

Main Article

Conflict Patterns Revisited: Trends, Frequencies, Types and Brutalities in both Ethnic and Non-Ethnic Conflicts

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Explanatory note *This article is an updated, expanded and improved version of the article by the same author that appeared in the Autumn 2015 issue of this journal titled 'Looking at Conflict Patterns: Declining Frequencies yet Persistent Brutalities in both Ethnic and Non-Ethnic Conflicts' (Vol 3. No.2, pp.9-23), partially in response to the two Critical Responses i.e. open peer-reviews in the same issue (Ibid, pp.24-25).*

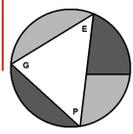
Introduction

What brutalises rebels? What makes them cruel, or makes them do things that we consider cruel and immoral? That is a primary question of my research on rebels and rebellion, i.e. the “violent opposition to the ruler, government regime[,] or state for any personal, collective or ideological purpose” (Ten Dam 2015a: 6 (quote),15). Arguably, rebels or insurgents are the most important and dominant kind of armed non-state actors. After all, without rebels, no rebellions. The question of brutalisation—which can be put to all kinds of armed actors—is of prime importance to the field of conflict studies in general and to the “emerging multidisciplinary field” of ethnogeopolitics (Rezvani 2013a: 4) in particular.¹

Actually, most conflicts appear to be internal, insurgent, ethnic and separatist in nature, and one wishes to prevent or curtail the suffering involved. A secondary yet crucial question precedes the primary one: do rebels brutalise all the time, increasingly so, or at all? And if so, to what quantifiable degrees? At first glance the answer to that seems affirmative—indeed, rather obvious. Reputations of armed opposition groups plummeted following the end of the Cold War.

The ideals of a ‘people’s war’ propounded by Ché Guevara, Mao Tse-tung and Frantz Fanon lost appeal among the young, and gained ridicule when people observed the atrocities in places ranging from Afghanistan to Sierra Leone, from Colombia to Congo. So-called ‘freedom fighters’ brought little liberation but plenty of savagery and crime; Ché, Mao and Fanon held no sway among them.

The remaining ideologues, according to many observers, appear to be Islamic terrorists who show little regard to human life. Their violence is the more frightening, because of their so-called *catastrophic terrorism* i.e. violence intended to kill as many people (civilians) as possible. This trend arose in the early 1980s, superseding a *classical terrorism* intended to gain media attention and its objectives with as few casualties as possible (Van Leeuwen,

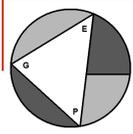


apud Van Ham *et al.* 2001: 7,11-12). Indeed, it seems as if “even the old guerrilla struggles have grown more awful.

Increasingly, “the rebel—Irish or Arab, urban or rural—has appeared cruel, a new barbarian. ... The romantic rebel is dead and gone” (Bell 1998: 4). In order to determine whether that bleak assessment is true, and if so, why it has come about, one needs to ask the following questions:²

1. Has the ‘decent’ liberation fighter, who behaves honourably towards combatants and non-combatants alike and commits no war crimes or any other atrocities, become extinct? Has it ever existed?
2. Many studies observe the ‘degeneration’ of the freedom fighter into a criminal, bandit or terrorist. Is this observation correct?
3. Have these studies focused too much on ‘new’ conflicts, overlooking the commonalities with Cold War and pre-Cold War conflicts?
4. Why do regulations such as The Hague and Geneva conventions seem to have so little impact? Do local values and customs deviate so much from international law? Or do premature and unfair condemnations of rebels as ‘terrorists’ and ‘bandits’ lie at the root of their later brutalisation, as they have nothing to lose by violating basic norms?
5. Can we determine what constitutes a ‘just revolt’, given that there may be different ‘just war’ notions in different cultures?
6. Do motivations like anger about pain, humiliation and injustice or greed for power, prestige and riches not just spawn rebellions *per se*, but also terrorism, banditry, and other (war) crimes by rebels?
7. Apart from motivations, do the pressures and horrors of battle brutalise rebels—and any other kinds of combatants for that matter?
8. Do all kinds of combatants exhibit similar kinds and degrees of brutality and brutalisation (if any)? Or does the type, status and circumstance of the armed actor in question at least partially determine his or her resort to brutalities i.e. violations of local and/or norms of violence (if any)? We should focus on the nature and behaviour of rebels and other non-state actors, as they are part of most conflicts today; but in the end we also need to analyse the nature and behaviour of soldiers and other state and semi-state actors like paramilitaries.

The first three first research questions are about whether and how much *brutalisation*, i.e. increasing resort to violence that violates local and/or international norms—that I hold are ultimately based on conscience, empathy and honour (Ten Dam 2014: 8-9)—occurs. The next four questions are about why and how brutalisation occurs for so far it does occur, and the



last one is about whether it occurs similarly or differently among all kinds of combatants, even though my present research focus is on insurgents.

A good way to answer these questions is by testing, through different yet complementary research methods (thick description, semi-quantitative tabulation and interpretation of data, quantitative analysis of data through full-fledged statistics, etc.), a *Brutalisation* theory I have developed myself, by incorporating what I consider to be the best concepts available in cultural anthropology, military psychology and other disciplines (see Ten Dam 2010: 335-343; 2011: 237-241; 2012: 226-232; 2015c: 579-611).

The theory is thus made up of the variables *violence-values* (my composite term) on proper and improper violence; *conflict-inducing motivations*, in particular grievances, avarices, interests and ideologies, that bring about i.e. cause or trigger the conflict; *combat-stresses* like fear, fatigue and rage resulting from or leading to traumas (and hypothetically to brutalities as well); and *conflict-induced motivations*, in particular grievances, avarices, interest and ideologies, that happen by, through and during the conflict.³

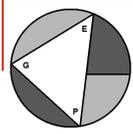
The theory thus assumes rebels—or other armed non-state and state actors—to increasingly violate local and/or international norms, in a cycle of escalating and worsening violence. As a first preliminary test of this theory, I have compared separatist rebellions by Chechens and Albanians, particularly in Chechnya (1994-1996, 1999-present) and Kosovo (1997-1999), and their historical causes and antecedents (Ten Dam 2010, 2011, 2012, 2015b).

Incidentally, elsewhere (Ten Dam 2015a) I already have argued how best to define any phenomena through a tripartite distinction between *action*, *actor* and *motive* or human drive. The consequent conceptualisations (see Appendix in Ten Dam 2015a: 13-18) I apply in my own research on brutalisation and other phenomena.

