

# DIMINISHING CONFLICTS IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Why some subside and other's don't

Edited by Edward Aspinall, Robin Jeffrey and Anthony J. Regan

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## DIMINISHING CONFLICTS IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Since the publication of the 2005 Human Security Report, scholars and policy-makers have debated the causes, interpretation and implications of what the report described as a global decline in armed conflict since the end of the Cold War. Focusing on the Asia-Pacific region, this book analyses the causes and patterns of this decline.

In few regions has the apparent decline in conflict been as dramatic as in the Asia-Pacific, with annual recorded battle deaths falling in the range of 50 to 75 percent between 1994 and 2004. Drawing on a wide range of case studies, this book looks at internal conflicts based on the mobilization of ethnic and nationalist grievances, which have been the most costly in human lives over the last decade.

The book identifies structures, norms, practices and techniques that have either fuelled or moderated conflicts. As such, it is an essential read for students and scholars of international relations, peace and conflict studies and Asian studies.

**Edward Aspinall** is a Senior Fellow in the Department of Political and Social Change, Australian National University. His research focuses on comparative politics of democratization, ethnic politics and nationalism, and he has published widely in these areas.

**Robin Jeffrey** is a Visiting Research Professor in the Institute of South Asian Studies at the National University of Singapore. His research interests include India and South Asia, as well as the Punjab insurgency.

**Anthony J. Regan** is a Fellow in the State, Society and Governance in Melanesia Program, Australian National University. He is a constitutional lawyer who has advised in peace processes and post-conflict constitution-making processes in a number of countries, and written extensively on a number of those cases.

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Why some subside and others don't  
*Edward Aspinall, Robin Jeffrey and Anthony J. Regan*

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Edward Aspinall, Robin Jeffrey  
and Anthony J. Regan**

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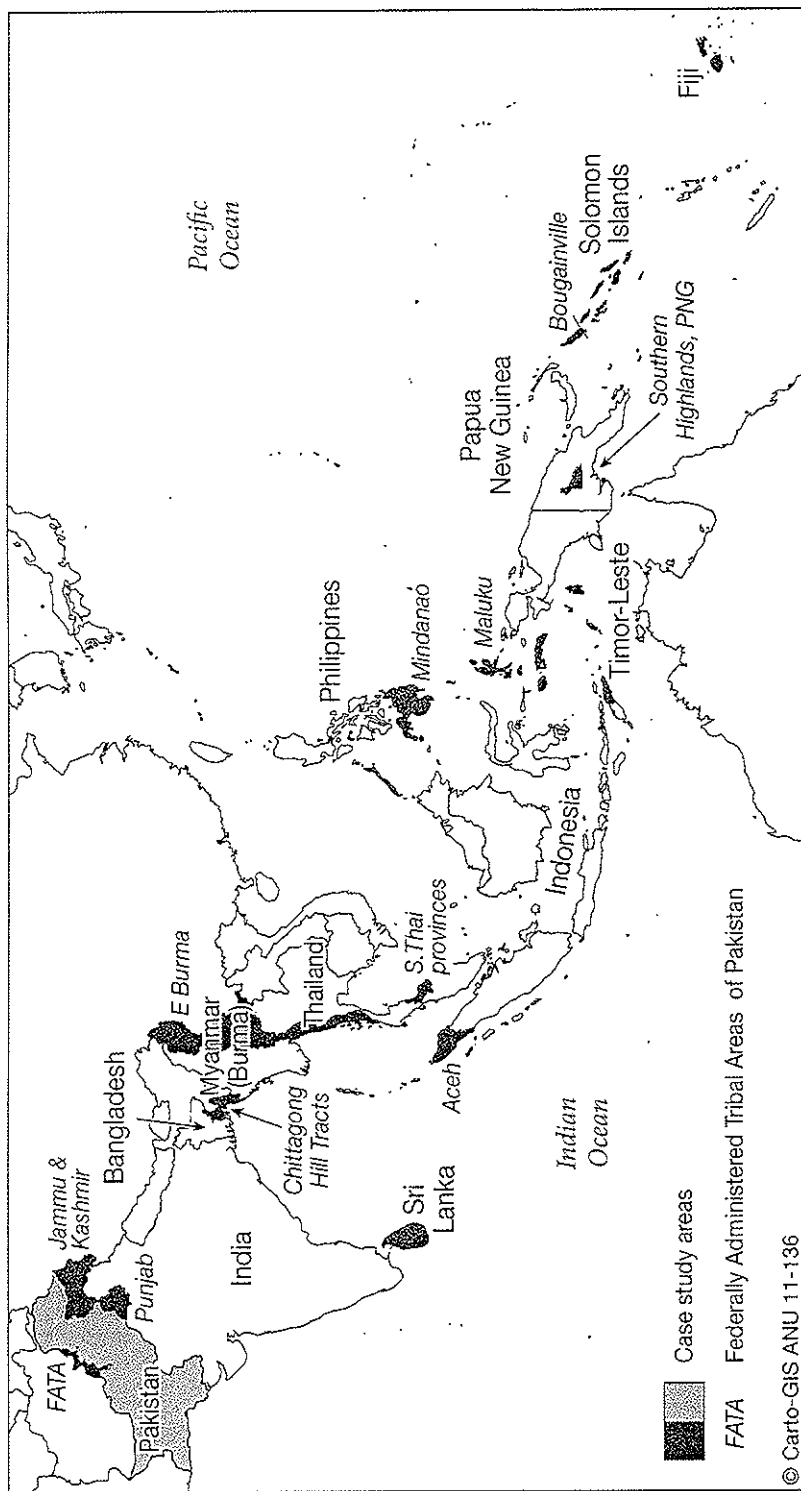
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Map 1 Asia-Pacific region

