as well as other violations of physical security, according to reports available since the end of the war.[30] The victory of government forces has led to continued sexual abuse and torture of Tamil minorities, with no promise of transitional justice, contributing to impunity for GBV.[31] A UN survey of GBV perpetrated by men, based on a national sample across four districts, including

two in the war-affected Eastern Province, shows that less then 10 percent of rape cases have been successfully prosecuted in Sri Lanka, and that 60 percent of men feel entitled to sex without prior permission of their partner.[32]

GBV perpetrated by nonstate armed actors is rarely reported, leading to the false assumption that it does not occur. This is the case in both Myanmar and Sri Lanka. In Sri Lanka, however, the UN's *Report of the Secretary-General's Panel of Experts on Accountability in Sri Lanka* found that both the Sri Lankan armed forces and the Tamil Tigers (LTTE) committed acts of GBV,[33] despite the narrative that the LTTE did not perpetrate GBV within the group due to a moral code prohibiting sexual relations.[34] The LTTE are suspected of committing GBV within the minority population to increase conscripts and coerce civilian support with threats of rape and abduction of family members.[35] As a result of these practices, early marriage of girls was promoted during the war to prevent their recruitment by the LTTE. It has continued in the Eastern and Northern Provinces since the end of the conflict, as evidenced by the high rates of teenage pregnancy.[36] Given that no prosecutor has been appointed to investigate war crimes, including GBV committed by both Sri Lankan and LTTE forces, there are strong incentives to not report this violence.

It is still difficult to get reliable GBV data in conflict-affected settings, even where government capacity and reporting institutions exist. The Philippines has among the highest levels of reported domestic violence in Asia, reflecting the country's early adoption of an elimination of violence against women (EVAW) law and the government's institutional capacity to implement the law. However, the conflict-affected Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) recorded the lowest number of GBV cases of any region in the Philippines in 2014 and 2015, while the neighboring, peaceful region of Davao recorded the highest number, despite its much smaller population.[37] Due to strong, gender-based codes of honor within families and communities in ARMM, and the shame associated with rape and other sexual violence, women and girls are expected to keep silent about the violence they have experienced. They may do this to prevent the escalation of clan violence in contexts where abduction, rape, and forced marriage are common,[38] and where daughters may be offered for marriage to appease warring clans.[39] A high-ranking police official in ARMM stated, "Because of culture, people will not report [crimes] to the police. They consult their village chiefs, because once they report it to the police, it is tantamount to a declaration of war."[40] Moreover, police may not accurately apply the EVAW law, and they are forbidden by law to record the gender and other demographic data of crime victims.[41] These barriers thwart the collection of GBV data that could lead to more effective responses.

Qualitative studies of conflict situations can help to explain the variation in reporting of specific kinds of GBV committed by the military, nonstate armed groups, or civilians, as the cases above show. To qualify and contextualize data on all forms of reported GBV in conflict-affected Asian contexts, we need to map the social, political, and institutional barriers to reporting, and the prevailing degree of gender discrimination and inequality.

State responses to GBV

How can countries protect women and girls and prevent future GBV? *National laws against GBV* and *government action plans to implement them* are crucial. With appropriate institutional capacity to protect victims and prosecute perpetrators, anti-GBV laws directly address the culture of impunity, and thus can help prevent GBV. In the Asia-Pacific, only Myanmar has not adopted specific laws prohibiting domestic violence.[42] In Myanmar, however, a civil society coalition has been engaged in more than three years of dialogue with the government over the GBV law.[43] A major point of contention in this dialogue, amid widespread reports of Tatmadaw abuses, has been the inclusion of conflict-related sexual violence.

One of the starkest indications that GBV is widespread in a society is the presence of gender norms that prohibit or constrain its reporting or recording

Domestic violence laws were adopted in Indonesia in 2004 and India in 2005. High-profile local cases in Sri Lanka in 2005, Nepal in 2009, Bangladesh in 2010, and India in 2013 shaped new or stronger anti-GBV laws that have closely mirrored the UN's normative definitions (see note 1) covering the four types of GBV—emotional, physical, economic, and sexual. Best known is the Indian case, in which the fatal gang rape of a 23-year-old female tertiary student on a Delhi bus drew mass protests in the streets of Delhi and media attention around the world.[44] In South Asia, 74 percent of countries have adopted laws covering all four forms of GBV, compared with 44 percent in East Asia and the Pacific.[45] In India, following the adoption of the anti-GBV law, a civil society initiative supported by transnational advocacy networks and the UN set up *a system to monitor the implementation of the law* in collaboration with state agencies. The Lawyers Collective, along with other organizations and stakeholders, evaluated the effectiveness of the infrastructure envisaged by the Domestic Violence Act and the performance of the implementing agencies. They also examined the responsiveness of the judiciary to the issue of GBV. This initiative has substantially increased the state's accountability to civil society.[46]

