

Impact of Iran–US Tensions on Local Security and Civilian Life in Iraq: Evidence from UCDP Georeferenced Event Data

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Abstract

This study examines the impact of Iran-US tensions on local security and civilian life in Iraq, as measured through UCDP Georeferenced Event Dataset. Iraq's geographical location, internal political tensions, foreign military presence and engagement of armed groups and militias have placed it at a high risk of being dragged into regional conflict dynamics. This study has used a quantitative descriptive research design after examining events during the conflict in Iraq will be analyzed in the period 2019-2025. The 1,510 conflict events were analyzed using frequency distributions, descriptive statistics, cross-tabulations and graphical analysis with SPSS. The results show that 2021 was the year of the highest frequency of conflict events, where 322 conflict events were recorded. In 2019 cases of civilian deaths and total fatalities were the most with higher mean civilian death, indicating that earlier events were more deadly. State based violence was the most prevalent form of violence, representing 1,383 incidents, and one-sided violence represented 127 of the violence incidents. Results were presented province-wise, showing the highest occurrence of conflict events in Dahuk, followed by Diyala, Arbil and Salah ad Din. The findings also yielded mixed results on the effect on violence in Iraq, with some provinces reporting more violence than others, and some more lethal than others. The findings of study suggest that Iran-US tensions and regional dynamics

were conducive to the insecurity, incurring damages to civilians and instability in Iraq. The study emphasizes the need to account for the local impact of international tensions as reported through event-level information.

Keywords: Iran-US tensions, Iraq security, civilian life, UCDP GED, conflict events, state-based violence

1. Introduction

Iran and the United States have long been one of the primary drivers of the Middle East's political turbulence. The conflict is primarily Iran vs. the United States, but Iraq has frequently been a direct victim due to its geographic, political, and security roles. Iraq has a long border with Iran and there is also a strong historical tie in the political, religious, and security dimension in the country between Iran and U.S. (Tellidou, 2024). This means Iraq has become a place of significance in which regional rivalries, proxy wars, and foreign military operations have affected the security of the people in the region. Iraq was facing a series of security issues related to broader tensions with Iran and the U.S. in 2019. The lives of Iraqi people had been impacted by armed incidents, militia activity, airstrikes, attacks on military bases, and adverse incidents among various actors.

The conflict events caused fear, insecurity, death of civilians as well as disruption of local communities. Targeted provinces were targeted with threats to life, movement, livelihood and basic services (Nicolosi, 2023). Iran-Iraq tensions with Iran are significant for analysis of how international conflict can impact on the lives of average people and security in their countries. This research is about the effects of Iran-Iraq and Iraq-USA conflict/tensions on local people and security in Iraq (2019-2025). The study analyzes conflict events, deaths, civilian deaths, locations and actors involved in organized violence in the UCDP Georeferenced Event Dataset, Global Version 26.1 (GED). The research is designed to detect trends in violence, link the areas most threatened with violence, and predict the regional security implications of conflicts in Iraq.

1.1. Background of the Study

Historical political, military and strategic quarrels have made the relations between Iran and the US a strained affair for many years. This simmering of tensions in the Middle East was further fueled by differing interests in regional politics, security alliances and influence over neighboring states (Tabatabai, 2020). The rivalry has affected Iraq, a nation that maintains close

relations with Iran and receives arms and military and political aid from the United States. The Iraq situation became more vulnerable following 2019 due to the deterrent effort of Iran and the USA. Since 2019, Iraq has been more susceptible in the wake of Iran and USA deterrent effort. The operation of foreign military forces, armed groups that had ties to Iran, local militias, and extremist groups made the security situation complex. In many cases, the conflict events were not just physical but also involved airstrikes, attacks on bases, militia activity, and violence against civilians. These events increased uncertainty and weakened local security conditions (Tsourdi, 2025; Laudati & Pesaran, 2023).

Proxy influence is also an important factor in Iraq's security situation. There is a suspicion that some of the armed groups in Iraq have political or ideological affiliations with regional powers. As there is more tension between Iran and the US, these groups can emerge even more and this could increase the tension on the internal stability of Iraq (Rudolf, 2023). In this situation, local people are affected when violence happens near urban centers, nearby villages, roads, and public places. This can cause civilian deaths and injuries, displacement, fear and economic hardship for the civilians. The extent of using data of conflict events as useful for this study is that it enables the researcher to analyze the actual dynamics of violence at different time points (Ross, 2008; Raza, 2021). The UCDP GED contains data on date, place, the named victims, type of violence, and human casualties. This aids in comprehending the security situation from 2019 through 2025 in Iraq, as well as which provinces were more impacted by armed violence.

1.2. Problem Statement

This study tries to solve the main problematic which is insecurity and instability in Iraq due to the tension between Iran and USA that affected the security situation and local people directly. Although the conflict is mainly between external powers, its consequences are often experienced by Iraqi civilians (Kamrava, 2018). The high casualties, fear and disruption in affected communities have risen due to armed events, militia activities, airstrikes and regional animosities.

The studies that address the Iranian-Iraqi relations from positions of politics and international relations do not consider their impact on the local people and security matters on local ground from the event level. The local impact of these tensions is hard to understand without analysing the conflict events, the loss of life, the number of civilian deaths and affected locations. In this regard, the current study examines the impact of conflict events from 2019 to 2025 on the security patterns and civilian life in Iraq (Forozan, 2017).

1.3. Research Aim

The aim of this research is to study the impact of Iranian and US tensions on the security and civilian life in Iraq locally. It highlights events of conflict, affected localities and people's impact as regards loss of life and insecurity. Using UCDP Georeferenced Event Data, the study will examine the pattern of conflict and local security circumstances in Iraq.

1.4. Research Objectives

1. To examine the trend of conflict-related events in Iraq during Iran–US tensions.
2. To identify the localities in Iraq most affected by conflict-related incidents.
3. To analyze the impact of conflict events on local people in terms of fatalities and insecurity.

1.5. Research Questions

1. How have Iran–US tensions influenced conflict-related events in Iraq?
2. Which localities in Iraq are most affected by conflict-related incidents?
3. What is the impact of these conflict events on local people in terms of fatalities and insecurity?