Conflict Patterns: Implications for Ethnogeopolitics and Beyond

One might ask how typical, representative and otherwise relevant the Russo-Chechen and Serbo-Albanian conflicts actually are, in the broader context of armed struggles and other forms of political violence in the past, present and (foreseeable) future. The first thing one should note is the remarkable given that both qualitative and quantitative studies—like the one by the Center for Systemic Peace (CSP) (e.g. Marshall & Cole 2014: esp. 11-13, Figure 5)⁴—have generally found an overall decrease in internal (ethnic) conflicts after 1990, despite the often-cited notion of post-Cold War instability (Gurr 2000: 52).

Figure I shown further below shows such a finding from the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP), though the generally downward trend is a highly fluctuating one, with a notably high rise in 2014: the latter year saw 40 armed conflicts including eleven wars with “at least 1,000 battle-related deaths in one calendar year” (Pettersson & Wallensteen 2015: 537)—a rise of six conflicts including five wars from 2013.



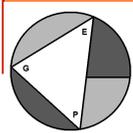
The UCDP's researchers are alarmed about this “uneven, yet clearly visible, upward trend” in recent years, not just in the number of conflicts: 2014 saw 101,400 fatalities (UCDP's best estimate), the “highest number of battle-related deaths in the post-1989 period” due to the “escalation of several conflicts” and the highly destructive conflict in Syria (Ibid: 536 (quotes), 539 (estimate of fatalities)).

Incidentally only their more recent reports provide and present figures on “trends in battle-related deaths since 1989” irrespective of the number of conflicts (Themnér & Wallensteen 2014: 541). Their fatality estimates (Ibid: 542, note 7) as shown in Figures IIa and especially IIb present an intriguing yet worrying increase in combat-related fatalities, accompanied by an undeniable increase in the number of armed conflicts, mainly due to “events in the Middle East” (Ibid: 544) like the Syrian War.

Crucially, these new trends may signify continuing brutalities or even increasing levels of brutalisation. Yet “compared to the large-scale violence of the 20th century, the number of fatalities caused by armed conflicts in 2014 is relatively low” (Pettersson & Wallensteen 2015: 536). Moreover, the overall downward trend of political violence—indeed of *any* type of private and public violence, whether counted as number of incidents or number of fatalities, across the last decades, centuries and even millennia, as convincingly shown by scholars like Steven Pinker (2011, 2012) (and Joshua S. Goldstein (2011))—even reverses the accumulation of old, unresolved, continuing armed conflicts since the Second World War (WWII). Yet these downward trends do not diminish the relevance of ethnogeopolitical research in general and the author's Brutalisation research in particular, for the following eight reasons:

1. Rebels and internal conflicts are predominant. According to the UCDP, there have been 548 conflict dyads (pairs of warring parties) in 254 armed conflicts (144 wars) active in 155 locations since the Second World War, and 144 armed conflicts (47 wars) between 1989 and 2013, many of these protracted or continuing after 1990 (Themnér & Wallensteen 2014: 541, 542).⁵ Yet rebels are still the predominant armed non-state actors, and intrastate conflicts have far outnumbered interstate conflicts for decades if not longer. Indeed, interstate conflicts “have become .. increasingly rare .. since the early 1990s, .. especially since 2004” (Themnér & Wallensteen 2011: 528).

Nowadays wars and lower-level conflicts between states are practically non-existent, though external state involvement in intrastate conflicts remain significant: thus 39 of the 40 conflicts active in 2014 (i.e. apart from the India-Pakistan conflict) were “fought within states, but 13 of them—or 33%—were internationalized in the sense that one or more [foreign] states contributed troops to one or both sides” (Pettersson & Wallensteen 2015: 537).⁶ As noted in an earlier UCDP report, “the number of internationalized intrastate conflicts continued to be at a high level” since 2012 (Themnér & Wallensteen 2013: 509).⁷



In sum, conventional wars between states have been rare since WWII and particularly since the end of the Cold War. Actually intrastate wars “*always have* outnumbered interstate wars” (M.L.R. Smith 2003: 34).

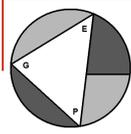
One could even argue that since the dawn of human history, most intrastate wars (and ‘lesser’ conflicts) have been *rebellions* against the incumbent regime, and that most rebellions have been *separatist* ones seeking independence or some form of self-rule for one’s own community however conceived. Seen from that perspective, the Chechen and Albanian cases are quite typical. Certainly “insurgency and its tactics are as old as warfare itself” (Sewall *et al.* 2007: 2, § 1-2).

There “always has been intercommunal strife”; indeed, intrastate wars probably will continue to outnumber interstate wars, even if the latter are “off-season” due to American hegemony and may return with a vengeance once “great-power rivals feel able to challenge” that hegemony (Gray 2005: 19, 22 (quotes)).⁸

2. Quantitative global conflict studies show a remarkable increase in both the number and intensity of conflicts during 1979-1989, arguably constituting the last period of the Cold War (e.g. Marshall & Gurr 2005: 11, Figure 3.1), a significant if temporary peak in violence that requires further elucidation and research.
3. Many or most conflict datasets overlook sorts of violence that apparently are on the increase in most recent years beyond the number of armed conflicts, like the number of violent incidents in Africa by different actors as tabulated by the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data (ACLED) Project (see Figure III).

