30 January 2008

Mr Richard Moyes
rmoyes@landmineaction.org

Dear Mr Moyes

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST 0873-07

I am writing to confirm that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office has now completed its search for the information you requested on 1 November 2007.

You requested information under FOI on “requesting information since 2001, on “projects the FCO has funded, undertaken or analysed in a) Afghanistan b) Iraq that work, inter alia, to assess the numbers and specific causes of civilian casualties resulting from armed violence perpetrated by UK forces and our relevant international partners” and “analyses or assessments made by FCO staff or scientific advisors regarding methodologies for assessing the civilian cost of armed violence”

I can confirm that the FCO holds some information relevant to your request and a copy of the information which can be disclosed is attached. The names of officials have been omitted, as they are not relevant to your request. I would also like to highlight that the email of 14 January 2005 entitled “Collier and Hoeffler on peacekeeping”; the email of 11 September 2006 entitled “Greed and Grievance: a critique of Collier” and the paper entitled “Conflict: an introduction to current thinking” are the personal views of an FCO officer and in no way reflect the views of the FCO.

The FCO has not funded any projects to assess the number or specific causes of civilian casualties in Afghanistan. UK troops operate in Afghanistan on the invitation of the Afghan government and as part of the UN-mandated, NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). Any investigation into the numbers and specific causes of civilian casualties will be carried out by the Afghanistan Government or NATO in the first instance and by UK forces if they are involved. The FCO does not undertake this type of project in Afghanistan.
Afghanistan Group also does not hold any information on the second part of the request. The FCO publishes a civilian casualties fact sheet that can found on the FCO web page, and a list of reports can be found below. The FCO has not commented on these reports.


UN High Commissioner for Human Rights
(http://www.unhchr.ch/hurricane/hurricane.nsf/view01/8FA97A1314FB08B5C1257399005990A3?opendocument)

Oxfam


HRW press release in March 2007
(http://hrw.org/english/docs/2007/03/06/afghan15446.htm)


2002 a report "Fatally Flawed: Cluster Bombs and Their Use by the United States in Afghanistan" (http://hrw.org/reports/2002/us-afghanistan/).

There is also other information relevant to your request. However, for the reasons given below we cannot release this information to you.

Some of the information is exempt under sections 27(1)(a) and (b) international relations, and the rest under 35(1)(a&b) formulation or development of government policy and ministerial communications. These exemptions are explained below.

Some of the information you requested is exempt under section 27(1)(a) and (b) of the Act, as disclosure would be likely to prejudice relations between the United Kingdom and other states and international organisations, in this case the United States and Iraq. This information relates to confidential discussions held between the United States and the United Kingdom, and in the Iraq Policy Unit on civilian casualties Iraq. This exemption requires the application of a public interest test. The effective conduct of international relations on Iraq policy depends upon maintaining trust and confidence between other Governments and international organisations. This relationship of trust allows for the free and frank exchange
of information on Iraq policy on the understanding that it will be treated in confidence. If the
United Kingdom does not maintain this trust and confidence, its ability to protect and
promote UK interests through productive international relations will be hampered. As the
subject of civilian casualties in Iraq is still a sensitive subject with the Iraqi and US
governments, we judge that releasing this information may hamper the chances of further
information being passed to us. For these reasons we consider that the public interest in
maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

Some of the information you requested is exempt under section 35(1)(a and b) – formulation
or development of government policy and ministerial communications. This information
relates to confidential policy discussions. Some of the information also shows the policy
discussion for writing the Foreign Secretary’s statement on the Lancet Casualty report.
Relieving this material may prejudice future policy discussion when writing a Foreign
Secretary’s statement. This exemption requires the application of a public interest test. We
recognise that there is a public interest in the greater transparency in the decision making
process to ensure accountability within public authorities. However, officials need to be able
to conduct rigorous and candid risk assessments of their policies and programmes including
considerations of the pros and cons without there being premature disclosure which might
close off better options and inhibit the free and frank discussion of all policy options. For
these reasons we consider that the public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the
public interest in disclosure. The public interest also lies in ensuring the collective
responsibility of government is not undermined by the disclosure of interdepartmental
consideration and in not undermining the collective responsibility of government ministers as
shown by their ministerial correspondence.