1.6. Significance of the Study

This study is timely because it illustrates the relation between international and regional tensions to local security and civilian situations in Iraq. The findings could prove relevant to researchers involved in the study of conflict, security, international relations and Middle East politics. The study builds on UCDP GED data not just on political discussion, but to get a data-based understanding of the patterns of violence. The study is also relevant for policy makers and security analysts as it indicates the affected areas, trends of conflicts and pattern of deaths. This insight can prove useful in comprehending potential increased security threats in a region and effects of regional tensions on local instability (Allansson et al., 2017; Juneau, 2015). This study can also be useful to human rights and humanitarian organisations as it shows the impact of security events on civilians, such as civilian deaths. The study adds to the knowledge regarding local implications of Iran-USA tension in Iraq. It demonstrates that international conflicts are not just at the state level of politics; they reach into the lives of ordinary people, communities, and even internal security conditions.

2. Literature Review

Previous studies and existing knowledge about Iran-US tensions, Iraq's security situation, proxy conflicts, militia activity, civilian deaths, and regional instability are discussed in the literature review. Iraq was crucial within Middle Eastern politics due to its considered position between major powers within the region, as well as the war in Iraq, foreign intervention, terrorism, and political abilities inside Iraq. (Kamrava, 2018) Though the Iran-Iraq struggle has not always been direct war, it still manifests itself inside Iraq through armed groups, military attacks, airstrikes, political pressure and security instability. The literature reveals that Iraq suffers not only from internal conflicts, but also from competition and competition of external powers.

Iran has political, security influence in Iraq, especially through Shia political parties, armed militias. The U.S. has maintained military operations in Iraq and other strategic ties since the 2003 U.S.-led invasion of the country and the war against the Islamic State. Such competing drivers have made Iraq a fragile state where a clash between Iran and the U.S. could have local consequences (Hegre et al., 2020; Zhukov, 2017). The effects of these are civilian casualties, displacement, fear, disruption of daily living, and less effective public security. This study builds on the existing literature by examining the local impact of the Iran-US tension in the Iraq from 2019 to 2025. This research moves beyond a political discussion on the subject, employing UCDP Georeferenced Event Dataset data to identify real instances of conflict, conflict deaths, civilian deaths, security trends and the list of the provinces affected.

2.1. Iran-US Relations and Regional Conflict

Iranian-American relations have been troubled for over 30 years on political, ideological, military, and strategic matters. The suspicion has been all around both countries since the Iranian Revolution of 1979 (Dodge, 2021). Iran has been regarded by the United States as a threat to its Middle Eastern interests, and the U.S. has seen Iran as a threat to U.S. security and regional influence as well. Economic tensions, such as military competition, regional alliances, economic sanctions, and Iran's nuclear development were all added to the mix. Rivalry between Iran and U.S. has buttoned up saboteur at diplomatic level. In the region it also impacts Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Yemen and the Gulf States (Raleigh et al., 2010).

Iran has established close ties with various armed and political groups in the region, and the United States has fostered its own allies and security partnerships, with U.S. military bases.

This has led to the possibility that regional struggles can easily merge into broader Iran / US rivalry. Since 2019, tensions between Iraq and Iran have increased more visibly in relation to both parties. There was also a rise in instability in the form of attacks on military bases, US strikes, militia activity, and the murder of prominent figures (Byman, 2022). These incidents demonstrated Iraq was capable of being a direct theatre which could be used for confrontation even though Iran and the United States were not officially at war. Thus, the nature of Iran-U.S. relations is relevant to Iraq's internal security concerns because regional rivalry may affect local armed activity and political instability.

2.2. Iraq as a Conflict Zone

The geographical position, the political trajectory and the security fragility in Iraq have made it a war zone. It is bordered by Iran on the east, and surrounded by Syria, Turkey, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan. This place is significant in Iraq regional power politics. In the event of any tensions between Iran, the United States and other regional actors, these can have a direct or indirect impact on the security environment in Iraq. Iraq is also vulnerable due to its internal situation (Gromes, 2023). The country has been embroiled in foreign intervention, local ethnic violence, terrorism, poor governance and various divisions since 2003. The emergence of the Islamic State produced additional destruction and insecurity particularly in northern and western Iraq. In other regions, there remained armed conflicts and threats to security in the Islamic State, as de facto control was reduced (Dehnavi & Fiedler, 2025).

Iraq is another one of the reasons that makes it a battlefield because of the different armed groups inside of Iraq. Some groups are a component of state-sponsored security apparatuses, others may have political or ideological ties with regional actors. This can cause the appearance of confusion among official security forces, militias, and non-state armed groups. This makes the government of Iraq often struggle to control all armed collective and enjoy the total sovereignty over its land. The conditions affect Iraq greatly due to the tensions between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the United States of America (Davies et al., 2025). Attacks can take place against military bases, foreign interests, local security forces or against a different armed group when tensions get high. These events leave not only political players insecure, but for the people who reside in or around an area of conflict.

2.3. Impact on Local People

One of the most significant issues in Iraq is impact of the conflicts on the people who live there. Direct and indirect damage to civilians during a conflict event. Direct harm involves civilian

deaths, injuries, fear and displacement. Indirect harm encompasses lost income, school closures, infrastructure damage, decreased mobility and decreased access to health care and basic needs. Civilian casualties are one measure of local impact (Gause, 2017; Johnson, 2022). Be aware that civilians can become victims even if they are not involved in armed disturbances in a populated area. Airstrikes, explosions, armed conflict and armed group, gangs or militias can affect homeland, roads, markets and public places. This fosters a state of insecurity among local communities on a perpetuated basis.

Another critical consideration is displacement. Families may evacuate if they feel the area is unsafe for them. Displacement affects the school, the workplace, where people live, and their mental health. People who decide to leave areas of conflict could face poverty, overcrowding, and a lack of services. Alternatives to the events of daily life may cause fear and uncertainty. Economy disruption is prevalent also in areas affected by conflict (Luna & Zoltan, 2015). Business activity may slow down, transport networks may be disrupted, and investment may be deterred by violence. Local workers, shop owners, farmers, and small businesses may be negatively affected by instable security situations (Azizi, 2022). The political and military effects of Iran-USA tensions and conflict events do not stop at the political or military arena: it also touches social and economic life of ordinary people.