# 1 Introduction

## Diminishing conflicts: Learning from the Asia-Pacific

*Edward Aspinall, Robin Jeffrey and Anthony J. Regan*

### Diminishing conflicts?

This book begins with ambiguity. It is intentional. By calling the book ‘diminishing conflicts’ we mean not only to analyse conflict that has diminished in the Asia-Pacific region, but also to highlight lessons about what can be done to reduce and end conflict. In exploring these twin goals, we seek to contribute to two pressing and interrelated lines of inquiry in the study of conflict and peace. The first concerns a debate about whether long-term armed conflict in the world has in fact declined and what might drive such decline. The second line of inquiry is more practical and concerns how best to design efforts to reduce armed conflicts, especially those that take place within states.

Is the world experiencing a decline in war? Many of the institutes and scholars who map trends in conflict have concluded that since the early 1990s there has been a remarkable decline in armed conflict globally. The *Human Security Report* of 2005 crystallized debate among analysts and policy makers about the causes, interpretation and implications of what the report described as ‘a dramatic and sustained decline in the number of armed conflicts’, which, combined with an ‘uneven but equally dramatic decline in battle-deaths [that] has been underway for more than half a century’, has produced a markedly more peaceful world (Human Security Centre 2005: 17). Shortly afterwards, the Human Security Project declared that ‘the world is becoming less war-prone. The number of civil wars dropped by three-quarters from 1992 to 2005’ (*miniAtlas of Human Security* 2008: 9). More recently, to be sure, there seems to have been a partial reversal of this trend with the *Human Security Report* of 2009–2010 noting that ‘the data show a modest but consistent increase in the number of state-based armed conflicts between 2005 and 2008’ (Human Security Report Project 2011: 159). The authors of the report, however, noted that ‘it is equally clear that the long-term decline in the deadliness of state-based conflicts has not been reversed’ (Human Security Report Project 2011: 159). In particular, the decline in the number of major conflicts – those causing over 1,000 battle deaths per year – has continued, with a 78 per cent decrease between 1998 and 2008 (Human Security Report Project 2011: 10).

The finding that there has been a sustained decline in armed conflict has generated controversy. Some studies challenged the validity of the data on which

the finding is based, notably those compiled by the International Peace Research Institute, Oslo (PRIO) and the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP).<sup>1</sup> One study that drew on World Health Survey sibling-history data from 13 countries argued that conventional measurements of war deaths, such as those used by PRIO, significantly underestimated fatalities and that strong claims of a consistent decline in war deaths should be re-evaluated (Obermeyer *et al.* 2008: 6); however, this analysis has in turn been criticized for making inappropriate comparisons and for alleged errors of fact (Spagat *et al.* 2009: 936). Other analysts noted that the main PRIO/Uppsala University datasets focus on ‘battle deaths’, excluding not only fatalities that might arise indirectly as a result of war, but also deaths that occur as a result of non-state conflicts (such as those between rival militias but not involving government security forces) and those caused in ‘one-sided violence’, such as pogroms and genocides (Spagat *et al.* 2009: 936). Such criticisms suggest that a focus on battle deaths alone underestimates the impacts of war and is an invalid measure of whether violent conflict is increasing or decreasing. New datasets are being constructed to record numbers of deaths beyond battle deaths, but they do not stretch sufficiently far back in time to allow confident conclusions about long-term trends. Most analysts would agree that there has been a decline in fatalities directly caused by state-based conflict; but much else remains controversial and obscure. Has there, for example, been a decline in deaths and human suffering caused by other varieties of violence?