Across Asia, *specialist courts* have been established to hear GBV cases, although transitional-justice hearings for conflict-related GBV, including sexual violence, have hardly been established. The Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC), addressing crimes perpetrated during the Khmer Rouge regime, are an exception.[47] Despite the fact that many conflicts in the Asia-Pacific region have included documented acts of sexual violence, primarily against minority women (e.g., Bangladesh in 1971, Cambodia during the Khmer Rouge regime, Indonesia in East Timor), less than half the region's countries have ratified the 1998 Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, compared with 63 percent of African and 82 percent of Latin American and Caribbean states.[48] The lack of local judicial infrastructure is cited as a reason for nonratification,[49] as well as the nature of ongoing conflicts.[50] The Sri Lankan government is currently considering appropriate transitional-justice mechanisms; however, it is unlikely that prosecutions for war crimes, including GBV, will take place. In Nepal in 2014, the Supreme Court mandated the establishment of fast-track courts for rape and domestic violence in addition to the on-camera hearings provided for in the Domestic Violence Crime and Punishment Act.[51] The implementation of the fast-track GBV provision has not yet been evaluated, however.

Countries in Asia also have *extremely low GBV conviction rates*. In India, only 3,860 of the 5,337 rape cases of women and girls reported over a 10-year period resulted in prosecutions. Perpetrators were either acquitted or discharged by the courts for lack of "proper" evidence, according to the Indian National Crime Records Bureau.[52] In the case of Indonesia, despite the existence of a specialized court, the CEDAW Committee voiced concern over the limited number of cases of sexual violence and trafficking brought to court and the absence of a monitoring mechanism for the domestic-violence law. It also emphasized the failure of the Indonesian government to prosecute the perpetrators of conflict-related GBV crimes and to provide women victims with justice, reparation, and rehabilitation.[53] The UN study singles out the sense of sexual entitlement that fuels men's physical and sexual GBV in Asia. The fact that the majority of men face no legal consequences for committing GBV is a reflection of the gender inequalities in the law and justice system.[54]

With respect to *specialized policing*, only the Philippines among those countries with subnational conflicts has created women's police units in some districts to receive GBV reports. Research has yet to examine whether there are more GBV reports in those districts. The Philippine Commission on Women compiles nationwide statistics from police reports of 13 different types of violence against women and girls across 18 different regions, in accordance with national law.[55] However, Davies, True, and Tanyag found in their research that even if cases are reported, they may not be recorded and shared at higher levels of policymaking, because professional reputations are at stake, and there is low institutional transparency on the data collection.[56]

In terms of *government provision of GBV services* to address the health, psychological, and livelihood needs of victims, India has introduced "one-stop shop" crisis centers for GBV victims, following the recommendations of the 2013 Justice Verma Commission.[57] Initially these centers were intended to serve only victims of sexual violence, but the majority of clients soon turned out to be victims of domestic violence rather than sexual violence by strangers (as in the Delhi Rape case, which had prompted their creation). Demand for the crisis centers clearly exists, and we should expect to see their impact in increased reporting of GBV—the pattern seen in developed countries—although how this will translate into GBV prevention remains both uncertain and hard to measure, due to the problems with data collection and the lack of accurate baseline data.

There are several lessons to be learned from recent GBV policies and interventions in Asia. First, where GBV responses have effectively tackled impunity, civil society has played a role in monitoring the implementation of EVAW laws, including judicial processes, policing, and health services. Second, the infrastructure and capacity offered by specialized courts, fast-track processes, and one-stop shops for survivors are promising, but their usefulness and potential adoption elsewhere in Asia must be rigorously evaluated. Third, women police units are also an innovation, but they do not eliminate the need for all police officers to be trained in the EVAW law. More research is needed to assess whether these specialized police units increase GBV reporting and whether they are located in the districts most susceptible to GBV. Finally, in post-conflict situations in Asia, transitional-justice processes remain rare, yet without them there is a risk of continued impunity for GBV, and of renewed conflict.