Section 35 is statutory recognition of the public interest in allowing government to have a
clear space, immune from exposure to public view, in which it can debate matters internally
with candour and free from the pressures of public political debate. Government officials
need to be able to engage in free and frank discussion of all the policy options, to expose their
merits and demerits and their possible implications as appropriate. Their candour in doing so
will be affected by their assessment of whether the content of such discussion will be
disclosed in the near future. For these reasons, the public interest in withholding this
information outweighs the public interest in release.

The information supplied to you continues to be protected by the Copyright, Designs and
Patents Act 1988. You are free to use it for your own purposes, including any non-
commercial research you are doing and for the purposes of news reporting. Any other re-use,
for example commercial publication, would require the permission of the copyright holder.
Most documents supplied by the FCO will have been produced by government officials and
will be Crown Copyright. You can find details on the arrangements for re-using Crown
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Information you receive which is not subject to Crown Copyright continues to be protected by the copyright of the person, or organisation, from which the information originated. You must ensure that you gain their permission before reproducing any third party (non Crown Copyright) information.

In keeping with the spirit and effect of the Freedom of Information Act, all information is assumed to be releasable to the public unless exempt. The information supplied to you may now be published on our website together with any related information that will provide a key to its wider context.

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact me. Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.

If you are unhappy with the service you have received in relation to your request and wish to make a complaint or request an review of our decision, you should write to: IPU OGLO, Room K270, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, SW1A 2AH.

If you are not content with the outcome of your complaint, you may apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Generally, the Information Commissioner’s Office cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted the complaints procedure provided by Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: The Information Commissioner’s Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire SK9 5AF.

Yours sincerely,

Roz Griffiths
Iraq Group
In essence, the method is indeed tried and tested. For example, a somewhat similar study was published earlier this year, also in the Lancet, on mortality in the Demographic Republic of the Congo. (Coghlan et al. The Lancet 2006; 367:44-51). There are two major differences:

- the Iraq study was based on a much smaller number of locations visited: just 47 rather than 750 in the DRC study. The impact of this is that it greatly increases the width of the "confidence interval", so the Iraq study is only able to place casualties somewhere in the range of between 0.4 and 0.9 million. This has been appropriately accounted for in the analysis of the Iraq study. The choice of a small number of clusters obviously responds to the extreme danger of doing a survey in Iraq.

- the Iraq study has a longer recall period than is customary. People usually forget about deaths that happen some time ago, so the method should lead to an underestimation of deaths in the pre-war and early post-invasion periods. However, there is no sign that this happened in this case, as the results are exactly comparable to the same authors' earlier study in which the recall period was much shorter. Infant deaths show no change over time, and deaths in the elderly show only a relatively small increase.

You may also be interested to know that the DRC study found mortality rates over three times higher than those reported in yesterday's Iraq study. The World Bank has a toolbook on adult mortality measurement which includes a section on this method (a single cross-sectional survey with deaths identified by recall). I am quoting their assessment of the method below, but in summary, it concludes that there is a risk of underestimation of mortality. The Iraq survey was particular in that death certificates were sought. Interviewees were surprised in their homes and yet were able to produce death certificates. It is hard to imagine how they could have pulled this off if they were falsifying information. Unless, of course, the local research simply invented the results rather than actually doing interviews. This possibility exists with all field research.

There is considerable experience of this approach to measuring adult mortality. The results suggest that it is common for a substantial proportion of recent deaths to be omitted. Often only about a third to one half of the expected number of adult deaths are reported and sometimes far fewer. There seem to be several reasons for this. One major problem is that deaths only occur in a small minority of households and interviewers simply give up asking the question and leave that section of the schedule blank. In addition, reference-period errors may be important and also omissions, perhaps because of an unwillingness on the part of respondents to talk about the dead. In several WFS surveys the number of deaths reported each month declined rapidly as the interval between their occurrence and the survey increased (Timms, 1987). Coverage errors are also a problem. Not everyone is clearly attached to a single household and some people live alone. Such individuals may be among those most likely to die but are unlikely to have their deaths reported. Moreover, the death of an adult can often precipitate
household fission so that the households in which deaths occur may disintegrate before the survey is conducted.