Our second line of inquiry concerns the efficacy of efforts to resolve conflicts. What makes conflict abate, die down, end? From the end of the Cold War in the early 1990s, international peace-making efforts increased dramatically. One recent study has found, for example, that ‘The number of UN peacemaking initiatives increased more than five fold between 1989 and 2003. This figure is an underestimate because it does not include the confidential peacemaking efforts of UN Secretaries-General’ (Human Security Report Project 2011: 67). These efforts produced dramatic breakthroughs in resolving or ameliorating long-lasting, destructive conflicts from El Salvador to Indonesia, and from Northern Ireland to South Sudan. Yet the record has not been one of unadulterated success. Not only did many such peace deals and the associated international efforts falter (Hartzell 1999; Walter 2002), but many peace agreements left unresolved issues and dissatisfied combatants, and sometimes produced new conflicts. Such outcomes can lead to situations of ‘violent peace’ (e.g. Aust and Jaspers 2006), in which armed conflict between state security forces and organized adversaries may have ended, but in which chronic insecurity, low-level violence and criminality produce great suffering for civilians, impede economic development, and entrench grievances. Indeed, other scholars have noted that large parts of the developing world occupy a nether zone which may be characterized as ‘no war, no peace’ (Richards 2005; see also Kaldor 1999), challenging assumptions about a clear division between war and peace. There are, in other words, pressing issues at stake, not only about how to design and encourage solutions to armed conflict, but also about how to define what peace means and about how to improve its quality. ‘Violent peace’ should be an oxymoron.

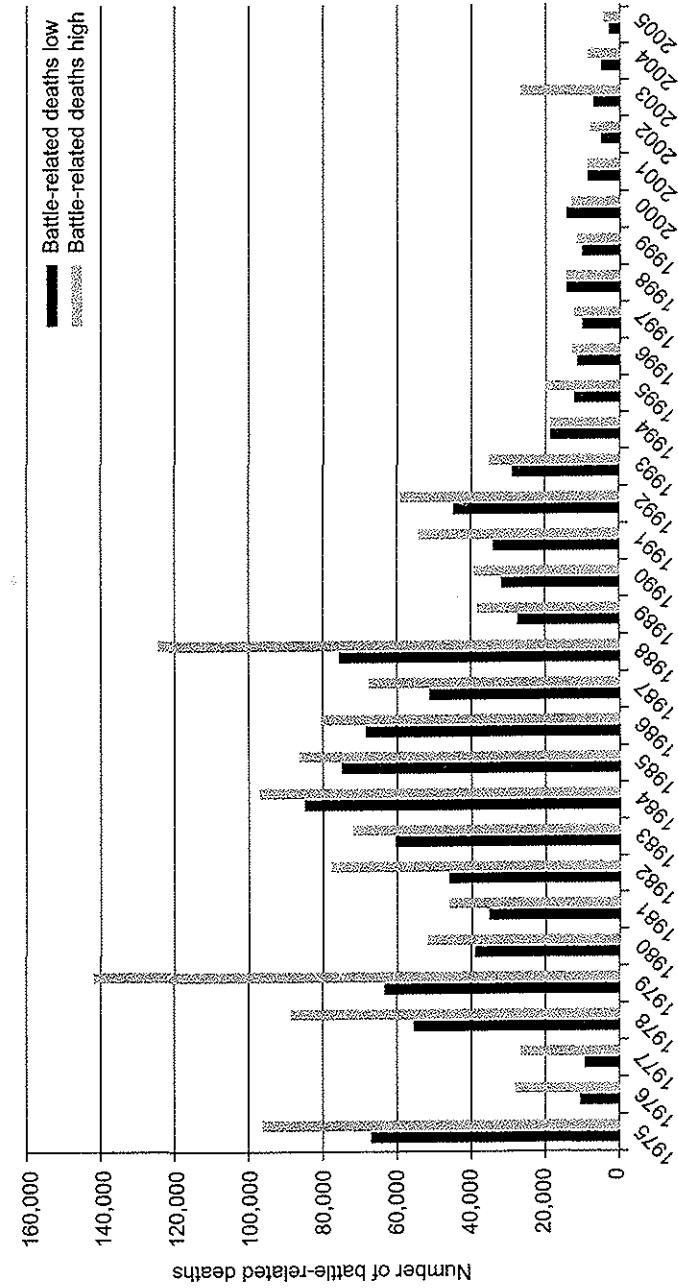


Figure 1.1 Asia-Pacific battle-related deaths, 1975–2005.

Source: Uppsala/PRIO Yearly Battle Deaths Dataset, version 2.0.

Note: Figure 1.1 includes all state-based conflicts, including interstate conflicts.

Table 1.1 Estimated annual battle-related deaths in Asia-Pacific region for three decades, 1976–2005

	1976–1985	1986–1995	Decade decline (%)	1996–2005	Decade decline (%)
Low-end estimate	420,112	371,047	12	80,646	78
High-end estimate	714,767	538,113	25	119,257	77

Source: UppsalaPRIO Yearly Battle Deaths Dataset.