Conclusion

There are significant issues in the relationship of GBV to other forms of conflict and violence in Asia, including the major problem of GBV underreporting, especially in situations of conflict and displacement, and the widely varying responses of governments. Greater awareness of GBV in Asia, where just one country is now without an EVAW law, has also increased attention to the institutional and political barriers to GBV reporting and recording. This is a positive sign of progress in the region. Conflict-related GBV is more visible than ever before, but it is also a contentious matter for governments to address. A regional GBV mechanism could help governments monitor and analyse GBV, ensure redress for victims, and hold states accountable for due diligence against GBV, particularly in conflict situations.[58]

The linkages between conflict-affected GBV and gender inequality in Asia are still being established. There is an urgent need to better understand the obstacles to reporting GBV and how to overcome them, as well as for improved collection of data on the incidence of GBV to contribute to this research and to inform policy and prevention initiatives. However, broad measures to redress structural gender inequality will likely also have benefits for reducing GBV. Reforming discriminatory civil and family law, strengthening the legal rights of minority women and girls, and promoting their access to resources, formal employment, and secondary education will make them less vulnerable to exploitation and violence and more empowered to report it. These measures remain crucial to GBV prevention in Asia.

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Notes

1 This paper is focused on GBV against women and girls. However, GBV against men and boys is also a problem. In Asia, *violence against women* (VAW) is often the preferred term, which has a legal basis in national law but encompasses GBV against women and girls, though typically not GBV against men and boys. GBV includes physical, psychological, and sexual violence, including rape, forced prostitution and trafficking, dowry-related violence and other traditional practices harmful to women, female genital mutilation, marital rape, spousal violence, sexual harassment and intimidation at work, and economic abuse and violence (UN General Assembly, "Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women," A/RES/48/104, 85th plenary meeting, December 20, 1993). Other forms of violence are also considered under the UN's Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), such as "early and forced marriage, and online sexual abuse."

2 The term *domestic violence* refers to spousal and nonspousal violence occurring in the family home or household. Although in common usage it often denotes intimate partner violence (IPV), the term is broader than that.

3 In a systematic review of scientific data collected by WHO VAW-prevalence surveys, ever-partnered women in the WHO region of Southeast Asia were found to have the highest lifetime prevalence of physical violence (37.7 percent). See World Health Organization, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, and South African Medical Research Council, *Global and regional estimates of violence against women: prevalence and health effects of intimate partner violence and non-partner sexual violence* (Geneva: WHO, 2013), 17, http://www.who.int/reproductive health/publications/violence/9789241564625/en/. The prevalence rate of physical and sexual violence for ever-partnered women in Southeast Asia was the second highest in the world after Africa (WHO et al., *Global and regional estimates*, 20). Similarly, in the 2010 Global Burden of Disease study, the Southeast Asia region recorded the second-highest prevalence rate of intimate-partner violence, at 41.73 percent, after Central Sub-Saharan Africa (WHO et al., *Global and regional estimates*, 47). E. Fulu et al., *The United Nations Multi-country Study on Men and Violence in Asia and the Pacific* (Bangkok: UNDP, UNFPA, UN Women and UNV, 2013) further supports the pervasiveness of VAW in the Asian region, though the prevalence rate varies within and across Asian countries. This survey of men and women in nine rural and urban sites in six countries found men's perpetration of intimate-partner physical and sexual violence extremely common, with rates of 26 to 80 percent across sites, and women's experience of partner victimization at 25 to 68 percent: on average a 30–57 percent prevalence rate (Fulu et al., *Multi-country Study*, 27). Among women respondents, between 10 and 59 percent reported rape by a nonpartner (Fulu et al., *Multi-country Study*, 39). According to the UN study, the majority of men perpetrating rape—between 72 and 97 percent across the nine sites—did not experience any legal consequences (Fulu et al., *Multi-country Study*, 3).

4 Sara E. Davies and Jacqui True, "Reframing the Prevention of Conflict-Related Sexual and Gender-Based Violence." *Security Dialogue* 46, no. 6 (2015): 14.