If only a proportion of adult deaths are reported it may still be possible to adjust them using the growth balance method and related techniques. Unfortunately the combined effects of migration, age misreporting and sampling errors often mean that few firm conclusions can be drawn from such analyses. Typically one can only conclude either that the data mm be complete, though not whether they are, or that the data are definitely incomplete, though not how incomplete (eg. Timaus, 1987). In some countries, concentrating on the data for women, who may be less likely to migrate, or re-tabulating the data using unconventional age groups, to alleviate the problem of heaping of reported ages on those ending in the digits 0 and 5, may facilitate assessment of the completeness of reporting.

It is important to add, however, that sometimes questions about recent deaths in single-round surveys work well. In nearly half the WFS surveys considered by Timaus (1987) such questions yielded estimates of adult mortality that were comparable with those from other sources. Thus the approach is unreliable, rather than useless. Unfortunately its performance can seldom be assessed on the basis of internal evidence. In addition, sampling errors and errors in the reporting of ages at death mean that it is seldom possible to accept the age-specific mortality rates as they stand. Usually the data have to be smoothed by fitting a model life table. Thus they are of little use for studying age patterns -f mortality in detail.

Finally, information on recent deaths are of limitee use for the study of mortality differentials. Even if sample size constra;nst do not prohibit disaggregation, it is difficult to collect information retrospectively on the characteristics of the deceased. In addition, techniques for assessing and adjusting data on recent deaths cannot be applied to sub-populations that are affected by migration. Even when these methods work well at a national scale, it is unreasonable to suppose that the level of reporting is invariant across regions or social groups.

Statistics Adviser
Europe, Middle East and Americas Division
Department for International Development (DFID)

Email chain of 20 October 2006 between FCO officials regarding Royal Holloway study

Thanks , I still think we FCO should not be rubbishng the Lancet, but can acknowledge there are other scientists with other views.
Copied to other HMG with an interest.

-----Original Message-----
From: 
Sent: Friday, October 20, 2006 12:25 PM
To: [redacted]
Cc: [redacted]
Subject: FW: Lancet Paper - Channel 4

I thought you would be interested in this paper adding more doubt over the Lancet study.

-----Original Message-----
From: [redacted]
Sent: Friday, October 20, 2006 11:51 AM
To: [redacted]
Subject: FW: Lancet Paper - Channel 4

...this is the study that channel 4 were referring to from the nice man at The Royal Holloway College.

-----Original Message-----
From: [redacted] [at] [rhul.ac.uk]
Sent: Friday, October 20, 2006 11:34 AM
To: [redacted] [at] [fco.gov.uk]
Subject: Lancet Paper - Channel 4

<<ScienceLancet.pdf>> <<lancet study flawed1.pdf>>

Dear [redacted],

Have a look then please call me.

[redacted]
Department of Economics
Royal Holloway College
University of London
Egham
Surrey
TW20 0EX
United Kingdom

Email from MOD to FCO Official re advice from Chief Scientific Adviser of 13 October 2006

[redacted]

Please see comments on The Lancet article from CSA.
What is the next course of action? Would we be able to see a copy of any written documents relating to the briefing that is being prepared?

From the Rolling Brief I think the lines remain that "There are no entirely accurate or comprehensive figures for civilian deaths in Iraq. Estimates vary according the method of collection."

The numbers seem incredibly high, when compared to www.iraqbodycount.net for example.

Let me know if we can help any more...
From:  
Sent: 13 October 2006 12:00  
To:  
Cc:  
Subject: CSA Review of the LANCET Article on casualties in Iraq
James,
Psa comments from CSA after review of the Lancet article.