In both senses of ‘diminishing conflicts’, the Asia-Pacific region provides a rich field of study, comparison and practice. In few regions has the decline in armed conflict appeared to be so dramatic as in the Asia-Pacific, defined here as the region stretching from Afghanistan in the west to the countries of northeast Asia and the Pacific in the east. According to figures in the UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset, deaths in wars fell by as much as 90 per cent between the 1976–1985 decade and the 1996–2005 decade (see Figure 1.1).<sup>2</sup> For the region as whole, estimates of the annual number of deaths in war fell by about 25 per cent between the decade of 1976–1985 and that of 1986–1995. Between the latter decade and 1996–2005, they fell about 80 per cent. At the high end of these estimates, 77,000 people were dying in war each year in 1976–1985; by 1996–2005, the estimate had fallen to 12,000 (see Table 1.1).

As with the broader global picture, however, more recent data (Figure 1.2) suggest an increase in violent conflict and battle-related deaths in the region. According to another dataset, which allows us to disaggregate conflict trends in

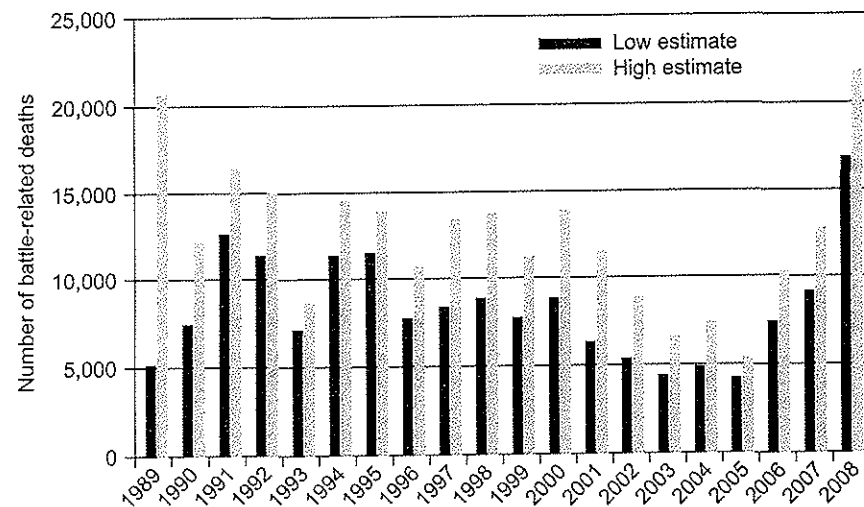


Figure 1.2 Battle-related deaths in Asia-Pacific including Afghanistan, 1989–2008.

Source: UCDP Battle Deaths Dataset, Version 5.0, July 2009.

particular countries, in 2005 the high estimate of battle deaths in the region was just under 6,000; by 2008 this has spiked to over 22,000, a dramatic increase in the space of three years. However, this increase was largely due to conflicts in just two countries: Afghanistan (about 6,000 deaths) and Sri Lanka (about 10,000) and if these two conflicts are removed from the count, then a much more stable picture would appear. Moreover, while violent conflict continues in Afghanistan, the unusually high death toll in Sri Lanka was a product of the Sri Lankan military’s brutally effective final push against the secessionist guerrillas of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), a campaign that concluded with a government victory in 2009 (UCDP 2010). As we see in the discussion of Sri Lanka in this volume, since that time armed conflict has all but disappeared, even if the underlying causes of conflict have not been ameliorated.

These recent trends are clearly significant, even if it is premature to suggest that they point to a reversal of the long-term decline of conflict deaths in the region. But they do point to the fragility and ambiguity of the overall trend. They should also help remind us that war remains a feature of daily life for millions of people in the region. Burma is a striking example. The country has experienced by far the greatest number of conflict years (calculated by counting the various conflicts and then adding the years each conflict was active) in the world, with a total of 246 years between 1946 and 2008 (Human Security Report Project 2011: 46). This book reflects on the general trends towards peace, analyses places like Burma where peace has appeared remote and puzzles over anomalies and exceptions.

*Diminishing Conflicts* also searches for examples where peace has been given a chance and has taken hold. From the 1990s, sustained international efforts have attempted to reduce violent conflicts. These efforts sometimes produced remarkable success stories, but they have also led to failures, as well as various ambiguous outcomes in between. Learning from the successes, failures and ambiguities is another aim of this book, and we try in the Conclusion to extract principles from the case studies.