5 "Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, General Recommendation No. 19 (11th session, 1992)," website of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), accessed August 22, 2017, http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/recommendations/recomm.htm.

6 See The Demographic and Health Surveys Program website, http://dhsprogram.com.

7 Dara Kay Cohen and Ragnild Nordås, *Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict Dataset,* retrieved August 10, 2017 from the Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict Dataset website, http://www.sexualviolencedata.org/dataset/.

8 Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) and Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO), *UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset Codebook Version 4-2014a* (Oslo: PRIO, 2014).

9 For example, the Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict dataset is reliant on three international sources of English-language reporting—the U.S. State Department, Human Rights Watch, and Amnesty Intenational—that are likely to be heavily compromised in Asia, where local civil society and news reports may be more important for tracking GBV. See Dara Kay Cohen and Ragnild Nordås, "Sexual violence in armed conflict: Introducing the SVAC dataset, 1989–2009," *Journal of Peace Research* 51, no. 3 (2014): 418–428.

10 Thomas Parks, Nat Coletta, and Ben Oppenheim, *The Contested Corners of Asia: Subnational Conflict and International Development Assistance* (San Francisco: The Asia Foundation, 2013), https://asiafoundation.org/resources/pdfs/ContestedCornersOfAsia.pdf.

11 World Bank, *World Bank Annual Development Report 2011: Conflict and Development* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2011).

12 Alexandra Bilak et al., *2016 Global Report on Internal Displacement* (Geneva: Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre and Norwegian Refugee Council, 2016), http://www.internal-displacement.org/library/publications/2016/2016-global-report-on-internal-displacement-grid-2016/.

13 There is little or no data disaggregating the gender and age of IDPs. However, the numbers are estimated to be similar to those in the population, with some indication that they are weighted toward women and children, given that men may stay to fight or secure land. Sebastián Albuja et al., *Global Overview 2014: People internally displaced by conflict and disaster* (Geneva: Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre and Norwegian Refugee Council, 2014), 13, 23, http://www.internal-displacement.org/library/publications/2014/global-overview-2014-people-internally-displaced-by-conflict-and-violence/. For example, see UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), *Myanmar Humanitarian Response Plan: January–December 2017* (OCHA, 2016), 3, http://reliefweb.int/report/myanmar/2017-myanmar-humanitarian-response-plan-january-december-2017, which estimates that over 80 percent of the internally displaced are women and children.

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28 Ibid.

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Resource Conflict and Democratic Land Governance

Saturnino M. Borras Jr.

Rising resource conflicts: context and causes

Asia is a hotspot in the global land rush that has been gaining momentum over the past two to three decades. Multiple crises confronting humanity, in food, animal feed, fuel, finance, climate, and the environment; the responses to these crises, such as biofuel production and nature conservation; and the growing economic dynamism in newer centers of capital such as China and India have all increased the demand for land. The mainstream narrative on this global land rush is straightforward: there is a solution, and it lies in the existence of marginal, empty, and available lands. Two sets of actors have converged on this narrative—corporate actors and the state—in turn attracting bewildering layers of individual land brokers, entrepreneurs, scammers, swindlers, and thieves.

Most of these "available" lands are occupied and worked by the rural poor. Conflict erupts when the state moves in to claim these lands, often using extra-economic coercion, and offer them to corporate investors. This leads to the eruption of new conflicts, themselves built on older conflicts over natural resources. But while grabbing land from villagers is the most visible and immediate cause of these (often violent) conflicts, they are usually also entangled with social tensions due to ethnicity, nationality, class, caste, gender, and generation, leading to other types of vertical and horizontal conflict and violence society-wide. The present volume reveals medium to high levels of resource-related conflict that simultaneously occurs or overlaps with other forms of conflict and violence in 14 Asian countries.