2.4. Security Challenges in Iraq

The security situation is complicated in Iraq with militias, armed groups, terrorism, airstrikes, political instability and poor governance. These challenges are related to internal and external issues. On the domestic front, years of war and political division have had an adverse impact on the strength of state institutions in Iraq. The security system in Iraq is under pressure from the external competition (Kamrava, 2018; Howard et al, 2020). One of the most serious security issues is militias / armed groups. Local political support and linkages exist within some of these groups with a broader regional interest. Their presence challenges the capacity of the Iraqi state for maximal security control over Iraq. These groups may escalate this violence if they are not coordinated or if they react to regional tensions. Airstrikes, attacks on military bases etc. also contribute to insecurity. These incidents may worsen a conflict and trigger counter-responses (Barnes, 2023).

This dynamic of attack and response can cause the security environment to be volatile. The population near military bases or in the areas in the militant control may be in danger. Terrorism is still another challenge (Snider, 2017). US has been forced out of the streets, but still can

strike in certain places. That means that Iraq has several dangers simultaneously: terrorism, militia activity, tension with the outside, and political weakness. The overlapping challenges present Iraq with a complicated and daunting security situation. Weak Governance fueling insecurity. If the government is unable to assert full control over armed groups and to ensure citizens' safety, local people may lose confidence in state institutions. This can raise levels of fear, social stress and political discontentment (Bahgat & Ehteshami, 2017). The security issues in Iraq are not just a matter of armed violence; they are also questions of state's duties to protect people and stabilize the situation.

2.5. Research Gap

Research works dealing with Iran-US relations have generally been presented in international relations, foreign policy, regional conflict and military sphere. These studies are useful in understanding the reason and the process of Iran and USA rivalry in the Middle East and the importance of Iraq in this rivalry. The limited number of studies specifically considers the local effects of these tensions on Iraqi people and internal security based on event-level data. One big missing element is that a lot of the discussions are political and descriptive. They describe the Iran-US conflict at the state level but they fail to demonstrate the number of conflict events, country locations, the number of the most affected provinces, number of civilian deaths or total fatalities of such conflict (Azizi, 2021; Allansson et al., 2017).

This kind of data analysis is also necessary to get a grasp of what the actual security effects are on local communities without it. This study aims to map this gap, which is addressed by the UCDP Georeferenced Event Dataset (GED) Global Version 26.1. The database covers information on event dates, locations, actors, conflict types, event coordinates, number of casualties, and number of civilian casualties. This research concentrates on Iraq for 2019–2025 to explore whether conflict patterns shifted in time and which regions were hit the hardest. The study endeavors to link the experimental local security indicators to Iran-U.S. relations as are found in the available literature.

3. Methodology

This chapter introduces the research methods involved in studying the effect of Iran-Iraq conflict on local population and security in Iraq. The chapter includes the research design, research approach, data source, study area, selected period, variables, data analysis techniques, and ethical considerations. The security situation in Iraq is analyzed between years 2019 and

2025, so a quantitative method is appropriate to research the core of the study parameters, namely conflict events, casualties, number of civilians killed, location, and actors. This study relies on secondary information from the UCDP Georeferenced Event Dataset (GED) Global Version 26.1. This is an organized violence event-level data set with information about when and where an event occurred, actors in the event, violence type, latitude, longitude, total deaths, and civilian deaths, occurring in 2020 (Dodge, 2020). These are useful for understanding how the local people and security situations in Iraq changed as a result of conflict events between the period assumed.

3.1. Research Design

The design of this research is quantitative descriptive research design. The study will seek to describe and analyse the patterns in relation to events of conflict, casualties, civilian casualties, and conflict affected area of Iraq and use a descriptive research design. The goal is to look at the available conflict data and look for trendings, not to conduct interviews or solicit views from respondents. The quantitative design helps the researcher measure the impact of conflict numerically based on the number of events, total deaths, civilian deaths, and province wise distribution. This design is suitable because the UCDP GED dataset contains structured numerical data as well as categorical data that can be analysed using tables, charts and descriptive statistics.

3.2. Research Approach

This study is a deductive and quantitative research. The deductive approach will be appropriate considering the fact that the study starts considering a known understanding that the relation between Iraq and Iran with respect to armed activities and tension between the two countries can have an impact on Iraq's security and population. This concept is subsequently explored with secondary conflict information for the years 2019-2025. The quantitative approach is used because it involves analyzing measurable variables including event location, actors, type of violence, fatalities, civilian deaths, and year. This methodology enables the researcher to establish an annual trend, comparison of affected provinces, besides local security impact of the conflict events in Iraq.

3.3. Data Source

In this research, the data analysed is derived from the UCDP Georeferenced Event Dataset (GED) Global Version 26.1. The data has been gathered by Uppsala Conflict Data Program

(UCDP), Uppsala University. UCDP GED provides an event level dataset of organized violence events and presents information on the date, place, actors, type of violence and resulting deaths. The country that used for this work is Iraq. The dataset is useful because it allows to gather comprehensive details regarding conflict events at points of interest. It contains attributes such as geographical coordinates, province names, actors involved, names of the conflicts, dyads, total death, civilian death. These details are useful in understanding the impact of violence and insecurity on local people in various parts of Iraq.

3.4. Study Area and Period

The research area is Iraq. Iraq is chosen because of its geographical location, political system and security conditions, which are all exposed to the effects of Iran and the United States. Iraq borders on Iran and has been a significant site for American military and strategic interests. Iraq has been impacted by the conflict in the region, militias, bombings, gunplay. The study period selected is 2019 - 2025. It is a crucial time, as Iran-US tensions increased and became more visible with attacks, military responses, militia activities, and regional instability since 2019. This period of time can be studied, in terms of looking at recent events on the conflict and casualties, civilians' casualties and security issues in Iraq.

3.5. Variables

In this study the main variables are selected from the UCDP GED dataset. These variables play a role in understanding how an event in Iraqi conflicts affects the local security and human situation.

Table 1: Dataset variable

Dataset Variable	Description
year	Shows the year in which the conflict event occurred.
type_of_violence	Shows the type of violence recorded in the dataset.
conflict_name	Indicates the name of the conflict related to the event.
dyad_name	Shows the conflict relationship between two opposing actors.
side_a	Represents one actor or party involved in the conflict event.
side_b	Represents the opposing actor or party involved in the event.
where_coordinates	Shows the place name or coordinate-based location of the event.

where_description	Provides a short description of where the event occurred.
adm_1	Shows the province/governorate where the event occurred.
adm_2	Shows the district or lower administrative area of the event.
latitude	Shows the geographical latitude of the event location.
longitude	Shows the geographical longitude of the event location.
country	Shows the country where the event occurred, which is Iraq in this study.
date_start	Shows the starting date of the conflict event.
date_end	Shows the ending date of the conflict event.
deaths_a	Shows fatalities from actor/side A.
deaths_b	Shows fatalities from actor/side B.
deaths_civilians	Shows the number of civilian deaths recorded in the event.
deaths_unknown	Shows deaths where the actor/category is unknown.
best	Shows the best estimate of total fatalities in the event.
high	Shows the highest estimated number of deaths.
low	Shows the lowest estimated number of deaths.