Also the number of battled-related deaths since 1989 appears to rise overall, especially since 2011 (see Figures IIa and especially IIb, which shows the rise even more markedly), with also very high peaks in 1991 and 1999 mainly due to “the bloody conflicts fought in Ethiopia” and the interstate Ethiopian-Eritrean War respectively (Themnér & Wallenstein 2014: 542(quote)-543).⁹

Particularly both war- and peacetime terrorism might be on the rise. Thus the US State Department estimated that between 1995 and 2000 alone, so even before ‘9-11’, global terrorist violence killed and wounded 19,422 people—78% of the terrorist-related fatalities and injured from 1968 to 1989 altogether (Chalk 2002: 12 (& note 2)). More recently, the Center for Systemic Peace (CSP) estimated that High Casualty Terrorist Bombings (HCTB) i.e. “bombings by non-state actors resulting in fifteen or more deaths” have “increased dramatically since the 9/11/01 attacks” (Marshall & Cole 2014: 15, 16 (quotes))—though HCTB attacks still pale both in frequency and scale in comparison to other forms of “political or criminal violence” (Ibid: 16).¹⁰



4. The author's own definitions of identity and violence (see Ten Dam 2015c: 13-18, Appendix; Ten Dam & Polanski 2015: 227-232, Appendix B) could best be used in the author's own Brutalisation research and arguably in other kinds of violence research as well. Most datasets, including the UCDP's, heavily rely on J. David Singer & Melvin Small's classic definition of war as any sustained military conflict resulting in at least one-thousand battle-deaths per year (later expanded to at least 1,000 battle-related deaths per year).¹¹

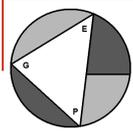
UCDP's definition of (*minor*) *armed conflict* has been widely adopted as well, as "a contested incompatibility that concern government or territory or both, where the use of armed force between two parties results in at least 25 battle-related deaths in a calendar year" (Themnér & Wallensteen 2014: 541, note 1; Pettersson & Wallensteen 2015: 536, note 1).¹²

However, such definitions "ignore the relative amount of fatalities .. when compared to the entire population. A thousand casualties in China signify a much 'smaller' conflict than a thousand casualties in Liechtenstein" (Ten Dam 1997: 7). Most war or conflict definitions also presume that all parties must possess a minimum of organisation. This leaves out violence against (practically) unarmed, unprotected or otherwise defenceless civilians in places without organised resistance.

Thus the UCDP excludes from its overall armed-conflict datasets all cases of *non-state conflict* or (instances of) violence with combatant and non-combatant casualties due to fighting between non-state groups only, and cases of *one-sided violence* with direct and deliberate attacks against civilians. It also only counts civilian casualties as 'battle-related deaths' that are the result of unintentional if careless and disproportionate 'collateral damage' from combat between opposing parties so as "to make sure that no one-sided violence" is "coded as part of the armed conflict" (Pettersson & Wallensteen 2015: 540 (quote), 549).¹³

Some other yet unfortunately discontinued datasets like PIOOM's count "indirect conflict-related deaths" caused by "hunger, diseases, and exhaustion" as well (Jongman 1995: 16 (2nd quote), 17 (1st quote)).¹⁴ Since recently the UCDP does provide, for the first time, overall datasets on *organized violence* that include (separate, distinguishable datasets on) non-state conflicts and one-sided violence as well, next to those of *state-based conflicts* i.e. armed conflicts between "two governments" (interstate) or "a government and a rebel organization" (intrastate) for the period 1989-2014 (Melander 2015: 2 (incl. quotes); see Pettersson & Wallensteen 2015: 549, note 25). Indeed, its new data "show that also the other two types of violence ... —conflict between non-state actors and violence targeting civilians— increased substantially in 2014" as shown Figures IVa and IVb.¹⁵

The latter figures show how much difference the inclusion or exclusion of one major genocide like the one in Rwanda in 1994 makes for the entire post-Cold War period.



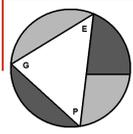
Only the exclusion of this genocide from the dataset makes state-based conflict the most lethal actor-type of conflict during this period. But even its inclusion would not make this period the most violent one since WWII.

Data on large-scale massacres (genocides and/or politicides) by the Center for Systemic Peace (Marshall *et al.* 2015, 2016; see Melander 2015: 8, Figure 8) ¹⁶ show that “during the Cold War there were at least five .. truly massive genocides” that makes the violence in the 1998-2014 period including the Rwanda Genocide and the “present carnage in the form of one-sided violence in parts of the Middle East and Africa” pale in comparison” (Melander 2015: 9).

However, one may question UDCP’s decision to reserve the armed-conflict concept to state-based conflicts only ¹⁷, in contrast to the author’s definition of armed conflict as “violent confrontation between two or more armed actors” be they state, semi-state or non-state (see Appendix in Ten Dam 2015c: 13-18). Be that as it may, overall conflict data should collate and present purely non-state conflicts in e.g. weakened, collapsed or utterly vanished states as well—and all instances of violence between non-state actors (and casualties caused by them) in or during the other (kinds of) conflicts.

Even though the author’s definitions of war and armed conflict also presume that “at least one party is able to resist another’s use of overt military force” (Most & Starr 1983: 140), the broadest conflict or rather violence datasets ought to include cases of one-sided, uncontested violence against powerless people unable to arm and defend themselves—both in ‘wartime’ and ‘peacetime’ however conceived.

5. There may be fewer yet more brutal(ised) instances of violence. It may well be true that the “obsolescence of major war is just one of many historical declines of violence” (Pinker 2011: 309) apparently accompanied by “humane developments such as the abolition of slavery, despotism, and cruel punishments” (Pinker 2012: xxvi (quote) & his note 3).¹⁸ Still, one needs to verify these apparent trends of *debrutalisation* (own term) or increasing respect of existing norms and *humanisation* (ibid) towards ‘higher’ norms, by falsifying the Brutalisation theory. Actually, the overall decline of violence may be as valid as, and coincide with, the brutalisation dynamics in the remaining, ever fewer instances of armed conflict and other forms of violence.
6. The author’s two-case study (Chechnya and Kosovo) in his overall Brutalisation research project explores unfamiliar terrain. Scholars rarely study Eurasian insurgencies compared with those in Africa, the America’s and South-East Asia. Table I below showing numbers of Google search-engine hits in 2016 for these (sub-)regions seems to largely corroborate this—though some search terms concerning these



regions, like 'South(-)Eastern Europe', get rather high numbers of hits on 'Google NL search'.¹⁹

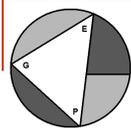
Arguably, Eurasian *Muslim* non-state actors are least researched of all, despite their apparently crucial role in the break-ups of the Soviet and Yugoslav federations. Also, Kosovo and Chechnya share the "experience of colonialism" and "problems of building new institutions" in the Third World (Horowitz 2000: 18).²⁰ Actually, it would be "wise and indeed urgent to compare the histories, deprivations and current fragilities of post-colonial countries in the (former) Third World and those of post-communist countries in the (former) Second World".²¹

7. Studying secessions may enhance understanding of the breakups of Communist federations, though the core aim of my ongoing research to understand rebel degenerations rather than state disintegrations. Both rightwing Totalitarianists (M. Malia, Z. Brezinski) and leftwing Modernisationists (J. Hough, A. Dallin, R. Suny) did not foresee Gorbachev's liberating yet destabilising *perestroika*, *glasnost* and *demokratzia* policies. Once the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia disintegrated, they claimed that these events were bound to happen: liberalisations deligitimised the Communist system and legitimised separatism (Totalitarianists), or cultural-socio-economic developments increased national consciousness (Modernisationists).

