

Praise of the article 'Looking at Conflict Patterns'

(First Critical Response to Caspar ten Dam's "Looking at Conflict Patterns: Declining Frequencies yet Persistent Brutalities in both Ethnic and Non-Ethnic Conflicts")

The value of the article is to raise important questions to be asked by scholars dealing with contemporary ethnic and non-ethnic conflicts. The author convincingly claims that the frequencies of contemporary conflicts steadily drops, but not their brutalities. Testing a brutalization theory through different research methods would contribute to our better understanding of conflict patterns.

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Good Observations, yet Consultations with Authors of Datasets Required

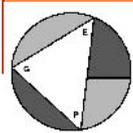
(Second Critical Response to Caspar ten Dam's "Looking at Conflict Patterns: Declining Frequencies yet Persistent Brutalities in both Ethnic and Non-Ethnic Conflicts")

The article on conflict patterns plausibly indicates the overall declines in most forms of violence - while the levels of brutalisation in the remaining instances of violence generally tend to remain high, given the very hard-to-beat reasons, circumstances and psychological dynamics of brutality itself.

However, it seems that the author has interpreted the setups and applied definitions of datasets without consulting the initiators, authors and/or implementers of those datasets. If so, he or she could have approached the latter with any questions and criticisms in order to get relevant feedback and resolve any potential and avoidable misunderstandings (and misinterpretations).

For instance, the author should or could have approached Ted Robert Gurr and other scholars involved in the Minorities at Risk project about the apparent circumscription of the 'minority' concept, and put his or her criticisms (as described in the article's Conclusion and in notes 14 and 15) before them.

For instance, note 15 states that "MAR's designation of Sudan as 'majority-dominated' in 2005 seems to refer to North Sudan dominating the 'minority' in South Sudan, which became independent in 2011—but this is not made explicit." Yet the author could have asked Gurr or anybody else at MAR whether that interpretation is correct, and whether the designation is



clarified in any of MAR's reports or categorizations of the cases in the datasets that the author has been unable to find or get access to.

Nevertheless, the article's observations are generally insightful, thought-provoking and worthy of further research by the author, other scholars or collaborative efforts by both.

- Anonymous

Author's Response

I appreciate the encouragements and suggestions by the peer reviewers (a third peer review remains both anonymous and unpublished according to that author's wishes). Admittedly, I may need to approach the authors of the conflict datasets and other sources more often and systematically.

However, I must point out that not all the scholars whose works and data outputs I have consulted, analyzed and used in my article have deigned to respond to any enquiries (about unclarities, uncertainties, etc.) that I did put to them by email months or, in some cases, even years ago. Nevertheless, I will make a renewed effort to reach them in a new round or follow-up of my conflict-pattern analyses and research.

- Caspar ten Dam

NB: do you have any comments on Caspar ten Dam's article and/or the Critical Responses? Please send these to info@ethnogeopolitics.org, or through the contact form at www.ethnogeopolitics.org.

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