



The Ploughshares Monitor

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The 2008 Armed Conflicts Report—preview

After a period of seven years, during which there was a cumulative decrease of 12 armed conflicts, 2007 saw an increase in armed conflicts from 29 to 30, with two added to the report and one removed. The number of countries involved increased from 25 to 26.

Fighting between Israel and Lebanon (Hezbollah) ended in August 2006 with a UN-brokered ceasefire and the deployment of Lebanese and UN forces into southern Lebanon. Yemen and Turkey were again added to the map, both having been included in past *Armed Conflicts Reports*—Yemen for its 1994 civil war and Turkey for the 1984–2002 phase of the conflict with Kurdish rebels. Research indicates that half of all post-war countries are in danger of reverting to war within a decade.

In Yemen, the current armed conflict began in 2004 with the emergence of a new rebel group (the Shabab al-Moumineen or Youthful Believers). By the end of 2007, the total number of deaths greatly exceeded 1,000.

The earlier phase of the Turkish conflict ended in 2002 when conflict-related deaths totaled less than 25 for the second consecutive year. A unilateral ceasefire had been declared by Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) militants in 1999. In 2004 the ceasefire ended, after the Turkish government refused to issue a general amnesty to PKK militants and militant Kurdish bases in northern Iraq became better equipped. Since then conflict fatalities have been on the rise, exceeding 1,000 in 2007.

Table 1: Geographic distributions of armed conflicts in 2007

Region	# of countries in region	# of conflicts in region	# of countries hosting conflicts	% of countries in region hosting conflicts	% of world conflicts
Africa	50	12	11	22	40
Asia	42	11	8	19	36.7
Europe	42	1	1	2.4	3.3
The Americas	44	2	2	5	6.7
Middle East	14	4	4	29	13.3
<i>World Totals</i>	<i>192</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>26</i>	<i>13.5</i>	<i>100</i>

Africa and Asia continued to be most affected by war (see Table 1), hosting 12 and 11 armed conflicts respectively, or about three-quarters of the world's total, leaving the three remaining regions of Europe, the Americas, and the Middle East with a combined share of about one-quarter.

Between 1998 and 2007, 30 armed conflicts ended (see Table 2), but only in Europe and the Middle East was a net gain realized. In Europe, three conflicts were resolved with one still active. Six conflicts in the Middle East were resolved and four remain active. Iran, Indonesia, and Angola each resolved multiple conflicts.

Table 2: Geographical distribution of armed conflicts resolved between 1998 and 2007

Region	# of conflicts resolved	% of total resolved conflicts
Africa	10	33.3
Asia	10	33.3
Europe	3	10
The Americas	1	3.3
Middle East	6	20
<i>Totals</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>100</i>

Full descriptions of all 2007 armed conflicts are available in the *Armed Conflicts Report 2007* under the “Library” link on the Project Ploughshares website (www.ploughshares.ca). Project Ploughshares has reported annually on armed conflicts since 1987.

