

## WHY A CONFLICT SERIES?

The EUISS Conflict Series examines contemporary conflict situations and conflict-related thematic issues with the aim of contributing to enhanced conflict analysis that serves policy planning and policymaking. Ultimately, the series strives to provide insights that can help prevent and resolve violent conflicts and address their destructive and far-reaching political, humanitarian, economic and environmental consequences. In addition, the series seeks to further our understanding of urgent global challenges and megatrends, such as climate change, digitalisation and migration from a conflict-sensitive perspective. The series considers the EU's Global Strategy and its recognition of the need to tackle conflicts in an integrative manner to be intertwined with other key priorities of security, resilience, multilateral cooperation and rule-based global governance. In essence, the series will look at the:

- > **Key factors and conditions that influence** different stages of conflict and how these could be constructively shaped by instruments including development and governance, multilateral diplomacy, crisis management, mediation, peacebuilding, etc.

Moreover, the series adopts a:

- > **Forward-looking perspective**, focusing not only on how conflict-related processes have unfolded but also drawing from research and conflict expertise to assess possible future implications of the analysed conflict aspects.

While all conflict situations are unique, common factors relating to their emergence, dynamics and end can be identified and used in assessing risks and monitoring developments in specific contexts. Indeed, due to enhanced research methodologies and the increasing availability of time series and cross-sectional data, researchers have been able to develop models estimating conflict probabilities under different conditions and even predicting future conflict dynamics using trends in the key factors influencing conflict. The EU also takes advantage of the developed scientific models of armed conflict in assessing conflict risks and early warning signs across the world. Beyond these models, however, case studies and thematic analyses are needed to explore how factors identified as important – from regime stability and inter-elite relations to inequality levels, past conflicts and peace processes, geopolitics, environmental shocks, economic development, etc. – play out and generate or mitigate conflicts in different contexts. It is here where the series positions itself with **the aim of producing Briefs that analyse why, how, or under what conditions different conflict-related outcomes occur, grounding the analysis in specific conflict contexts or thematic issues.**

## HOW DO WE DO THIS?

We invite contributions of approximately 4,500 words,<sup>1</sup> focusing on any stage of the conflict cycle, from early warning and prevention of conflict to escalation, management, stabilisation and resolution. The Briefs should include:

- > A clear research question and a clearly defined analytical framework
- > A succinct background to the current situation, with the bulk of the Brief focusing on the analysis of the chosen research question
- > Evidence-based analysis (inferences concerning effects and dynamics need to be grounded on credible evidence, such as primary empirical evidence, reports, research findings etc.)

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1. The maximum word count for a Brief (including visuals, text boxes etc. but excluding endnotes) is 5,000.

- > Data visualisations. The EUISS has in-house data visualisation capacity, and all Briefs will include visuals that help to capture the main trends of a given topic/situation
- > References.

We encourage our authors to consider realistic future scenarios given the analysed conflict aspects and to identify possible opportunities for peaceful conflict management. These can be short-term strategies that are most crucial to undertake in order to prevent/mitigate escalation or long-term efforts required to support more peaceful development.

All Briefs undergo a thorough review process by the EUISS, including substantive review and a copy-editing process. Only Briefs with a clear research focus and evidence-based analysis will be published by the EUISS. Guidelines concerning the technical aspects of a brief will be provided to all authors. The Briefs are published on the EUISS website and printed versions are automatically sent out to a wide distribution list, reaching key European policymakers. All the Briefs represent the views and perspectives of their authors and should not be taken as indications of the views of any EU body. The series aims at publishing in 4-8 weeks intervals during the time period of autumn 2019 to autumn 2020.

While the Briefs focus on a variety of aspects that are relevant to conflicts, there are some over-arching themes that will likely be discussed in many of the case-specific analyses, including governance institutions and their strengthening, state-civil society relations and the wider regional and international interests embedded in conflicts. Furthermore, the series welcomes thematically focused analyses that sensitise our readership to urgent contemporary and future issues (e.g. climate change and conflict, cyber security).

### WHAT IS CONFLICT AND WHERE IS IT GOING?

Conflict is an unescapable part of social interaction and prevalent in any society. As its simplest, conflict refers to the presence of incompatible interests between two or more parties, be it individuals, societal groups, nation states or international organisations and alliances. Notably, the manner in which a conflict manifests itself – the way we go about resolving the dilemma of contesting interests – varies greatly. Whether a conflict is waged in conventional means, such as through electoral politics, or by resorting to contentious means of civil resistance or different forms of violence depends on various structural, institutional, and political actor-specific factors. Violence, unlike conflict, is not inevitable but an extreme way to wage conflict. Considering this, the series focuses on conflicts that involve groups with some political aims and interests, such as local communities, mobilised non-violent protesters, states and rebel groups. Specifically, we aim at contributing to the discussion on the prevention, mitigation and resolution of conflicts that involve the use of contentious and particularly violent means of fighting.