### Shape and goals of the book

The book focuses on causes and patterns of the apparent decline in violent conflict in the Asia-Pacific and on the lessons that can be derived from the successes, the failures and the ambiguities. We do not attempt to analyse all varieties of armed conflict in the region or every case of armed conflict. We have excluded interstate conflict, which has not produced major violence for 30 years. To sharpen our analysis, we focus on internal conflicts driven by the mobilization of ethnic and nationalist grievances. Since the end of the ideologically driven interstate and civil wars of the Cold War era, which caused massive loss of life in Korea, Indochina and Afghanistan, ethno-nationalist strife has represented the most deadly sub-set of conflicts in the Asia-Pacific. In this respect, the Asia-Pacific region mirrors broader global trends. As has recently been observed, ‘Roughly half of the conflicts fought since World War II can be linked to this dynamic of ethno-political struggle for state power’ (Cederman *et al.* 2010: 114). Such conflicts have often been the

most intractable. Asia is littered with regions of ethno-nationalist dispute, where sporadic guerrilla wars or other forms of strife persisted for decades. The global decline in armed conflict represents in part a global reduction in ethnic conflict, a trend that was visible from the mid-1990s when researchers such as those in the Minorities at Risk project began to identify a decline in the number of ethnic groups using violent tactics; more conflicts were subsiding than intensifying (Gurr 2000: 53). The ethno-nationalist conflicts explored in this book, and the themes they throw up, are important in their own right; but they also cast light on broader trends of conflict diminution.

The core of the book is a collection of 15 studies of conflict by authors with special experience of the places of which they write. To chain them to the task, the writers have accepted the discipline of an overall template requiring them to analyse the causes of, and obstacles to, conflict diminution in their particular cases. The chapters represent a wide spectrum of conflict types, trajectories and outcomes. In terms of types of conflict, they include cases where violence has so far been minimal, but where many of the ingredients for violence appear to be present (Fiji); cases of violent conflict involving two main parties (Punjab, Sri Lanka); others with several and even changing parties (Burma, Bougainville); and still others with myriad and constantly changing small groups that could not readily be called parties at all (the Southern Highlands of Papua New Guinea and perhaps the Solomon Islands). In terms of trajectories and outcomes, they include cases where armed conflict has been successfully reduced as a result of negotiations and peace deals (such as Aceh and Bougainville) and cases where conflict has gradually faded in response to government policies of repression and concession (Punjab). From here the selection ranges through a group of intermediate cases to examples of seemingly intractable conflict (Kashmir, Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan) and military suppression (Sri Lanka).

The writers in this book have different skills from those of the comparativists, quantitative analysts and statisticians who have led discussion of the decline of armed conflict in recent times. The tools of those researchers are large surveys and datasets, and they use techniques of quantitative analysis to track global trends. Debates have focused as much on the integrity of data and how they are collected, and on the relevance of the proxies chosen, as on matters of interpretation and causation. The authors in this book, on the other hand, are specialists immersed in the cases about which they write. Many of them have spent years doing research in these regions, typically using their knowledge of local languages and cultures to become familiar with the actors in conflicts and their histories, behaviours and perspectives. Some of our authors have been involved in attempts to resolve or reduce conflict. While the broad literature has been important in compiling and interpreting quantitative data, in developing and testing hypotheses across cases, and in identifying global trends, our authors bring to bear the techniques of qualitative analysis. They interrogate these broad trends, drawing attention to the micro-processes through which they manifest themselves or are contradicted on the ground. They have an eye for detail, nuance, contradiction and exception – but with the goal of identifying themes that connect globally.

By drawing on the expertise of authors intimately familiar with the various cases, the book aspires to three goals. First, we seek to *dissect* assertions about global decline in armed conflict, especially ethno-nationalist conflict. While there has been an overall decline in armed political violence in the Asia–Pacific region as measured by battle deaths, we note that this trend disguises many exceptions and qualifications that cause us to question the efficacy of the use of battle-death data alone as the main measure of diminution of conflict. This book points out some of those exceptions. It does so not only by highlighting cases of persistent armed conflict. We also indicate some of the varieties of underlying fragility and disguised violence that broad trends may disguise. These may include cases where armed conflict has declined but root causes remain unaddressed, rendering them vulnerable to reignition. Another category of cases is those where, as suggested above, large-scale armed ethno-nationalist conflict has mutated into lower-level criminalized and predatory forms of violence. In such cases of ‘violent peace’, violence may continue but is defined by governments and observers as a ‘criminal’, rather than as a political or military, problem. Thus ‘violence’ is deemed to have fallen because only ‘battle-deaths’ are being taken as the measure.

Second, the book sets out to explain the apparent decline of armed ethno-nationalist conflict in the Asia–Pacific by identifying common causes and broad patterns of conflict diminution. With such a diverse set of cases it is not surprising that a huge array of causative factors and supporting conditions come into play. Indeed, we find that the causes of conflict *diminution* are no less complex than the causes of conflict itself. The *Human Security Report 2005* was quite definite in attributing the marked decline in armed conflict from the 1990s to what it called an UN-spearheaded and ‘remarkable, if often inchoate, upsurge in conflict management, conflict prevention and post-conflict peacebuilding activities by the international community’ (Human Security Centre 2005: 153). While international mediation and intervention were indeed crucial in a number of cases in this book (e.g. Aceh and Bougainville), they were by no means important in all cases where a decline in violence took place. Indeed, decline in armed conflict also occurred where governments eschewed formal peace processes and pursued military or counterinsurgency operations (e.g. the Punjab, Sri Lanka), and even (though much less clearly) in countries where highly authoritarian and militaristic regimes remain in place (e.g. Burma).