Yet "these structural characteristics cannot account by themselves for the collapse of the USSR in retrospect, as they have been used to emphasize the stability of the system as well" (Ten Dam 1993: 5; Lipset & Bence 1994). More likely the "breakdown of socialist system was not inevitable" (Szelényi & Szelényi 1994: 212 (quote)-218). Even Modernisationists applying "resource mobilization theories" that challenged "relative deprivation" (Mason 1992: 108) cannot explain persistent secessionism in 'non-sovereign' territories that had few chances to gain international recognition, like Chechnya and Kosovo (Walker 2003: 3-4,12,164-168 & chapter 4).²²

8. As I describe more extensively in the review essay presented in the journal's current issue, multiple interrelated factors can explain secessionist ethno-territorial conflicts —arguably the most frequent type of armed conflict for decades or even since the dawn of human history (see reason 1)—like Chechnya's independence struggle against Russia's might.

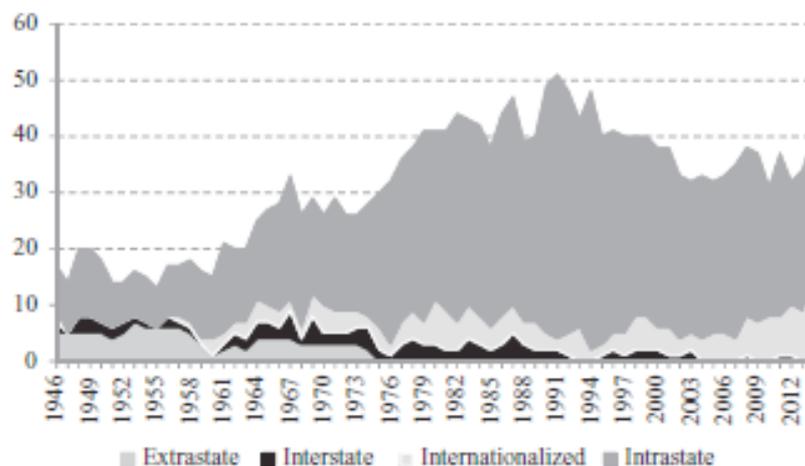
These factors include grievances of severe deprivations in the past and demographical size and dominance of the initiating (rebellious) party (Rezvani 2013b: esp. 227-249 (Chechnya); Rezvani 2014 (on Chechnya); Rezvani 2015). Yet Babak Rezvani stresses that such factors only make any conflict truly likely, in a time of interethnic tensions and state fragmentation, when the ethnicities concerned live next to each other in



concentrated pockets (*mosaic configuration*) within ethno-politically constructed territories: “in addition to their demographic dominance in their autonomous homeland, the burden of trauma caused by their genocidal deportation [in 1944] as well as a certain peculiarity of the Caucasus—probably its mosaic type of ethno-geographic configuration—are crucial factors, which in combination can explain the Chechen conflict” (Rezvani 2013b: 249; see also Rezvani 2014: 886).

One’s focus on non-state violence should not neglect state violence. Even if “civil war has been a far greater scourge than interstate war” (Fearon & Laitin 2003: 75) with at least sixteen million combatant and non-combatant deaths since WWII, state terrorism has killed and hurt far more defenceless people (unarmed civilians, disarmed combatants, etc.) than any non-state terrorism. States often overreact to planned insurrections and spontaneous revolts, and even more often initiate violence unprovoked by any violence from ‘their’ citizens. In the twentieth century states have killed, through both wars and peacetime repressions, over a hundred million people, mainly defenceless civilians—at least ten times the number of people rebels have been able to kill (Chirot 1994: esp. 7,9).

Figure I Number of Armed Conflicts by Type, 1946–2014



Extrastate [extrastate] armed conflict: between government of a state and non-state group(s) outside its territory (colonial and imperial wars etc.)²³; *Interstate* armed conflict: conflict between two or more states; *Internationalised internal* [international intrastate] armed conflict: between government and opposition groups, with intervention from foreign state(s); *Internal* [intrastate] armed conflict: between government and internal opposition groups. Niels Gleditsch *et al.*, ‘Armed Conflict 1946-2001’ *Journal of Peace Research* Vol. 39 No.5, September 2002, p.619.

Source: Therése Pettersson, & Peter Wallensteen, ‘Armed Conflicts, 1946-2014’ *Journal of Peace Research* Vol.52 No.4, July 2015, pp.536 (note 1: “www.pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/definitions/”), 539.

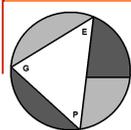
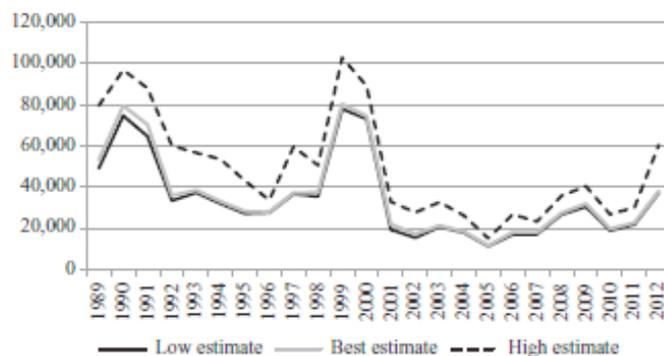
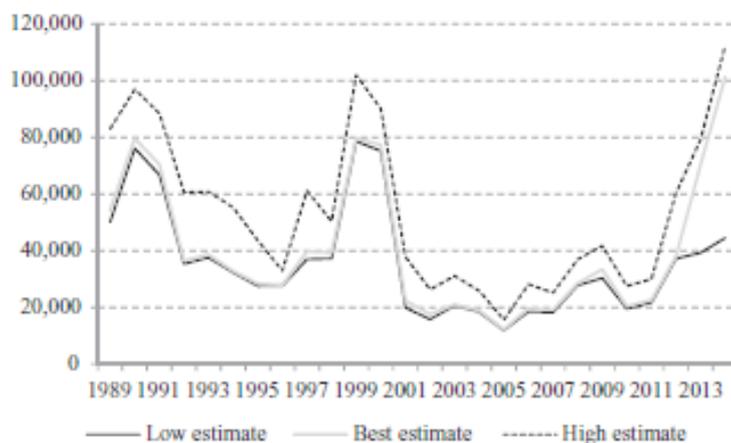


Figure IIa Battle-related Deaths by Type of Estimate, 1989–2012



Source:Themnér (Harbom) & Peter Wallensteen, 'Armed Conflict, 1946-2013' *Journal of Peace Research* Vol.51 No.4, July 2014, p.544, Figure 2 (note: "total estimate for battle-related deaths in 2013 is not included since no reliable battle deaths estimate data for Syria could be provided").