The global land rush and the widespread conflict linked to it have forced national and international institutions to respond. The UN Committee on Food Security, in 2012, adopted the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries, and Forests in the Context of National Food Security.[1] The World Bank proposed a "code of conduct" for companies engaged in the global land rush.[2] Jean Ziegler, the UN special rapporteur on the right to food, from 2000 to 2008, declared that the conversion of farmlands to biofuel production is a "crime against humanity." In 2016, the International Criminal Court declared that it would be willing to investigate and try executives of companies engaged in land grabbing. National parliaments in Asian countries have rushed to address the chaotic situation of villagers losing their lands. For example, the Cambodian government was forced to cap land concessions at 10,000 hectares after widespread protests against large-scale concessions.[3]

Social inequities and widespread feelings of injustice are among the root causes of social tension, conflict, and violence. Land politics lies at the heart of this in societies with an important agrarian sector. Responses to land and resource conflict should be based on social justice, where poor people's interest is the starting point and is protected and promoted, otherwise tension, conflict, and violence are likely to explode again in various forms in the future.[4] But many efforts to resolve land conflicts tend to address important but secondary issues: largely procedural matters such as transparency in cadaster records; the consultative process in large-scale corporate acquisitions; formalization of the individual, private land rights of villagers; conflict-resolution mechanisms that are nonstate and community-based. At best, these procedural measures may reduce the extent and intensity of conflict, but they do not necessarily get at the roots of conflict or resolve it in favor of the poor. System-wide deep social reforms will be necessary to strategically address current conflict and violence, and in the current context of natural resource politics it will require the interconnected policies of restitution, recognition, land redistribution, and fairer incorporation.

Cast of characters

The land rush has attracted three principal players, namely the state, corporations, and nonstate, noncorporate individuals. First, at center stage in "land politics"—who gets which land, how, how much, why, for what purposes, and with what implications—is the state. The state is often involved in investment prospecting, speculating on land and enticing large-scale land investors. Contested land, frequently in the hinterlands or coastal areas, is lumped together as "public land"[5] and therefore in the grey area of property-rights systems. The state lays claim to these resources and spaces, even though they are often occupied and worked by indigenous peoples or ethnic minorities, marginalized rural poor, artisanal fishers, or urban and peri-urban poor. Or the state expropriates the privately controlled lands of villagers by eminent domain, as has been done in India,[6] in China, and in Myanmar.

Often, public and private purposes can become quite blurred. Investment opportunities may coincide with a state-building agenda, helping the state to extend its sovereignty over territory that historically has been outside its authority and power. None of the national governments in Asia today can be characterized as a passive victim of corporate-driven land enclosures. The Indian state plays a key role in land expropriation.[7] The Cambodian, Indonesian, and Myanmar governments have been aggressive in investment prospecting, offering vast public lands that they claim to own, even though these are the territories of indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities. The state's role is central, whether it is a straightforward corporate agribusiness deal or something linked to climate-change mitigation, such as hydropower or biofuel projects, most of which are promoted as market-based initiatives.

Second are the corporate players—diverse, international and domestic, and from multiple sectors: food, animal feed, energy and fuel, mining, real estate, tourism, auto and aviation, seed, timber and pulp, chemicals, machinery, banking and finance, pension funds. Add a plethora of actors associated with climate-change mitigation initiatives. Many of the climate-change mitigation

Most available lands are occupied and worked by the rural poor

Responses to land and resource conflict should be based on social justice, where poor people's interest is the starting point and is protected and promoted

policies have implications for land politics and policies, such as carbon-sequestration initiatives like REDD+, generic nature conservation, hydropower megaprojects, and biofuel—increasingly understood as "flex crops."[8] Because they often require involuntary recasting of land control, access, distribution, and use, these mitigation policies can provoke conflict and violence. For example, the massive expansion of oil-palm plantations across Southeast Asia, which has led to widespread expulsion of villagers from their land, has been partly justified by national governments as a contribution to climate-change mitigation through the production of biofuel.[9] Often, these actors from different sectors interact. There is a convergence of new and old players in land politics. Most have engaged in speculative land prospecting. When they meet the investment prospecting of the state, the effect is explosive and provokes further conflicts.

Third, opportunities have opened up for nonstate and noncorporate individual actors: land brokers, entrepreneurs, scammers, thieves, and swindlers, some of them in paramilitary or militia groups. Across Asia, these individuals operate to accumulate land, and in some locations they can acquire far more than corporations, as documented in India.[10] The transformation of northern Shan State in Myanmar from biodiverse, shifting agricultural communities into monocultures of corn, sugarcane, and rubber has been driven largely by this noncorporate process. In some places in Myanmar, militias have directly engaged in forcibly and violently grabbing villagers' lands.