Third, by comparing both successful and unsuccessful examples of conflict diminution, we aim to highlight strategies that may contribute to conflict diminution. In our case studies, we identify ingredients that contribute time and again to the diminution of conflict. At the end, we cannot claim to have found a magic recipe for peace; but we hope to offer a clearer picture of principles that contribute to conflict resolution and the varying circumstances in which they work. The book thus hopes to provide a collection of parables for scholars, practitioners and policy makers seeking to end armed conflict. Although this collection stresses the great variety in the dynamics of conflict diminution, it also strives to show important lessons that can be transported between cases. To that end, the volume concludes

with an attempt to identify principles and lessons learned from both successful and unsuccessful cases of conflict diminution in the Asia-Pacific.

### Establishing a framework: Conflict and violence

We try to distinguish between *violence* and *conflict*. We develop a two-level framework that recognizes that not all forms of conflict are violent and that a trend of declining violence can mask many sorts of conflictual situations.

Much of the discussion about the decline of armed conflict in the world draws on datasets that measure conflicts in relatively crude terms, in particular by attempting to count fatalities that arise as a direct result of armed conflict ('battle deaths'). As critics have pointed out, measuring armed conflict in this way can be problematic (for the debate, Østerud 2008; Sollenberg and Wallensteen 2008). Most obviously, there can be grave doubts about the accuracy of data. Deadly conflict leads belligerents to hide or obscure information about the extent of, and responsibility for, violence. Journalists and other investigators often face great difficulties in reaching war zones to seek a picture of what happens there. And, especially in conflicts in remote corners of developing countries, comprehensive record keeping and independent journalism are likely to be limited. In our discussions in the development of this book, many of the country specialists who wrote chapters were sceptical about the accuracy of entries in international datasets for the conflicts with which they were most familiar.

Moreover, focusing only on deaths in battle can also miss other forms of violence. Not only do some conflicts in the Asia-Pacific region which have bled for decades rarely reach the annual figure of 1,000 deaths, meaning that they are not classified as 'war' in the international counts, some may not reach the 25-death figure required to be classified as a low-intensity conflict. It can also be difficult to separate battle deaths from deaths resulting indirectly from a conflict. Indeed, much of the worst suffering may arise as a result of the indirect consequences of war. Many deaths occur as a result of one-sided violence or of violence between non-state actors, and are thus not counted in some of the most widely cited datasets. Overall, our authors insist, focusing on war deaths alone may fail to reveal much about the experience of conflict and war. Especially in cases of ethno-political conflict, such data can mask many other impacts and miss important variations in how ordinary people experience conflict. For example, conflicts with massive levels of destruction of property and forced displacement, but few deaths, can be life-changing, immensely disruptive experiences that sow seeds for future antagonisms (e.g. the Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bougainville, the Southern Highlands). Even a conflict without battle deaths may cause massive disruption and significant levels of out-migration (Fiji).

In this connection, it is worth pointing to another striking trend: although the total number of battle deaths in armed conflict in the Asia-Pacific region has declined sharply over recent decades, the overall number of conflicts has declined far less rapidly. Deaths diminish, but conflicts remain (Figure 1.3).<sup>3</sup> The data suggest that armed conflicts in the Asia-Pacific region are becoming less