Figure IIb Battle-related Deaths by Type of Estimate, 1989–2014



Source: Therése Petterson, & Peter Wallensteen, 'Armed Conflicts, 1946-2014' *Journal of Peace Research* Vol.52 No.4, July 2015, p.540, Figure 2. ²⁴

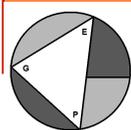
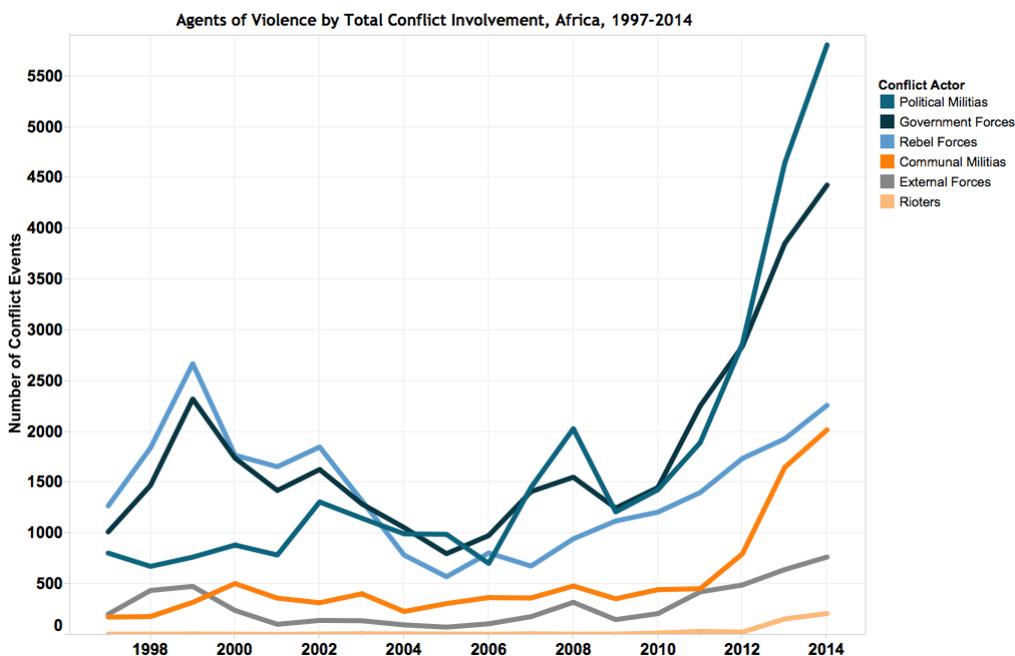


Figure III



Source: Armed Conflict Location and Event Data (ACLED) Project, 'Trend 2: Agents of Violence in 2014', www.acleddata.com/agents-of-violence-in-2014 (last visited 4-04-2015).²⁵

NB: if not detectable in colour in Figure III: highest line at 2014 = Political Militias; next-highest line = Government Forces; third line = Rebel Forces; fourth line = Communal Militias; next-lowest line = External Forces; lowest line = Rioters. For definitions, see Clionadh Raleigh, & Caitriona Dowd, *Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED) Codebook 2015* University of Sussex (formerly at PRIO), 2015, pp.4-7; www.acleddata.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/ACLED_Codebook_2015.pdf.

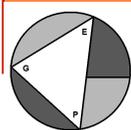


Figure IVa Yearly fatalities in organized violence (1989-2014) including the Rwandan Genocide

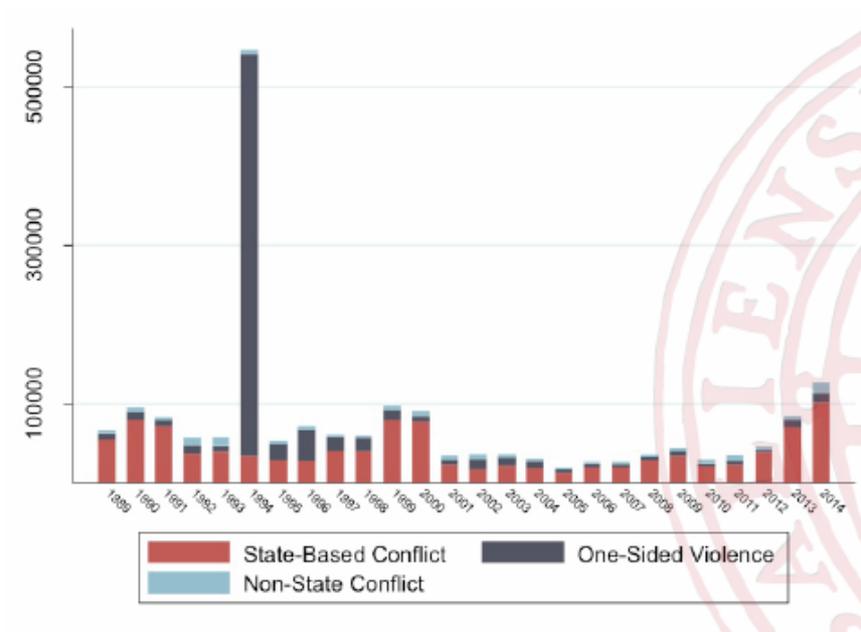
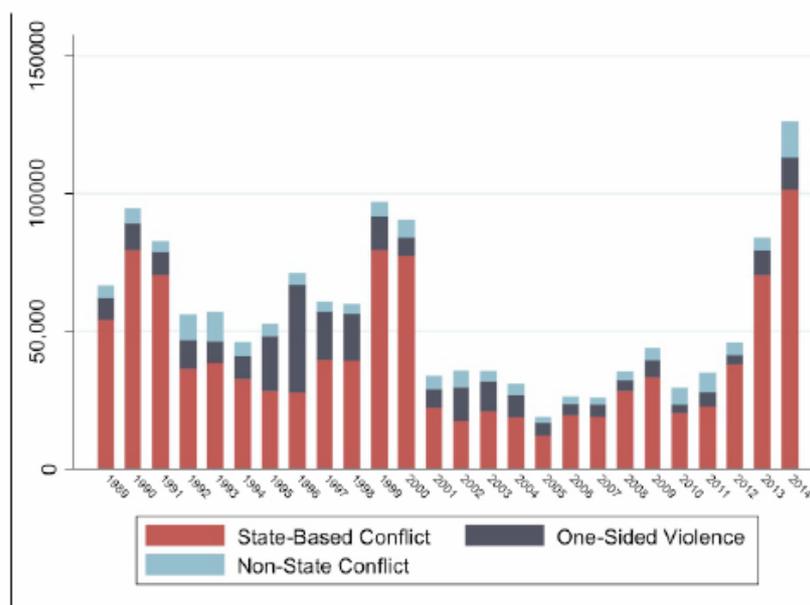