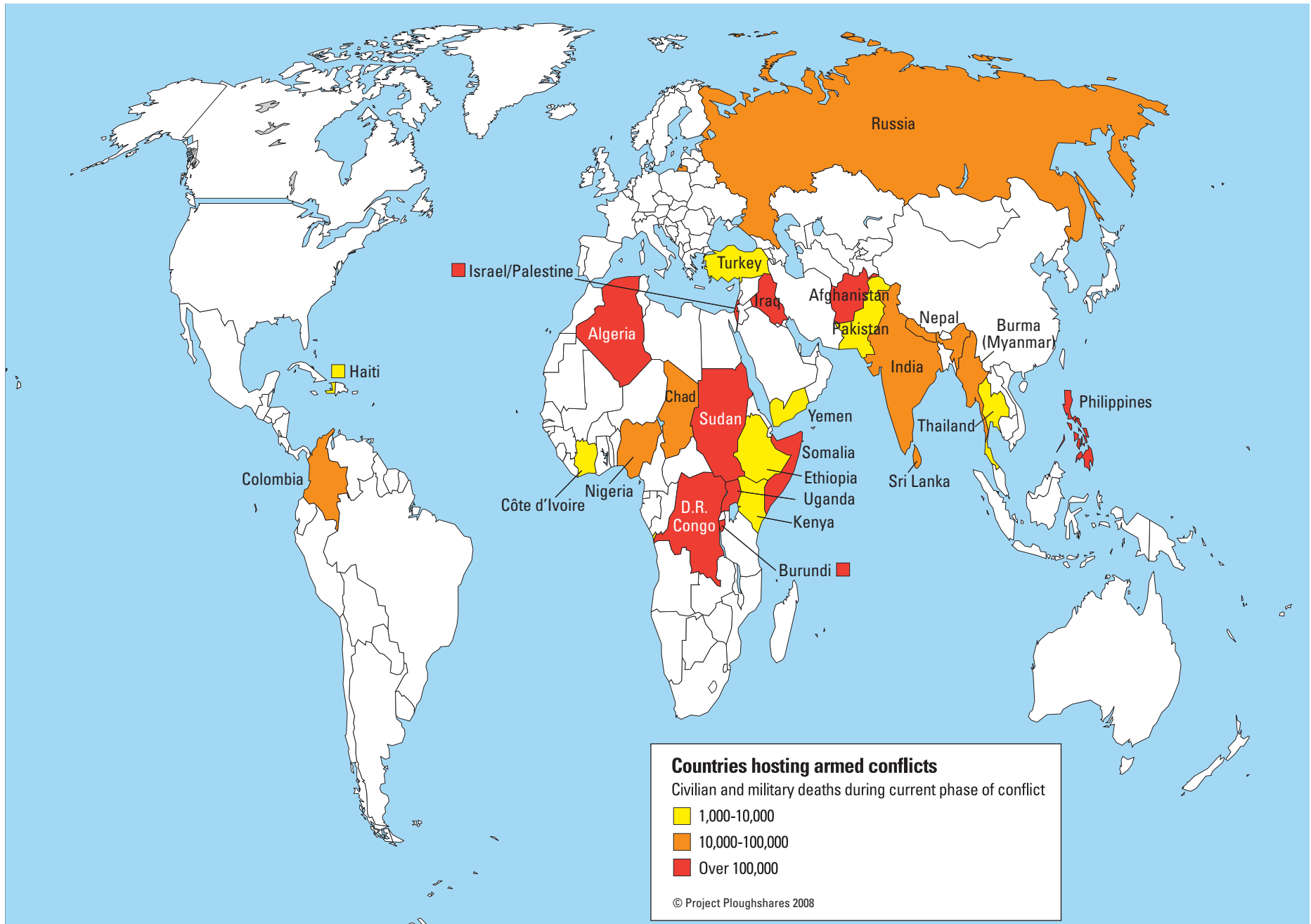
***Defining Armed Conflict:** For the purposes of the annual *Armed Conflicts Report* an armed conflict is defined as a political conflict in which armed combat involves the armed forces of at least one state (or one or more armed factions seeking to gain control of all or part of the state), and in which at least 1,000 people have been killed by the fighting during the course of the conflict. An armed conflict is added to the annual list of current armed conflicts in the year in which the death toll reaches the threshold of 1,000, but the starting date of the armed conflict is shown as the year in which the first combat deaths included in the count of 1,000 or more occurred.

The definition of “political conflict” becomes more difficult as the trend in current intrastate armed conflicts increasingly obscures the distinction between political and criminal violence. In a growing number of armed conflicts, armed bands, militia, or factions engage in criminal activity (e.g., theft, looting, extortion, drug trafficking) to fund their political/military campaigns, but frequently also for the personal enrichment of the leadership and the general livelihood of the fighting forces. Thus, in some circumstances, while the disintegrating order reflects the social chaos borne of state failure, the resulting violence or armed combat is not necessarily guided by a political program or a set of politically motivated or defined military objectives. However, these trends are part of the changing character of war, and conflicts characterized more by social chaos than political/military competition are thus included in the tabulation of current armed conflicts.

In many contemporary armed conflicts the fighting is intermittent and involves many levels of intensity. An armed conflict is deemed to have ended if there has been a formal ceasefire or peace agreement and, following which, there are no longer combat deaths (or at least fewer than 25 per year); or, in the absence of a formal ceasefire, a conflict is deemed to have ended after two years of dormancy (in which fewer than 25 combat deaths per year have occurred).

The above definition builds upon, but differs in some aspects from, the definitions of other groups producing annual conflict tabulations, notably reports from the Department of Peace and Conflict Research, Uppsala University (Sweden), published annually in the yearbook of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute.

Armed Conflicts in 2007



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