Combined, these three actors engage in all sorts of land transactions, some of which fit the category of land grabbing while others do not. Some of these transactions are easily recognized and monitored, especially those involving big corporations, while others are below the radar of any institutional monitoring. Individually and jointly, these actors recast the politics of land ownership, control, distribution, and use, and poor villagers are usually on the losing side. Thus, these state, corporate, and noncorporate, nonstate actors become key players in conflict and violence, and are therefore parties to conflict transformation initiatives, as seen throughout Asia today.

Old and new resource conflicts

Investments in agriculture do not automatically cause conflict and violence, but recasting land politics—who gets which land, how, how much, why, and for what purposes—does. Resource conflict is about power and power relations, which in turn have significant class and identity dimensions—dimensions of gender, ethnicity, nationality, religion, caste, and generation. Almost always, those who lose land are already disadvantaged, and they often belong to socially marginalized ethnic groups. Full-scale conflicts and even violence erupt, not because the "moral economy" (in the tradition of James Scott's work) in societies of those losing lands has been violated, but because of the *manner* in which that moral economy has been violated.[11] In addition, not all unjust expropriations erupt into full-scale conflict and violence, especially where villagers are too scared to resist (although these tensions are palpable and should be addressed). In general, however, there are a number of ways that social and political tension and conflict arise and explode, which should be seen within the broader context of recasting the institutional rules on land ownership, control, distribution, and use.

First, there are land enclosures driven by the state, corporations, or individual land brokers and entrepreneurs. These actors take control of villagers' land and expel them from it, with or without extra-economic coercion, and whether villagers resist overtly or not. Conflict does not happen only when villagers are able to file formal complaints or overtly resist. Conflict over resources has spiked in recent years across Asia, associated with the dramatic expansion of agricultural monoculture such as industrial tree plantations; of mines, tourism enclaves, and speculative real-estate megaprojects like special economic zones; and of market-oriented, climate-change mitigation initiatives including carbon-sequestration projects, large hydropower projects, and nature conservation projects.

Second, states may refuse to recognize the rights to land, territory, and associated resources of specific social classes and groups in society. In some parts of Asia, the state has half-heartedly or problematically implemented policies that call for such recognition, like the Indigenous People's Rights Act (IPRA) in the Philippines. But in several countries, these tensions over state recognition of land rights have led to conflict between the central state and local actors, or to interethnic violence. These conflicts often have gender and generational social dynamics. The state refuses to recognize the land rights of these groups, because their territories have coveted resources—productive lands, forests, water, and mineral ores that can be offered to corporate investors—as well as being integral parts of its sovereign territory.[12] The violent conflict in the Chittagong Hills Tracts in Bangladesh is an illustration.[13]

Third, the land rush has exacerbated preexisting social inequality based on land monopoly by the landed classes and corporations. The dramatic revaluation of land, which has become exponentially more coveted, has impacted land distribution in two ways. On the one hand, landlessness and inequality have increased due to the new landless population created by the land rush, many of whom have been forced into the already bloated informal sector.[14] Villagers are often forcibly expelled from their land, leading to escalation of conflict, which can become violent at times. On the other hand, political opposition to the redistributive land policies of the past has become even stronger and more entrenched. The landed classes and corrupt government officials, at times involving the military, are at the forefront of the effort to cash in on the land rush, and are thus vigorously opposed to democratic land redistribution. The use of extra-economic coercion by these elite actors to expel villagers from their land is quite common, igniting old and provoking new conflicts. Both ways in turn can link to broader issues of conflict, violence, and peace-building. In Myanmar, many corporations that seized village lands were owned by ex-military officials capitalizing on the 2011 ceasefire to penetrate some ethnic minority territories that were impenetrable before.[15]

Fourth, not everyone whose land is coveted by investors and the state is expelled from the land. In some instances, the investors need the land *and* the people, as cheap labor that comes with the land. In such settings, villagers are not expelled. Instead, they are incorporated into the

None of the national governments in Asia today can be characterized as a passive victim of corporate-driven land enclosures

emerging enterprise, either as workers or as contract farmers, through a variety of growership arrangements. Where this happens, villagers often remain the nominal owners of the land, but they have no more control over it. Many Malaysian and Indonesian oil-palm plantations are organized this way, for example. Demands for better wages, fairer prices for produce, better living conditions, or greater autonomy are often ignored, creating a trigger for escalation to conflict and violence, as scenes in the banana-plantation belt in Mindanao have demonstrated in recent years.