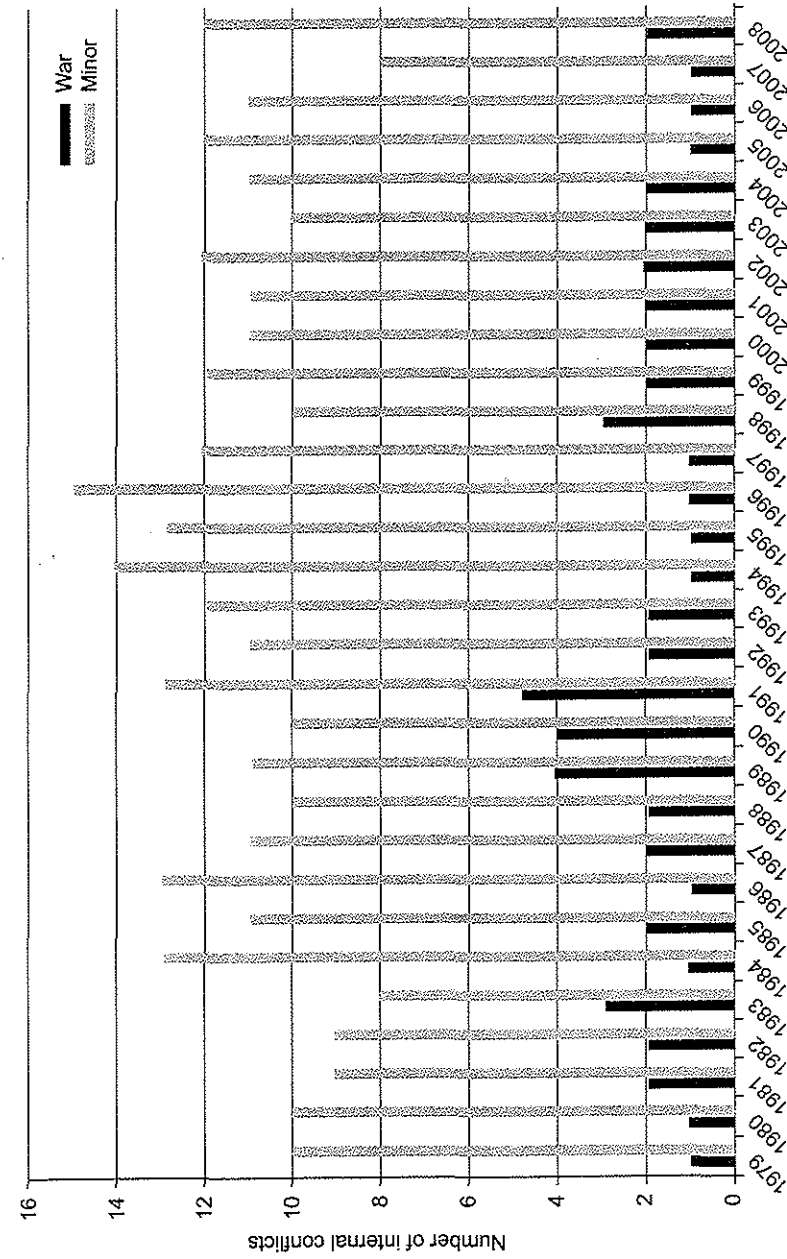


Figure 1.3 Level of intensity of internal conflicts in Asia-Pacific, 1980-2010.

Source: UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Database, ©PRIO 2009.

Notes

Minor: Between 25 and 999 battle-related deaths in a given year.

War: At least 1,000 battle-related deaths in a given year.

destructive of human lives, but this does not necessarily mean that other forms of destruction and disruption have declined. And latent conflicts, involving bitter displacements and grievances, may contain the seeds of future violence. Such considerations are a focus of this book.

Moreover, emphasis on conflict deaths, and hence on direct physical violence, overlooks other key questions. Is a reduction in violence matched by resolution of the underlying causes of violence? Is such a reduction accompanied by change in antagonistic forms of identity and mobilization around which conflict was expressed? Höglund and Kovacs (2010) explain post-settlement 'peace' in terms of a three-fold classification encompassing issues, behaviour and attitudes. Focusing on issues entails examining the 'relative presence or absence of remaining conflict issues in society' (p. 376); conflict behaviour concerns the 'relative presence or absence of violence and insecurity' (p. 379); and conflict attitudes concern whether there are 'improved social relations between the former warring parties and reduced conflict attitudes in society at large', or whether the 'society remains highly polarized along former conflict lines' (p. 382). To take one example from their resulting 'peace triangle', inquiring into conflict issues can lead to a diagnosis of 'unresolved peace' if 'the peace process has failed to resolve or manage certain issues, although the conflict behaviour has been regulated' (p. 377), of 'restored peace' if the underlying causes and grievances lurk unresolved beneath the surface or of 'contested peace' if the peace agreement 'gives rise to new conflict issues' (p. 378). Focusing on behaviours or attitudes can yield different forms of incomplete peace.

We find many such ambiguous and halfway cases in the Asia-Pacific region. In some of the cases in this book, armed violence declined hand-in-hand with the construction of new institutions and policies designed to overcome root causes and deep dynamics of conflict (Bougainville, Aceh). In others cases, diminution of violence was accompanied by a fading of ethno-nationalist concerns in political life and the strengthening of new, cross-cutting axes of political conflict and cooperation (Punjab). In such cases, we may say that *both* violence and conflict declined. In other cases, however, violence may decline, while the basic causes of conflict remain virtually untouched (Burma, Chittagong Hill Tracts). In such circumstances, the disruptions associated with conflict may continue and the dangers of future violent conflict are likely to remain strong.

It is possible to envisage what we mean by conflict diminution in terms of two axes. On one axis we might measure the intensity of a conflict, as reflected in war deaths or other data (e.g. displacement). On the other, we might measure the extent to which factors contributing to intense conflict have been addressed: have underlying sources of grievance been resolved? Have the political identities and organizations that fuelled the conflict have been modified?