Figure IVb Yearly fatalities in organized violence (1989-2014) excluding the Rwandan Genocide



Source: Erik Melander, *Organized Violence in the World 2015—An assessment by the Uppsala Conflict Data Program* Uppsala, Sweden: Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP), Uppsala University, Sweden UCDP Paper No. 9, 2015, p.3, Figure 2 & p.4, Figure 3; www.pcr.uu.se/digitalAssets/61/61335_1brochure2.pdf.

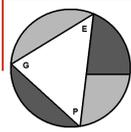


Table I Number of Google hits for search terms on regional conflict studies 2016*

Search terms: ‘[region] conflict studies’	Google NL*** Accessed 19-08-2016	Google Scholar (http://scholar.google.nl/) Accessed 22-08-2016	Google Scholar – advanced scholar search Accessed 22-08-2016
Eurasia conflict studies**	461,000 707,000	74,900 3,940	74,900 3,940
Caucasia	557,000	87,800	89,200
Caucasus	1.710,000	57,800	57,800
Northern Caucasus / North Caucasus	1.470,000	68,800	68,800
Central Asia	2.060,000	1.890,000	1.900,000
Balkan	381,000	90,600	90,600
South-Eastern Europe	20.600,000	56,200	56,200
South Eastern Europe	20.700,000	1.820,000	1.820,000
Africa	3.360,000	1.870,000	1.870,000
Asia	2.100,000	2.080,000	2.080,000
South East Asia	1.060,000	2.020,000	2.020,000
Southeast Asia	2.030,000	908,000	908,000
America	3.090,000	3.600,000	3.600,000
Central America	2.690,000	3.170,000	3.270,000
Southern America	42.200,000	2.420,000	2.420,000
South America	2.460,000	3.040,000	3.040,000
Middle East	4.230,000	2.860,000	2.860,000
Middle Eastern	3.840,000	2.430,000	2.380,000

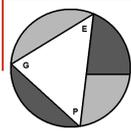
*: see for an earlier 2009 version of this table <http://sites.google.com/site/tristansolutions/google-hits-for-region-conflict-studies> (reproduced in Ten Dam 2015:c 18, Table I), which among other things show more differences between the basic (middle column) and advanced (right column) Google Scholar hits than in the 2016 version.

**’: ‘conflict studies’ was added to the name/designation of each region.

***: general search on ‘Google NL’ (www.google.nl) also included newspaper articles, research institutes, etc. (the 2009 version used the ‘Google UK’ search engine, as I was in Belfast at the time— see further note *).

Conclusion: Notes of Caution

Regarding the conflict trends described, assessed and summarised above, one needs to make two cautionary notes, particularly to those involved in the field of ethnogeopolitics, but also to any scholars who may tend to overrate the universal application of their discipline or the general validity of their preferred theory or research approach: 1) ethnic conflicts may be predominant, but not all conflicts are ethnic in nature; and 2) not all conflicts are caused by majorities suppressing minorities.



First, one should not presume that all internal conflicts, or even all conflicts *per se*, are ethnic in character depending on one's definition of ethnicity—as for instance Donald Horowitz appears to do in his otherwise excellent research. Horowitz presumes that *ethnic conflict* has acquired an “ubiquitous character” due to Decolonisation and the “dismemberment of empires and large states”, concluding that the “permeative character of ethnic affiliations” determines the nature of practically all conflicts (Horowitz 2000: 5,4,7 (quotes)).²⁶

Yet one should envisage and expect to encounter non-ethnic, civic conflicts, and allow the generic term ‘conflict’ to include such phenomena, however rare these may be. Actually, non-ethnic conflicts appear to be quite frequent, even if the ethnic intrastate conflict still is the dominant type.

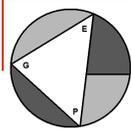
Moreover, I do not deem it wise to loosely apply or interchange characterising, adjective terms and concepts like ‘ethnic’ and ‘national’, even if these do seem to refer to kindred, interrelated or overlapping phenomena. Consequently, I conceptualise *patriotism* and *nationalism* as loyalties and identities that may or may not be based on *ethnicity* i.e. any group with an “actual or perceived common ancestry” (Ten Dam 2014: 6; see further Ten Dam 2015a: 6,14).

Generally, I deplore the cavalier and over-generalised use of so many concepts, like ‘identity’ and ‘modernity’ (see Ten Dam 2010: 335-340), not just the concept of ‘ethnicity’ or the composite term ‘ethnic conflict’. Alas, “Although the technical meanings of the terms “ethnic,” “ethnoreligious,” “communal,” and “national” are not identical, it is becoming an increasingly standard shorthand to refer to the whole field as the study of “ethnic conflict” (Licklider & Bloom 2007: 1, note 3).²⁷ Therefore, conflicts *per se* may refer to other contrary, perhaps even irreconcilable, interests than mutually antagonistic identity claims by actual and (self-)perceived ethnicities—like redistributive demands by certain socio-economic classes which cut across ethnic cleavages.