Fifth, there is often conflict over whether preexisting land laws, environmental standards, and so on that regulate land politics will be recast, and if so, how and for what purposes. These questions provoke tension and conflict between local communities and the state. This in turn transforms the arena of institutional rules into a key zone of conflict, where the state and corporations want to change the rules to favor their takeover of the land, while villagers resist. More often than not, however, villagers are completely ignored and excluded from the processes that recast these institutional rules. The villagers are denied representation in the institutions, spaces, and processes that determine the fate of their lands. The current National Land Use Policy in Myanmar is hotly contested for this reason.[16]

Policy responses

The global resource rush has produced a consensus among a range of state and nonstate actors. Everyone talks about governance: the situation is chaotic, many villagers are being expelled from their land, so there is a need for "good governance" to address the land rush, resource conflict, and violence. Yet, those who talk about land governance are not necessarily talking about the same thing. There are three broad political tendencies.

Tendency 1: governing land politics in order to smooth corporate land investments. The land rush is considered a rare opportunity, whereby states and corporations that are once again interested in land and the rural economy can achieve the most efficient use of land, a scarce resource. Proponents of this view acknowledge that the current land rush has resulted in the expulsion of many villagers from their land, involuntarily and unfairly, but they are not against voluntary displacement. They encourage it for those who have no potential to become efficient and competitive producers. Voluntary and market-based schemes, including formalization of individual private-property rights, formal and clear cadaster records, transparent land deals, consultative processes in large-scale land acquisitions, and a code of conduct for corporations, are solutions to involuntary displacement.[17] Market- and community-based conflict-resolution mechanisms can address existing land conflicts by promoting a vigorous land market. In the longer term, expansion of a system based on individual private-property rights will address resource conflict. The World Bank, most government ministries in charge of promoting land investments, and corporations are the key actors in this tendency.[18]

Tendency 2: governing land politics in order to mitigate negative impacts on villagers while maximizing opportunities. The land rush is here to stay, so negative impacts on villagers must be mitigated while maximizing all the opportunities that come with it. Proponents of this view believe in a win-win-win formula, where the state, corporations, and local communities all are better off when a land deal is consummated. Like the first tendency, market- and community-based conflict-resolution mechanisms are favored. Corporate social responsibility and community partnerships with corporations are a pragmatic response to the resource rush. Some in this tendency see individual private-property rights as the strategic way to address resource conflict and violence, while others see a more social-justice-oriented approach. Most big NGOs and development agencies take this position, making it the most popular of the three tendencies. Advocacy focuses on international standards framed as corporate social responsibility, such as the push for "sustainable palm oil" in Indonesia and Malaysia.[19]

Investments in agriculture do not automatically cause conflict and violence, but recasting land politics—who gets which land, how, how much, why, and for what purposes—does

Tendency 3: governing land politics in order to stop land grabbing and return expropriated land to villagers. The land rush is seen as an inherent manifestation of the imperatives of capital to continuously generate profit at the expense of poor people, especially the rural poor. Proponents of this view think conflict-resolution mechanisms and other voluntary and market-based solutions will facilitate, not stop, the land rush, and will expand, not end, land-based inequality. The solution can only be a system of social-justice-oriented, redistributive land policies. Globally, La Vía Campesina, the world's largest farmers' movement, with strong although uneven presence across Asia, and its allies are at the forefront of this tendency.

These are ideal types. Real life situations are rarely a perfect fit. But the typology can help contextualize responses to resource conflict and violence.

Towards social justice-based resource conflict resolution and transformation

Most policy responses to resource conflicts, national and international, have been from tendencies 1 and 2 and advocate short-term measures oriented towards resolving specific land disputes. Voluntary and market-based policies, many of which are procedural in nature, are popular among mainstream institutions and national governments.[20] While such short-term, procedural measures are important, they are secondary. They are reactive, while existing problems require a stance that is both reactive and proactive.[21] They could also unintentionally fan the flames of conflict and violence.

More urgent and important is to take a proactive stance alongside a defensive stance, pitched at the system level, in order to address current land and resource conflicts and violence on the one hand, and prevent future ones from exploding and recurring on the other hand. A social-justice-oriented response should be based on the four policy strategies of restitution, recognition, land redistribution, and fairer incorporation.