Violent conflict in its most extreme forms – e.g. civil wars, deliberate attacks against civilians and protracted violence between communities – takes place and threatens multiple regions, countries and areas around the world. There are some key trends with regard to the types and forms of conflict that we witness today. Amid the decline of inter-state wars (e.g. armed conflicts between two or more sovereign states), the international community's attention has been directed to intra-state conflicts (internal armed struggles between the state and at least one non-state rebel/insurgency group). Intra-state conflicts account for an overwhelmingly large share of organised violence involving states, with 50 out of 52 recorded state-based armed conflicts in 2018 being characterised as such. These internal armed struggles have a heavy toll on the societies in which they occur: the Syrian civil war alone led to an estimated 11,500 fatalities in 2018.<sup>2</sup>

Alongside intrastate conflicts, recent decades have witnessed an increase in the number of non-state conflicts, i.e. armed violence between non-government conflict parties, such as fighting between different insurgent groups or communities organised along collective identities, such as ethnic, religious or tribal identities. For example, in the highly internationalised civil war in Yemen, rebel groups fighting against the state have been simultaneously engaged in lethal violence against each other.<sup>3</sup> Also, while

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2. For clarification of different types of organised violence and descriptive statistics on trends in armed violence, see Therése Pettersson, Stina Hogbladh, and Magnus Oberg, "Organized violence, 1989-2018", *Journal of Peace Research*, June 2019, pp.1-15.

3. Ibid.

the main cleavage between a government and rebel groups often captures the international community's and media's attention, more localised conflicts also have heavy death tolls and destabilise entire regions. In Nigeria, for example, an increased availability of firearms has made communal violence between farmers and pastoralists highly lethal, displacing tens of thousands of people and at times causing more fatalities than the Boko Haram insurgency.<sup>4</sup> The multitude of conflict actors does not only apply to non-state groups: in many conflict environments, states outsource certain security functions and make use of pro-government militias.<sup>5</sup>

Indeed, complexity is a defining characteristic of contemporary conflict environments, as a multitude of local, national and international actors take part in different levels (and types) of conflict in a given time in a given area. While the proliferation of countries' internal conflicts – both civil wars and non-state conflicts – means that conflicts often take place in a geographically limited subnational or local area, we are simultaneously witnessing the internationalisation of conflicts. Armed groups such as Daesh mobilise and operate in several countries and armed conflicts cross borders through the flow of transboundary groups, arms and grievances. Linked to this, technological developments are transforming contemporary conflicts. Remote attacks can be launched farther away from their target with greater precision – and conflict also takes place online and in cyberspace. These different types and levels of conflict often take place at the same time, fuelling one another and forming complex conflict systems.

A key question given the complexity of contemporary conflicts is how international actors, such as the EU, should best 'preserve peace, prevent conflicts and strengthen international security.'<sup>6</sup> While there is increasing awareness of the interconnectedness of different conflict layers and actors, implementing holistic and inclusive efforts that would tackle these linkages is challenging. For example, a recent study found that pro-government militias are often left out of peace negotiations and disarmament processes, which can render them potential spoilers of peace.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, empirical evidence shows that recent years have seen a general decline in conflict resolution through peace agreements, a finding that is partially attributed to the internationalisation of civil conflicts.<sup>8</sup> The EU has developed an ambitious set of tools that can contribute to conflict prevention in the long term, respond to signs of conflict escalation and contribute to the peaceful resolution and stabilisation of conflict situations.<sup>9</sup> However, careful analysis and lessons learned are needed in order to better understand when and how these and other tools can be constructively used to prevent or mitigate violent conflict and its destructive consequences. The aim of the Conflict Series is to contribute to this need by providing case specific and thematic analyses of conflict in the contemporary world.

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4. ISS, "Nigeria (Farmer – Pastoralist)", Armed Conflict Survey 2019, May 2019, pp.317-326; Amnesty International, "Harvest of Death: Three Years of Bloody Clashes Between Farmers and Herders in Nigeria", 2018, <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/AFR4495032018ENGLISH.PDF>.

5. The Pro-Government Militia Database shows governments to collaborate with militias in approx. 81% country-years of armed conflict. See Sabine Carey, Neil Mitchell and Will Lowe, "States, the security sector, and the monopoly of violence: A new database on pro-government militias", *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 50, issue 2, pp.249-258.

6. TEU Article 21(2) as amended by the Lisbon Treaty.

7. Christoph V Steinert, Janina I Steinert, and Sabine C Carey, "Spoilers of peace: Pro-government militias as risk factors for conflict recurrence", *Journal of Peace Research*, 2019, vol. 56, number 2, pp.249-263.

8. Pettersson et al., 2019; Dylan Balch-Lindsey, Andrew J Enterline and Kyle A Joyce, "Third-party intervention and the civil war process", *Journal of Peace Research*, 2018, vol. 45, number 3, pp.345-363.

9. In 2011 the Council of the European Union declared that 'preventing conflicts and relapses to into conflict [...], is a primary objective of the EU's external action, in which it could take a leading role in conjunction with its global, regional, national and local partners'. Tools developed to this objective include the Prevention of Conflicts, Rule of Law/Security Sector Reform, Integrated Approach, Stabilisation and Mediation (PRISM) under the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP), which funds stabilisation, conflict prevention, and peacebuilding initiatives in partner countries.