Second, one should neither presume that all internal conflicts are ethnic in character, nor assume that invariably majorities suppress minorities—as Ted Robert Gurr's Minorities at Risk (MAR) Project ²⁸ seems to suggest.²⁹ Conflicts can be “initiated .. by minorities against majorities, or by minorities against other minorities” (Tishkov 2004: 9), and often “representatives of minorities dominate and suppress “others” ” (Ibid).

Indeed, in many cases numerical minorities suppress numerical majorities; think of South-Africa under Apartheid, or contemporary Sudan essentially ruled by three Arab tribes constituting just five percent of its population—now a higher percentage but still constituting a small minority in Sudan since the definite breakaway and independence of South Sudan in 2011.

Thus the MAR project's designating of ‘minority elite’ for Sudan as being “No: Northern majority dominates” (Marshall & Gurr 2005: 60, Table 8.2) is misleading or at least confusing. Labels are arbitrary, unless their definitions are clarified and their frameworks specified: thus

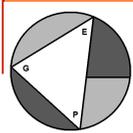


Kosovar Albanians are (or were) a numerical ‘minority’ in Serbia, but constitute a numerical ‘majority’ in Kosovo. The same can be said of the Chechens in and beyond Chechnya.

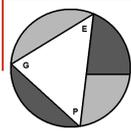
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Endnotes

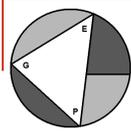
1. There is “no general consensus on the definitions of geopolitics and ethnopolitics, and hence ethnogeopolitics also cannot be easily or non-controversially defined” (Rezvani 2013a: 4). Still, while geopolitics in the broader sense is “focused on military strategy, economics and natural resources, but also on culture”, traditional geopolitics is focused on “states and global regimes” only while ethnogeopolitics looks at all these factors at “the level of peoples” (Ibid.: 4 (quotes)). NB: the earlier article contains the same references to “Rezvani 2013” (Ten Dam 2015c: 9 & note 1), but unfortunately the source in question—Rezvani’s Editorial of the journal’s maiden issue—is absent from its Bibliography (Ibid: 21). This oversight has been corrected in the current article.
2. I thank Prof. Adrian Guelke for helping me to formulate these first probing questions during the early phase of my PhD research at Queen’s University Belfast in 2005-2006. I added the eight research question in later years, when I studied the literature on combat-stress (see Ten Dam 2012, 2015b).
3. From 2005 till early 2014, the Brutalisation theory, with some modifications, has been described as “a cycle of violence involving four main variables: “values on “good” and “bad” violence (variable 1); grievances leading to armed conflict (variable 2); combat stress leading to atrocities (variable 3); and new conflict grievances emanating from such atrocities (variable 4), spawning counter-atrocities and eventually hardening or debasing the original violence-values (the cycle returns to the first variable)” (Ten Dam 2010: 332). Since then, the theory’s variables have been widened and reformulated, so as to more equally represent different motivations as explanations of brutal behaviour.
4. Monty G. Marshall’s. & Benjamin R. Cole’s *Global Report 2014* is the most recent one freely available at www.systemicpeace.org/globalreport.html (acc. 18 August 2016). Unlike UCDP’s straightforward if simplified counts of number of armed conflicts (see Figure I in the text), the CSP applies a more advanced yet more complicated and thereby contestable 10-point-scale measure of *magnitude* of “each “major episode of political violence” (armed conflict)” including (a weighing of) “numbers of combatants and casualties, affected area, dislocated population, and extent of infrastructure damage” (Marshall & Cole 2014: 12, note 7).
5. In 2015, the UCDP reports 567 conflict dyads (pairs of warring parties) in 259 armed conflicts active in 159 locations since 1946 (Pettersson & Wallensteen 2015: 537), but Petterson & Wallensteen do neither clearly indicate the number of major armed conflicts or wars during 1946-2014, nor the number of armed conflicts (both minor armed conflicts and wars) between 1989 and 2014. One cannot simply add the conflicts for each year (Ibid: 538, Table I), as many or most of the same conflicts continue into the next year.
6. In 2014, UCDP reported that all 33 conflicts in 2013 were “fought within states, but nine of them—or 27%—were internationalized in the sense that one or more states contributed troops to one or both sides” (Themnér & Wallensteen 2014: 542). In 2015, it added one additional active conflict for both 2013 and 2014, an internal conflict in Myanmar (Pettersson & Wallensteen 2015: 537, note 2). In



- earlier UCDP reports, no breakdowns on numbers of extrasystemic conflicts between state and outside non-state group(s), and intrastate, international(ised) intrastate and interstate conflicts, are given for e.g. 1946-2010/2011 and 1989-2010/2011 (Themnér & Wallensteen 2011, 2012); nor are these easily available at www.pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/datasets/.
7. Preceding UCDP reports (e.g. Harbom & Wallensteen 2007; Harbom, Melander & Wallensteen 2008) also have noticed the low numbers of interstate conflicts and relatively high numbers of ‘internationalised intrastate’ conflicts in which at least one of the warring parties (government or opposition) “receive military support in the form of troops from another government” (Harbom & Wallensteen 2009: 577, 578 (Table II, note b: quote)).
 8. Colin S. Gray recognises that most armed conflicts have been, and probably will be, internal; he just warns against the overconfident assertion that (major) interstate wars are becoming forever extinct.
 9. Perhaps the 1999 peak of battle-related deaths is also due to the Kosovo War, but then other high-intensity conflicts with even more casualties such the American occupation of Iraq from 2003 onwards, should have provided even higher numbers and peaks of battle-related deaths.
 10. CSP’s definition of terrorism (if any) appears to involve “killing and maiming mainly non-combatants” (Marshall & Cole 2014: 15), but also appears to include other violence by “non-state actors” (Ibid) as well, such as violence against combatants and exclusively political and military targets (barracks, government buildings etc.). The first aspect closely concurs with my definition of terrorism, the latter two do not (see Ten Dam 2015c: 13-18, Appendix; Ten Dam & Polanski 2015: 227-232, Appendix B).
 11. In 1963 J. David Singer founded the Correlates of War (COW) project to accumulate data on wars since 1816 (www.correlatesofwar.org). See also the classics: J. David Singer & Melvin Small, *The Wages of War, 1816-1965: A Statistical Handbook* New York: John Wiley, 1972; J. D. Singer *et al.*, *Explaining War: Selected Papers from the Correlates of War Project* Beverly Hills/London: Sage Publications, 1979.
 12. The UCDP distinguishes between *minor armed conflicts* of “at least 25 battle-related deaths in a year but fewer than 1,000” and *wars* of at least 1,000 battle-related deaths in a year” (see Themnér & Wallensteen 2014: 553; Pettersson & Wallensteen 2015: 549), whereby “major armed conflict” implicitly appears to be an alternative composite term for war. One of the qualitative elements of UCDP’s overall armed-conflict definition (including that of war) is the existence of declared and incompatible goals between the opposing parties, termed *incompatibility*, the “stated (in writing or verbally) generally incompatible positions” (Ibid; Ibid).
 13. Combat, battle or warfare includes “traditional battlefield fighting, guerrilla activities (e.g. hit-and-run attacks/ambushes) and all kinds of bombardments” (Pettersson & Wallensteen 2015: 549).
 14. During the time I worked for PIOOM between 1998 and 2002 and ever since, I have hardly ever encountered any conflict dataset that matches or even approaches the breadth, nuance and precision of PIOOM’s dataset(s) compiled by Alex Schmid and Berto Jongman.
 15. Announcement report “Organized Violence in the World 2015” (see Melander 2015): www.pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/definitions/ (last acc. 15-08-2016).
 16. Erik Melander states that his Figure 8 “shows the number of genocides and politicides with at least 1,000 victims as reported by the Center for Systemic Peace” in countries with intrastate conflict (Melander 2015: 8)—but does not indicate whether the Figure is a direct reproduction of one made by the Center for Systematic Peace.
 17. Armed conflict is “also referred to as “state-based conflict”, as opposed to “non-state conflict”, in which none of the warring parties is a government”: www.pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/definitions/ (last acc. 15-08-2016).