First, *restitution*. Before and during the recent land rush, villagers have been expelled from their farmland and home lots, whether legally or illegally, voluntarily or involuntarily, with or without compensation, with or without extra-economic coercion. Some may have been absorbed into other productive sectors of the economy, but others likely have not. They either remain in the countryside, or they have gambled on urban and peri-urban spaces, joining the already oversized informal sector. In many places, the recent wave of expulsions is just the latest in a long history of expulsions. For example, in Myanmar, waves of military operations have resulted in Karen villages that may have three different waves of occupants from three different ethnic groups, and each group is currently seeking to go back to "their" village. Many of these displaced people live in camps, while others are scattered throughout the country and beyond. This is not unique to

A social justice-oriented response should be based on the four policy strategies of **restitution, recognition, land redistribution, and fairer incorporation**

Myanmar; it is common where major armed conflict has resulted in complex layers of claimants to land, as in Timor-Leste, Sri Lanka, and other places. Where land restitution has been attempted elsewhere in the context of postconflict peacebuilding, it has adopted market-based approaches based on voluntary schemes and combined with land-market-oriented resettlement strategies. This was done in the 1996 Peace Accords in Central America, for example. These market-based approaches failed, partly demonstrating the inherent contradictions and limits to market mechanisms when the task at hand principally concerns redress, fairness, and social justice.

Second, *recognition*. Not all villagers have lost their access to and control over their land during the recent land rush. But their access to land is now seriously threatened in the midst of the spike in land investments. The key task in this context is to protect this existing access. In many settings in Asia, this means recognizing the rights of various social groups to land, territory, and associated resources. The politics of recognition has deep and intersecting dimensions of social class, gender, ethnicity, nationality, and generation. Protection through recognition does not only mean providing formal, individual, private-property rights. It can be achieved through various mechanisms, including democratic forms of customary arrangements, either individual or community or a combination of both. There are some progressive laws in Asia that have potential for fuller implementation, such as the IPRA in the Philippines.

Third, *land redistribution*. Many people who do not have stable jobs, either in the city or in the countryside, and who want to farm for a living do not have land to work. In addition, in many societies, those who work the land as tenants or farmworkers do not own the land they work, and thus have to pay exorbitant rent to private owners, or are subject to constant harassment from government or militia forces for informal rent, or are under constant threat of expulsion from land on which they are squatting. Many of them might have had land before, but lost it for a variety of reasons. System-wide land redistribution is urgent and necessary for a huge number of people across Asia today. Land reform, tenancy reform, leasehold reform, and forest-land reallocation programs are common policies for land redistribution. Many countries in Asia have such policies, but they are either not implemented or implemented perversely, while other countries do not have the necessary policies. In societies with an important agrarian sector, resource-conflict resolution and peace-building are inconceivable without taking redistributive land policies seriously.

Fourth, *fairer incorporation*. There are villagers who have been incorporated into the emerging capitalist farms and plantations, either as workers or as contract farmers, through a variety of growership arrangements. Most do not want to go back to autonomous, individual farming, or could not do so even if they wanted to, because the infrastructure for small, family farming is gone. Conflict arises over the terms of their incorporation: wages, working conditions, prices of produce, access to home plots and food gardens, and so on, as in palm-oil plantations in Asia. The task at hand is to improve the terms of such incorporation.

The four redistributive policies can only be fairly and effectively carried out if there is appropriate, meaningful *representation* of villagers in the policy process. "Not about them without them," as a popular grassroots slogan goes. In many societies, the institutional bases of representa-

tion—the right to information; participatory processes; mandatory consultation; free, prior, informed consent (FPIC); and so on—are established but are not harnessed and are contested,[22] while in other countries such institutional bases still need to be put in place. Representation is the lynchpin that links the four redistributive policies.

In short, only through system-wide, interconnected, social-justice-oriented land policies will conflict and violence be resolved democratically. There are two across-the-board principles that should guide such policies: a "land-size ceiling" that would limit how much land corporations and individuals can accumulate, and a "minimum land access" for farming, home lots, and garden plots to ensure that those who want to farm, full-time or part-time, have a place to live and land to work. Anything short of this will result in more of the same: some scattered policy reforms here and there, now and then, benefitting some, but not really attacking the agrarian roots of tension, conflict, and violence.[23] In Asia, as elsewhere, system-wide redistributive land policies are difficult, but not impossible to carry out.

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