



## The Ploughshares Monitor

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### The 2006 Armed Conflicts Report—preview

During 2005 the world's peoples suffered 32 armed conflicts in 27 states.\* Although the total number of armed conflicts was unchanged from 2004, two conflicts came to an end while two others surpassed the threshold of 1,000 direct deaths that separates armed conflict from lower levels of violence. While armed conflict was considered to be over in Senegal and the Indian state of Gujarat, despite the lack of formal ceasefires or peace processes, wars recurred in Haiti and Thailand. Overall, in 2005 the number of states at war increased by one. Because there are three other wars taking place in India, this country remained on the list of states experiencing armed conflict.

**Table 1: Geographic distributions of armed conflicts in 2005**

Region	# of countries in region	# of conflicts in region	# of countries hosting conflicts	% of countries in region hosting conflicts	% of world conflicts
Africa	50	13	12	24	41
Asia	42	13	9	21	41
Europe	42	2	2	4.8	6
The Americas	44	2	2	4.5	6
Middle East	14	2	2	14	6
<i>World Totals</i>	192	32	27	14	100

Although the war in Iraq dominated world headlines, in 2005 the continents of Africa and Asia continued to be most affected by war (see Table 1). Each region hosted 13 conflicts or more than two-fifths of the world's total, leaving the three remaining regions of Europe, the Americas (North and South), and the Middle East with two armed conflicts each, and a combined share of less than one-fifth of all conflicts. Africa also continued to bear a disproportionate share of the fighting, with almost one in every four African states suffering an internal war.

During the past decade (1996-2005) 32 armed conflicts ended (see Table 2), over two-thirds in Africa and Asia. However, only the Middle East ended the decade in a net gain situation; with the resolution of six conflicts and two still active.

**Table 2: Geographical distribution of armed conflicts resolved between 1996 and 2005**

Region	# of conflicts resolved	% of total resolved conflicts
Africa	12	37.5
Asia	10	31.3
Europe	2	6.2
The Americas	2	6.2
Middle East	6	18.8
<i>Totals</i>	32	100

Full descriptions of all armed conflicts of 2005, as well as those recently ended, are available in the Armed Conflicts Report 2006 under the “Library” link on the Project Ploughshares website ([www.ploughshares.ca](http://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) in order 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 a very wide range of 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 by Peter Wallensteen and Margareta Sollenberg of the Department of Peace and Conflict Research, Uppsala University (Sweden), published annually in the yearbook of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute.