These variables correspond well with the goals of the study. Using the event year and date, to find more trends to time series. Province & coordinates serve to identify impacted areas. The security context partly explains the actors and type of conflicts. Total Deaths and Civilian Deaths are measures of impact to local people.

3.6. Data Analysis Technique

Descriptive statistical analysis is done in examining the selected data in the study. The first step is to narrow the dataset by the following steps: filtering Iraq and the time frame of 2019-2025. The data is then filtered and presented in frequency tables depicting the distribution of conflict events annually, by province, by type of conflict and by actors involved. Trend analysis looks at the year-to-year fluctuations of number of events and deaths caused by conflict within the chosen timeframe. Iraq is being analysed province-wise in order to identify the most affected province. The total and civilian death count is analyzed through fatality analysis. The result of this can be shown in tables, bar graphs, line graphs and maps if necessary.

The analysis will mainly focus on:

1. Number of conflict events from 2019 to 2025.
2. Total fatalities by year.
3. Civilian deaths by year.
4. Province-wise distribution of conflict events.
5. Major actors and dyads involved in conflict events.
6. Security patterns linked with Iran-US tensions and related armed activities.

This approach can assist the researcher by providing a clear and data-based presentation of results. It also contributes to the objective of identifying the impact of conflict events on people and security situations within local contexts in Iraq.

3.7. Ethical Consideration

In this study, secondary publicly available data from the UCDP Georeferenced Event Dataset is explored. Primary data from human respondents is not collected. This means that there is no direct involvement of participants, interviews, questionnaires or personal information. The research procedures are well within the ethical boundaries of research, with the data set used solely for academic purposes. The information has been sourced correctly and the results do not misrepresent or alter the information provided. Because this study is a study of conflict, death, and civilian deaths, an appropriate and sensitive approach to analysis is provided. The study aims to explore the consequences of the conflict on the local people and local security and not to advocate for a particular political stance.

4. Results and Analysis

This chapter provides the analyses and data from the conflict events that took place in Iraq from 2019 to 2025. Data analysis was conducted on SPSS in order to study the effect of Iran and Iraq conflict and regional tension on local peoples on security situation in Iraq. The chapter emphasizes important variables, including conflict events by year, type of violence, provinces involved, actors involved, total casualties, and civilian casualties. Patterns within the data are explained using frequency distributions, descriptive statistics, comparisons of means, cross tabulations, and graphical presentations. Results provide a picture of the years and provinces that have been worst hit by conflict related violence. They also offer an analysis of how

violence exacerbated the civilian casualties and broader security issues in Iraq during the period defined in the timeframe. This chapter provides a statistical overview of the local impact of conflict events linked with Iran-US tensions.

4.1. Data Overview

The data that was used in this study was made up of one and a half thousand and a hundred incidents of conflict recorded in Iraq in the period 2019-2025. The variables selected were year, type of violence and province. The SPSS output revealed that there are no missing values for all of the selected variables, and all have valid cases equal to 1510. This indicated that the data were complete and could be suitable for further statistical analysis. The frequency distribution, descriptive analysis, cross tabulation and graphic representation were employed for the cases.

Table 2: Frequency Distribution of Selected Variables

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent
Year	2019	231	15.3
	2020	255	16.9
	2021	322	21.3
	2022	261	17.3
	2023	176	11.7
	2024	189	12.5
	2025	76	5.0
Type of violence	State-based violence	1383	91.6
	One-sided violence	127	8.4
Province	Al Anbar province	85	5.6
	Al Basrah province	6	0.4
	Al Qadisiyah province	1	0.1
	An Najaf province	3	0.2
	Arbil province	156	10.3
	Babil province	7	0.5
	Baghdad province	75	5.0

	Dahuk province	501	33.2
	Dhi Qar province	3	0.2
	Diyala province	189	12.5
	Halabja province	3	0.2
	Karbala province	7	0.5
	Kirkuk province	170	11.3
	Maysan province	4	0.3
	Ninawa province	96	6.4
	Salah ad Din province	137	9.1
	Sulaymaniyah province	66	4.4
	Wasit province	1	0.1
Total		1510	100.0

The highest number of occurrences recorded in the year-wise distribution was the year of 2021, with a total number of 322 cases, (21.3% of the total data source). This was followed by 2022 with 261 events, 2020 with 255 events, and 2019 with 231 events. The years with the fewest events were 2025 (76 events, or 5.0% of the total), and 2054 (60 events, or 3.6% of the total). Regarding the type of violence, Type 1 violence was predominant (1,383 events or 91.6%) and Type 3 violence (127 events or 8.4%). Results from the province-wise analysis reveals that the province of Dahuk recorded the highest number of conflict events (501 or 33.2%). Arbil (156 events), Kirkuk (170 events) and Diyala (189 events) were the next provinces on the list. These results show that the numbers of conflict events did not distribute equitably across Iraq, since some provinces had much fewer events than others.

4.2. Descriptive Statistics of Fatalities

Table 2 provides descriptive statistics of the conflict related deaths that were recorded in Iraq between the years 2019 to 2025. The results show that all fatality variables had 1,510 valid cases, which means no missing values were found in these variables. The minimum of best was 0 and the maximum was 42. The mean value was 2.88 and the standard deviation value was

3.594. This means that the average level of fatalities for a single conflict event was almost three deaths, but some events saw much higher numbers of deaths.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of Conflict-Related Fatalities

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
best	1510	0	42	2.88	3.594
deaths_civilians	1510	0	35	.43	2.072
deaths_b	1510	0	42	1.79	3.112
deaths_a	1510	0	13	.56	1.424
deaths_unknown	1510	0	13	.11	.749
Valid N (listwise)	1510				

The mean value of civilian deaths was 0.43 with a maximum of 35. That suggests that, besides this, civilian deaths averaged lower than total deaths, and there were serious civilian effects in some conflict events. The mean value of deaths_b is 1.79 and the deaths_a is 0.56. This indicates that there was more evidence of fatalities on Side B than side A. The proportion of unknown deaths was small, with mean value of 0.11. The descriptive statistics indicate that both civilian and combatant lives were taken in Iraq as a result of conflict events. While average loss of life per event was not particularly high, the peaks suggest some events were extremely lethal and therefore were serious for local security and civilian life.