To illustrate, let us look at one of our cases – Burma. Since independence from British rule in 1948, Burma has been wracked by civil wars between the central state and its army and a range of ethnic armies and insurgent groups. Observers agree that the last two decades have seen a significant decline in armed conflict between the Burmese army and the remaining ethnic armies. But this decline has not been caused or accompanied by permanent resolution of these conflicts or

meaningful demilitarization. Instead, in many regions of the country, the army has made ceasefire agreements with ethnic armies, often leaving those armies in control of their territories or even cooperating with them to share the spoils of territorial control. Such ceasefires leave armed groups in control of civilian populations; such groups are often ready for war and still engaging in predatory behaviour. Such ceasefires have also left the Burmese army as the dominant political actor throughout Burma. Moreover, the ceasefires have produced splintering of some armed groups, internecine strife between them and new alliances between the Burmese army and some of the splinter groups. In some ceasefire regions, the lives of the civilian populations have improved, but in others the suffering of civilians has not abated or has worsened.

Burma is thus an example in which a significant, but far from absolute, reduction of war deaths has taken place, but without mitigating the root causes of violence and without significantly reordering the conflict dynamics. A nascent process of political change leaves open the prospect that conflict dynamics, which have been frozen in many cases for decades, may be due for significant reconfiguration. Indeed, as Desmond Ball and Nicholas Farrelly outline in their contribution to this volume, a major ceasefire collapsed in 2011 during the early phases of the democratization process. The resulting violence presented a contradiction for any analysis of political reform. They suggest that a reversion to much more widespread and intense fighting is possible if the government ultimately fails to develop new mechanisms for reconciliation in eastern Burma.

Other examples might include East Timor, where one major armed conflict – that between the Indonesian state and much of the East Timorese population, but especially the independence movement – ended with the 1999 referendum and transition to independence. Yet the resolution of this conflict opened a host of fissures and conflicts between regional identities, political groups and others. Old wounds accentuated these divisions, and this in turn provoked new forms of violence, albeit far less intense than in the previous period.

Another example is at the other end of the Indonesian archipelago, in Aceh, one of the most successful conflict resolution cases in our sample. Here political violence had virtually disappeared by 2010 (though it rose slightly again in 2011–12 in association with an election). And, as part of the peace settlement reached in 2005 by leaders of the separatist organization Gerakan Aceh Merdeka (GAM) and the Indonesian government, serious attempts were made to address some of the root causes of the conflict by way of autonomy arrangements that responded to deep-seated Acehnese grievances. Yet even here, the underlying conflict dynamics were in some ways unresolved. The former separatists reorganized themselves into a political party. This party, though it abandoned the goal of independence, still espoused an ethnic vision of politics that differentiated sharply between the Acehnese and a hostile Indonesian Other. And in the villages of rural Aceh, former combatants remained a dominant force and used low-level violence and intimidation to enforce their political will and secure economic resources. Violence remains common, though relabelled 'criminal' rather than political – and the modus operandi and the perpetrators often remain the same.

In many ways, what we therefore identify in this book is not only a trend toward successful conflict *resolution*, but also a trend toward lower intensity but still endemic conflict: the 'violent peace' mentioned earlier. Overall, conflicts in the Asia-Pacific do seem to be diminishing, but many are far from being fully resolved or entirely dissipating. The region therefore provides a wealth of experiences – both failures and successes – for the endeavour to bring about reduction in violent conflict.

## Notes

- 1 These datasets can be found at [www.prio.no/CSCW/Datasets/Armed-Conflict/Battle-Deaths](http://www.prio.no/CSCW/Datasets/Armed-Conflict/Battle-Deaths) and [www.prio.no/CSCW/Datasets/Armed-Conflict/UCDP-PRIO](http://www.prio.no/CSCW/Datasets/Armed-Conflict/UCDP-PRIO).
- 2 'Wars' are defined as conflicts with over 1,000 battle deaths per year. In the Asia-Pacific region, the deaths in war dropped from an upper-end estimate of 71,477 deaths annually between 1976 and 1985 (the lower end estimate was 47,511 deaths annually), to 53,811 annually during 1986–1995 (lower end: 37,105) and then to 12,156 annually (lower end: 7,319) between 1996 and 2005.
- 3 Thus, in 1980 there were 11 conflicts recorded in the dataset, 10 of which were classified as minor (between 25 and 999 battle deaths in a given year) and only one of which was classified as a war (over 1,000 battle deaths). This number climbed gradually, peaking at 18 in 1992 (when the number of conflicts classified as wars also peaked at five) and then gradually declined to a total of nine by 2008. Comparing these figures to the trends in war deaths (Table 1.1) suggests that the decline in deaths is only partly attributable to a reduction in the overall number of conflicts or, put differently, by successful conflict resolution.

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