18. Pinker already noted some of the “downward trends” (Pinker 2012: xxvi (quote) & his note 3) of violence like homicide in his earlier works (Pinker 1998: 518-519; Pinker 2002: 166-169, 320, 330-336; the page references seem to fit with the editions shown in the Bibliography).
19. There are some notable differences between the Google hits as shown in Table I and those shown in an earlier 2009 version (Ten Dam 2015c: 18, Table I). Thus hits on region terms within Eurasia generally are much higher in 2016 than in 2009 (e.g. ‘North Caucasus’ Google Scholar: 21,500 in 2009, 68,800 in 2016). But so are those of most other regions outside Eurasia, which continue to show much higher numbers. These increases may be simply (partially) due to the amassment of sources and thus search-engine hits over the subsequent years.
20. Horowitz focuses “on Asia and Africa” (Horowitz 2000: xvii), as ethnicity is supposedly “less urgent” in the West” (Ibid: 18)—despite the noted “fragmentation of two .. Eurasian pseudofederations” (Ibid: xi).
21. Caspar ten Dam, comments on the ‘Annual Conference 2015 of the Knowledge Platform Security & Rule of Law’, www.ctdamconsultancy.com/uncategorized/invited-participant-at-annual-conference-of-the-knowledge-platform-security-rule-of-law/ (posted 25 June 2015).
22. Yet since 2008, governments stopped refusing to “recognize Kosovo” (Walker 2003: 17, note 12).
23. The UCDP considers the defined, categorised and coded type of “extrasystemic armed conflict” dormant or defunct, as “the last such conflict ended in 1974” (Pettersen & Wallensteen 2015: 549, note 26). But one may question UCDP’s decision not to consider and count as ‘extrasystemic’ conflicts armed confrontations between globally oriented non-state groups like Al-Qaeda and IS/Daesh, and recognised states outside the latter’s territories.
24. Notably “Themnér & Wallensteen (2014) refrained from reporting fatality estimates for the conflict in Syria, due to problems stemming from a combination of ‘issue crowding’ and ‘issue fatigue’. However, in 2014 the UN published a report on fatality estimates, and the SOHR (Syrian Observatory for Human Rights) provided more detailed breakdowns of their summary figures” (Pettersen & Wallensteen 2015: 540).
25. The number of conflict events shows a modest yet significant drop for 2015 in ‘Figure 1: Political Violence by Conflict Agent, Africa, 2009-2015’, www.acleddata.com/agents-of-violence-in-2015 (last visited 24-11-2016).
26. Horowitz does not come up with an explicit, universal definition of ethnic conflict, though he circumscribes ethnicity as group identity differentiated “by color, language, religion, or some other attribute of common origin” (Horowitz 2000: 17-18,41). Still, Horowitz seems to suggest that practically all internal conflicts are ethnic in nature. Though he allows for other types of ethnic conflict, like “ethnically based military coups” (Ibid: xvi), he practically equates it with rebellion.
27. Unsurprisingly, Roy Licklider and Mia Bloom’s same footnote 3 refer to Horowitz’ *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (2000).
28. Since 2014, an additional “All Minorities at Risk (AMAR) project addresses selection bias concerns identified in the MAR database. AMAR builds on MAR but uses a new set of selection criteria – based on the concept of “socially relevant” ethnic groups, rather than [exclusively] groups that are “at risk”” (www.mar.umd.edu/; last accessed: 22-08-2016).
29. Even if any of the “284 politically-active ethnic groups” tracked from “1945 to the present” represent majorities as in numbers of people in a certain country or region, the project’s title— ‘Minorities at Risk’—suggests otherwise (www.cidcm.umd.edu/mar/about.asp; last accessed: 22-08-2016). Even when looking at definitional criteria of groups constituting a minority at risk (MAR), it remains unclear if and to what extent a numerical criterion is being applied (not even criteria 1 and 2 make this sufficiently clear): thus criterion 4 states that these “include advantaged



minorities like the Sunni Arabs of Iraq .., but exclude advantaged majorities” (www.cidcm.umd.edu/mar/definition.asp; last acc. 22-08-2016). Then what about disadvantaged majorities? Are these latter groups really excluded from the data? Then one gets a lopsided picture, which neglects numerical majorities that are or may be at risk of marginalisation, discrimination and worse.

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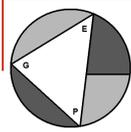
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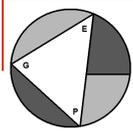
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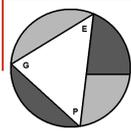
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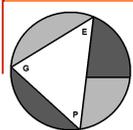
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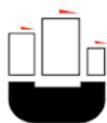


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