4.3. Year-wise Pattern of Civilian Deaths and Total Fatalities

The year-wise mean values of Iraq's civilian and total deaths between 2019 and 2025 are displayed below in Table 3. Results indicate that the maximum mean civilian deaths occurred in 2019 (mean 0.82). This suggests that in 2019, the number of civilian dead in a conflict event is greater on average than in the other years. In 2021, the mean number of civilian deaths amounted to 0.69, representing the second highest mean level, followed by 2020 with 0.44. The total deaths had the highest mean for 2019 (3.60) followed closely by 2020 (3.51). The statistics indicate that on average, conflict during the period 2019 through 2020 were more lethal than in subsequent years. The most recent year is 2021, where the number of conflict events was the highest, but the mean number of conflict fatalities was (2.85) lower than in 2020

and 2019. This indicates that there were more events in 2021, and the average number of deaths per event was also rather lower.

Table 4: Year-wise Mean Civilian Deaths and Total Fatalities

Year	N	Mean Civilian Deaths	SD Civilian Deaths	Mean Total Fatalities	SD Total Fatalities
2019	231	0.82	3.326	3.60	3.895
2020	255	0.44	1.062	3.51	4.779
2021	322	0.69	3.081	2.85	3.900
2022	261	0.21	0.965	3.10	3.030
2023	176	0.19	0.990	2.37	2.882
2024	189	0.16	0.652	1.87	1.936
2025	76	0.09	0.334	1.71	1.631
Total	1510	0.43	2.072	2.88	3.594

There is a downward trend in the civilian figures and overall casualty figures since 2022. Mean civilian deaths decreased from 0.21 in 2022 to 0.09 in 2025, while mean total fatalities decreased from 3.10 in 2022 to 1.71 in 2025. The results show a gradual and ponderable decrease over the years in fatalities, particularly since 2021. Throughout the study period, local people were affected by conflict-related violence, whilst security conditions in Iraq remained at a constant level.

4.4. Province-wise Pattern of Civilian Deaths and Total Fatalities

There were differences in the number of persons who died in Iraqi provinces according to civilian and total fatalities, as revealed in Table 4. The mean civilian deaths was 0.43, and the mean total deaths was 2.88 for each conflict event. This means that there are events that generated casualties, yet caused only a visible number of civilian deaths within the country due to the conflict. The province with the highest mean civilian death was Dhi Qar ($M = 12.00$), followed by An Najaf province ($M = 8.00$), Karbala province ($M = 5.00$), Babil province ($M = 3.00$), Baghdad province ($M = 1.84$) and Al Basrah province ($M = 1.83$). A few of these provinces had documented data on very few events such as Dhi Qar, An Najaf, Karbala, and Babil. Their high averages should be interpreted carefully, because a few severe events can strongly increase the mean. In terms of total fatalities, Dhi Qar province again showed the

highest mean total fatalities ($M = 12.00$), followed by An Najaf ($M = 8.00$), Karbala ($M = 5.00$), Babil ($M = 4.29$), Baghdad ($M = 4.11$), Ninawa ($M = 3.74$), Al Anbar ($M = 3.73$), Kirkuk ($M = 3.58$), and Salah ad Din ($M = 3.54$). According to these results, there were more acute incidents of conflict in several provinces in terms of overall fatalities.

Table 5: Province-wise Mean Civilian Deaths and Total Fatalities

Province	N	Mean Civilian Deaths	SD Civilian Deaths	Mean Total Fatalities	SD Total Fatalities
Al Anbar province	85	0.25	0.962	3.73	3.899
Al Basrah province	6	1.83	1.169	1.83	1.169
Al Qadisiyah province	1	0.00	-	0.00	-
An Najaf province	3	8.00	7.550	8.00	7.550
Arbil province	156	0.29	0.727	2.69	4.159
Babil province	7	3.00	7.506	4.29	7.111
Baghdad province	75	1.84	6.344	4.11	6.332
Dahuk province	501	0.11	0.562	2.15	2.348
Dhi Qar province	3	12.00	14.799	12.00	14.799
Diyala province	189	0.60	1.740	2.75	2.438
Halabja province	3	1.67	1.528	1.67	1.528
Karbala province	7	5.00	7.047	5.00	7.047
Kirkuk province	170	0.19	0.716	3.58	4.183
Maysan province	4	0.75	0.500	0.75	0.500
Ninawa province	96	0.27	0.801	3.74	4.773
Salah ad Din province	137	0.39	1.273	3.54	2.865
Sulaymaniyah province	66	0.41	0.784	1.73	1.354
Wasit province	1	1.00	-	1.00	-
Total	1510	0.43	2.072	2.88	3.594

The province of Dahuk had the highest number of conflict events ($N = 501$), while the mean civilian deaths in the province were low ($M = 0.11$), and the mean total fatalities in the province were lower than for several other provinces ($M = 2.15$). That means that there were a number of incidents of conflict in Dahuk, but in many cases there were lower numbers of civilian killings. Similarly, there were many incidents of insecurity in Diyala, Kirkuk, Salah ad Din, Arbil and Ninawa. The standard deviation values are high in some provinces particularly Dhi Qar, Babil, Baghdad, Karbala and Ninawa. Fatalities have not been distributed equally among events; some incidents suffered lower death toll, and others suffered higher death tolls. The general picture shows that normalization is not the overall trend among the provinces, and some experienced frequent insecurity, while others are not as frequent, but more lethal.

4.5. Cross-tabulation of Year and Type of Violence

Table 5 shows the cross-tabulation between year and type of violence in Iraq from 2019 to 2025. Type 1 violence, which includes assaults and murders, was the predominant type of violence observed during the study period with 1383 cases out of 1510 recorded. Type of Violence 3 was relatively less with only 127 cases. This suggests that there were relatively few Type 3 incidents of conflict in Iraq, with most occurring within Type 1 conflict.

Table 6: Cross-tabulation of Year and Type of Violence

Year	Type of Violence 1	Type of Violence 3	Total
2019	201	30	231
2020	229	26	255
2021	267	55	322
2022	257	4	261
2023	172	4	176
2024	186	3	189
2025	71	5	76
Total	1383	127	1510

In the year-wise analysis, the year 2021 had the highest number of total conflict events: 267 cases of Type 1 violence and 55 cases of Type 3 violence. This indicates that 2021 was the most active one in terms of recorded conflict activity. There were less than this in 2025 with 76 cases, while this is the highest number recorded in 2012 with 77 cases, suggesting either less violence or fewer cases were reported for those years. Across 2021 there was a sharp drop in Type 3 violence, meaning that in 2022, 2023 and 2024, one-sided violence was less common compared

to earlier years. The table underscores Iraq's continued struggle with Type 1 violence as the chief problem during the years.

4.6. Cross-tabulation of Province and Type of Violence

Table 6 shows the cross tabulation of province and type of violence in Iraq. From the results, Type of Violence 1 was the significant type of violence which accounted for 1,383 out of 1,510 overall recorded cases in most provinces. Type of Violence 3 occurred in fewer cases during the study period (127) than Type of Violence 2 (216).

Table 7: Cross-tabulation of Province and Type of Violence

Province	Type of Violence 1	Type of Violence 3	Total
Al Anbar province	79	6	85
Al Basrah province	0	6	6
Al Qadisiyah province	0	1	1
An Najaf province	0	3	3
Arbil province	151	5	156
Babil province	5	2	7
Baghdad province	53	22	75
Dahuk province	501	0	501
Dhi Qar province	0	3	3
Diyala province	157	32	189
Halabja province	2	1	3
Karbala province	0	7	7
Kirkuk province	155	15	170
Maysan province	1	3	4
Ninawa province	92	4	96
Salah ad Din province	126	11	137
Sulaymaniyah province	61	5	66
Wasit province	0	1	1
Total	1383	127	1510

Province-wise, Dahuk recorded the highest number of conflict events, with 501 cases, all of which were Type of Violence 1. Diyala was the second most affected province, with 189 total events, including 157 Type 1 events and 32 Type 3 events. Kirkuk also showed a high number of incidents, with 170 total events, mostly Type 1 violence. Arbil recorded 156 events, while Salah ad Din recorded 137 events, again showing a strong dominance of Type 1 violence. It is also worth noting that there were 22 instances of Type 3 violence in Baghdad out of 75 cases

in total, as indicated in the table. The province of Diyala had the highest rate of Type 3 violence, with 32 incidents, suggesting that civilians or non-combatants were targeted in one-sided violence in the province. Basrah, Najaf, Dhi Qar, Karbala and Wasit experienced only Type 3 violence with few cases. The findings indicate that violence in Iraq was geographically concentrated in provinces such as Dahuk, Diyala, Kirkuk, Arbil, and Salah ad Din, while Type 1 violence remained the major security challenge across the country.

4.7. Graphical Presentation of Results

Figure 1 presents the number of conflict events happening in Iraq each year between 2019 and 2025. The findings show an upward trend in the amount of conflict events from 2019 to 2021. There have been 231 events recorded in 2019, rising to 255 in 2020 and hitting a high of 322 events in 2021. This reflects that 2021 was the most impacted year in number of conflicts. After 2021, the number of conflict events started to decline, with 261 events in 2022, 176 in 2023, 189 in 2024, and 76 in 2025. The lower number in 2025 may also be due to limited data coverage for that year. The overall trend suggests that there was more conflict activity in the earlier years, in Iraq especially 2021, with declining trends in later years.

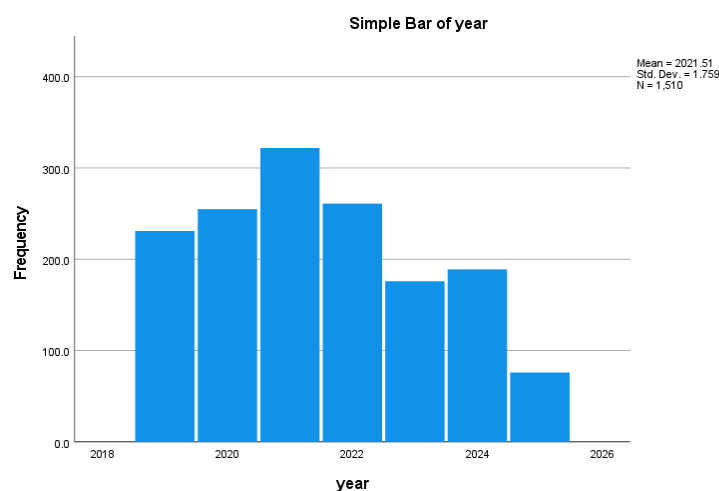


Figure 1: Year-wise Frequency of Conflict Events in Iraq (2019–2025)

Figure 2 presents the province-wise distribution of conflict events in Iraq. As seen on the graph, there was not an equal distribution of conflict events in each province. The most affected province in the data set was Dahuk province with 501 cases. The second province to be hit was diyala with 189 events, followed by Kirkuk with 170 events, Arbil with 156 events and Salah ad Din with 137 events. The focus of conflict during this study period seems to have been these provinces. There were almost negligible events reported in other provinces like Basrah, Najaf, Dhi Qar, Maysan, Qadisiyah and Wasit. This indicates that the conflict was not evenly

distributed spatially in Iraq, but was focused in certain locations. The overall figure indicates that the security situation in northern and provinces of higher event frequency was more complicated than in provinces of lower event frequency.

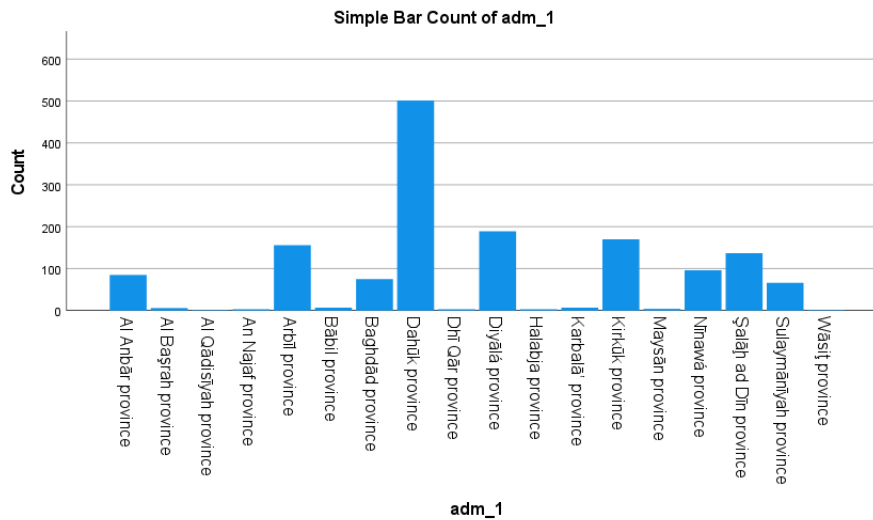


Figure 2: Province-wise Distribution of Conflict Events in Iraq

Figure 3 shows the trend of the number of total fatalities in Iraq from 2019 to 2025. The number of fatalities in 2019 is the maximum from the graph whereas 2020 is the next of it with a mean of 3.51. The total mean number of deaths was less in 2021 (2.85) but slightly more in 2022 (3.10). After 2022, the trend declined continuously, with 2.37 in 2023, 1.87 in 2024, and 1.71 in 2025. The trend indicates that though the conflicts happened in the study period, their deadly effect gradually decreased in the later years. The increase in deaths seen in the past could be due to different violence types, quantity or frequency. From the figure, it is evident that the earlier years were more fatal; while the later years show a lower rate of death as compared to the earlier years.

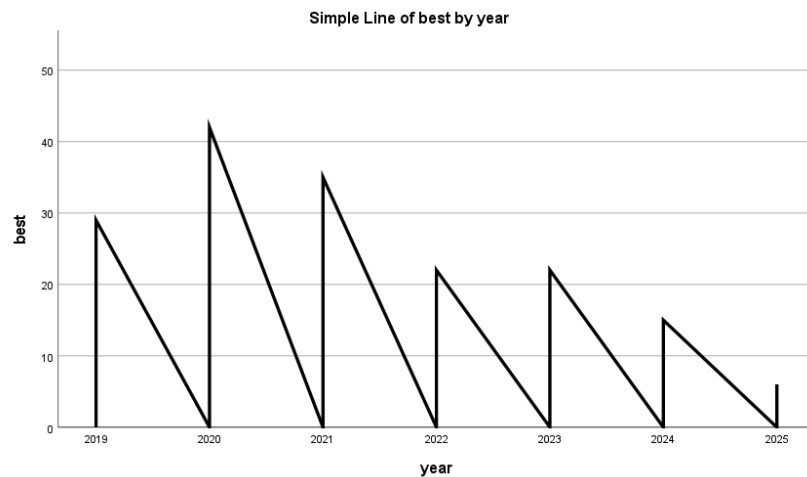


Figure 3: Year-wise Trend of Total Fatalities in Iraq

The trend of death tolls in Iraq over the years is shown in Figure 4. From the graph it can be seen that in the year 2019, there was the highest number of civilian deaths with the mean value as 0.82. In 2020, the mean civilian deaths decreased to 0.44, but increased again in 2021 to 0.69. A definite downward trend is visible after 2021. The mean civilian deaths decreased to 0.21 in 2022, 0.19 in 2023, 0.16 in 2024, and 0.09 in 2025. This suggests that the number of civilian casualties has generally decreased through time, particularly since 2021. This drop indicates that there were fewer civilian fatalities in later conflict events than there were in previous years. A low mean value can still be significant as it is a source of harm to local people. The figure indicated that the violence during the pre-war years had more a significant civilian effect and this decreased in the post-war years.

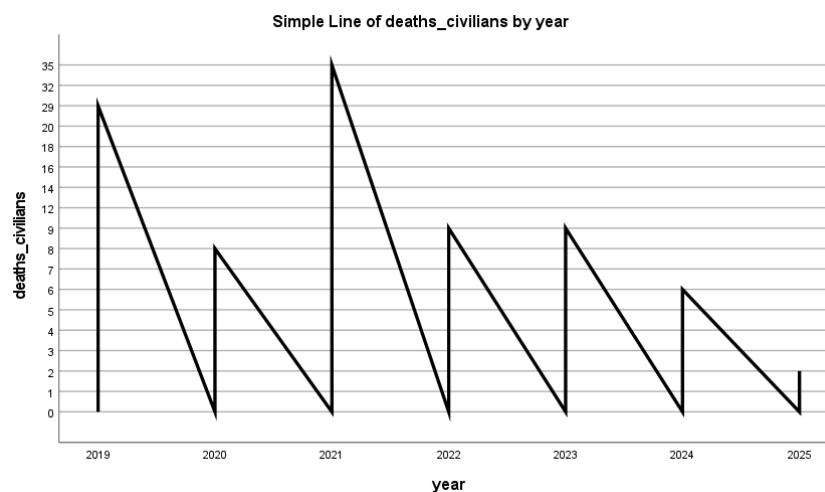


Figure 4: Year-wise Trend of Civilian Deaths in Iraq

5. Discussion

The aim of this study is to investigate the impact of Iran and Iraq tensions on local security and civilian life between 2019 and 2025. The data utilized for analysis was the UCDP Georeferenced Event Dataset and covered conflict events, nature of the violence, affected provinces, the number of fatalities, and civilian deaths (Thurber, 2014; Robinson, 2020). The number of the conflict-related events in Iraq during the selected period has been significant and amounted to 1,510 events. The results suggest the country continued to be extremely vulnerable to regional dynamics of conflict given its territory, internal political unrest, and the presence of various member armed actors. The year wise results indicate that maximum cases of conflict events were recorded in 2021, reflecting 322 cases. This implies 2021 was the most volatile year in terms of the number of conflicts experienced (Ross, 2017). Total number of events went up between 2019 and 2021 and after 2021 the total number of events decreased. The diagram illustrates that there was more conflict observed during the first years of the study period, and as conflict decreased observed events decreased during the later years of the study (Slezkine, 2014).

The decline is no evidence of stabilization of Iraq altogether. It shows a change over time in the amount and type of conflict events. The reduced numbers of events in 2025 should also be read with a grain of salt as there is potentially less data coverage in 2025. The findings also reveal that violence in Iraq was mainly in the form of State-based violence. Only 127 events were recorded as Type of Violence 3, whereas 1383 events were registered as Type of Violence 1, out of 1510 total events. This implies that a majority of the conflicts had been associated with organized armed actors instead of one-sided violence against civilians (Raleigh et al., 2010). The finding is significant since it highlights the link between armed confrontations, military actions and organized violence and Iraq's insecurity during the period. Overall, the occurrence of one-sided violence was less frequent, but it was still important as it directly indicates harm to local communities and civilians. Conflict events were also distributed unequally across Iraq, as evidenced by the results of the province-wise content analysis (Ottmann, 2017).

The most are recorded in Dahuk province, then Diyala, then Kirkuk, then Arbil and Salah ad Din. This means that geographic distribution of insecurity was identified in certain provinces. In terms of number of conflict events, Dahuk reported the highest incidence, but in terms of civilian deaths, the mean was low when compared to some other provinces (Chojnacki et al,

2012; Şimşek, 2025). This indicates Dahuk had many conflict incidents, yet this many were not fatal for civilians. However, more civilian deaths had been reported with higher averages in some provinces (Baghdad, Diyala, Karbala, Dhi Qar and An Najaf) with small numbers of cases. Even if their own province event is relatively rare there may be effects of fatal events in another province on that province. Further descriptive statistics reveal that per event, there were on average 2.88 deaths, including 0.43 civilian deaths. It also means that most events had relatively low average casualties, but some events had high levels of intensity (maximum total casualties of 42, maximum civilian casualties of 35).

These are the maximum values and indicate that although the events of conflict were not widespread, there were conflicts that had a serious impact on local people and security. In addition, the analysis reveals an overall higher proportion of deaths on Side B than Side A, based on the average number of deaths per conflict event that each actor sustained, indicating differential patterns of fatal effects. The pattern of deaths by year reveals 2019 to be the year with the largest mean civilian deaths and total deaths (Pettersson & Öberg, 2020). This translates to the quality of conflict events, as the number of dead bodies was higher per event in 2019 than in 2021, despite the fact that 2021 had the highest number of events. The results indicate decreasing civilian deaths and overall death toll since 2021. This may represent over time a decrease in the intensity leading to death in events of conflict. Conflict events continued throughout the period, indicating Iraq continued to be susceptible to insecurity even though its fatalities fell (Hasan, 2021).

The results of the research objectives include the results that indicate the patterns of conflict frequency, affected localities and impacts on the human resources. The study revealed that Iran-U.S. tensions and region conflict dynamics were highlighted in Iraq by continued conflict events, unequal provincial insecurity, and civilian deaths. The results corroborate the notion that Iraq is a highly sensitive conflict zone that could see regional rivalry influencing local security situation. The findings also reveal that local populations remain impacted beyond civilian casualties, also in terms of security issues, fear, instability and normal life disruption (Gunter, 2011). This study is a contribution to the literature as it gives voice to the event level data, in addition to political or descriptive discussion. This research is research that has been previously discussed with Iran-USA relations at the international or regional level, and in this research, local measurable consequences in Iraq were examined. The analysis illustrates patterns and associations but cannot confirm that every conflict event was caused directly by Iran-US tensions (Khorram-Manesh et al., 2021).

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

In this study, we have tried to observe the effect of tension between Iran and the USA on local people and the security situation in Iraq during 2019-2025. The study was based on data from the UCDP Georeferenced Event dataset for the analysis of conflict-related events, conflict type of violence, conflict provinces involved, total casualties and civilian casualties. The results showed that between the chosen period, the lives of Iraqis were suffering a lot due to the conflict-related violence. There were 1,510 conflict events recorded and the level of insecurity continued to be a significant concern for local communities. Findings indicate that there was the most conflict events in 2021, civilian fatalities peaked in 2019 and the average civilian fatalities were highest in 2021. This means that year 2021 is by far the most conflicted (in terms of number of conflicts) while that of 2019 is the worst in terms of deaths per conflict. The civilian death rate and rate of total deaths are decreasing after 2021, suggesting over time conflict events were less lethal. The ongoing manifestations of the conflict events demonstrated that Iraq continued to suffer from severe security problems.

The study also revealed that the main form of violence was state-based violence, with most of the incidents recorded being state-based. Less frequent violent acts occurred on one side, but more on one side than the other, as they had a direct impact on the civilians and local communities. The finding was province-wise, where the conflict events were found to be localized mainly in Dahuk, Diyala, Kirkuk, Arbil and Salah ad Din. There were many more events reported in Dahuk, while provinces like Baghdad, Dhi Qar, An Najaf, Karbala, and Babil had more average civilian deaths or total deaths in some instances. The study concludes that Iran-US tensions and related regional conflict dynamics resulted in insecurity in Iraq. Some provinces felt the impact more frequently than others, and in some instances the incidents were more severe leading to more fatalities. The results reveal that the local people of Iraq suffered as a consequence of civilian fatalities, fear, instability and disruption of their daily lives.

This study adds to the literature by offering a quantitative-based analysis of local security outcomes rather than political or strategic discussions. From the results, a recommendation is made for Iraqi authorities and security institutions that they direct more attention to provinces that experience more incidents of conflict, particularly Dahuk, Diyala, Kirkuk, Arbil and Salah ad Din. These are the areas that need greater monitoring, more local security planning and more coordination amongst security agencies. The government should also pay more attention to the protection of civilians in provinces where civilian fatalities were higher. Campfire locations

should be targeted where lower volumes of events were recorded with greater number of fatalities, as these events can result in significant fear and insecurity among the local population. Recorded conflict information should be used at the level of the event for security planning. The use of data tools like the UCDP GED could help diagnose conflict trends, conflict-affected areas and patterns of fatalities. Improving early warning systems and preventing future violence through data-based planning.

The priority should be humanitarian assistance for the areas affected the most by conflict-related insecurity. Assistance needs to include emergency relief, psychological support, rehabilitation services, and assistance to families of civilians killed. Regional and international actors should minimize the use of Iraq as a proxy conflict arena. The diplomatic process between Iran, U.S. and the leadership in Iraq is required to defuse the tensions and avoid spillover impact on Iraqi civilians. These should be expanded by future researchers to include displacement, economic damage, infrastructure loss, and psychological effects. While these variables can help to give a fuller and more holistic picture of the impact of conflict on local residents beyond the sphere of death caused by violence. Future research can also aim at developing a clearer spatial pattern of violence through the use of GIS mapping and advanced statistical analysis. This would contribute to give a sense of the purpose of the most vulnerable and the extension of the conflict between provinces, province by province and year by year.

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