APS/CSA  
MB 81451

Chief Scientific Adviser’s advice, summarised by Assistant Private Secretary of  
13 October 2006


1. Further to our discussions yesterday, CSA has reviewed the recent article by Burnham and colleagues published in the *Lancet* (Online – 11 October 2006) and received comments from an independent expert in statistical epidemiology and demography (Davies, Imperial College). He has the following comments to make:

   a) The study design is robust and employs methods that are regarded as close to ‘best practice’ in this area, given the difficulties of data collection and verification in the present circumstances in Iraq. The methods section of the paper is sufficiently detailed to gain a good impression of the techniques adopted, problems encountered in implementation and the statistical methods employed in analysis. The methods are an improvement on those used in the 2004 Lancet article by the same senior author (G Burnham). Sample sizes have been increased, given critical comment on the earlier study with respect to small sample size (and the concomitant large confidence intervals surrounding estimates of excess mortality) and previous lack of verification of reported death against death certificates. The senior author is a competent researcher in public health and demography and the study received appropriate scrutiny from the sponsoring institutions in the USA and Iraq.

   b) The most significant improvement in methodology between the 2004 and 2006 studies lie in death certificate verification of reported mortality, larger sample sizes and better design in the cross-sectional (by age and gender) cluster-based survey methods.
c) The reported analyses and statistical methods employed seem robust, although moderate confidence bounds remain on the estimate of 601,027 post-invasion deaths due to violence (95% confidence bound of 426,369 to 793,663). This is in part a consequence of heterogeneity between clusters and extrapolation from samples to the total population. In the difficult circumstances surrounding data collection this is hardly surprising. The average estimate in the 2006 study is close to that reported in the 2004 study.

d) Deaths were much more prevalent among adolescent to middle aged men and bias may remain with respect to average levels of non-combatant mortality in the overall population, given that some of the recorded deaths were amongst combatants against both the coalition forces and opposing sectarian groups.

e) The discussion section of the 2006 paper is more balanced than that in the 2004 study, with reasonable discussion of problems in data collection plus study implementation, and the interpretation of the reported estimates.

2.

3. Given the reasonably robust study design and appropriate analysis methods, CSA recommends caution in publicly criticising the study.

Email from Iraq Policy Unit to Parliamentary Relations Team containing Prime Minister's Questions brief of 13 October 2006

Please see attached a brief for the PM on the Lancet survey. This can be used for PMQ's plus other briefings. Let me know if there is any follow up.

061013 PM brief on casualties ...

FS Lancet Response - Nov 2004....

Lancet Response - supps.doc
Quick point to make on the email below - we do not (not) accept that the figures quoted in the Lancet survey are accurate. We believe that they are much higher than what we would assume to be reasonable figures of deaths in Iraq. The high figures in the report come from the extrapolation of a very small sample size, and the figure of 601,000 is taken as the mid point in an extrapolated range between 426,369 - 793,663. The figures are extraordinarily high and significantly larger than the figures quoted by the Iraq Body Count or Iraqi Government - however the survey methodology used here cannot be rubbished, it is a tried and tested way of measuring mortality in conflict zones. The overriding message is that there are no accurate or reliable figures of deaths in Iraq.

Please come back to me if there are further questions - happy to discuss with No10 if needed.

-----Original Message-----
From: [Redacted]
Sent: 16 October 2006 17:19
To: [Redacted]
Cc: [Redacted]
Subject: RE: PMQs deaths of Iraqis

It's fine, but are we really sure that the report is likely to be right? That is certainly what the brief implies. The section I heard on the news said that if this report was correct, there wd have been 500 deaths per day since 2003, which in itself seems higher than anything I'd seen previously.

For latest news and information from Downing Street visit: http://www.pm.gov.uk
Help save paper - Do you need to print this email

Oral PQ attachments from Iraq Policy Unit to Lord Triesman of 18 October 2006

Please see attached electronic copies of briefing for Oral PQ from Lord Lamont on deaths in Iraq. Hard copies have been handed over. Full Iraq Supps to follow shortly.
Steering Minute for Lord Triesman from Iraq Policy Unit of 18/10/06 re House of Lords Oral Answer on Civilian Casualties in Iraq from Lord Lamont of Lerwick

1. I submit a draft answer to the House of Lords Oral question on total number of deaths in Iraq since 2003.

2. Lord Lamont of Lerwick is seeking clarification on the accuracy of the figures published by The Lancet on 12 October in an article entitled ‘Iraq: Mortality after the 2003 invasion of Iraq: a cross sectional cluster sample survey.’ The survey concluded that 655,000 Iraqis have died since 2003 over and above the normal mortality rate.

3. The figures quoted in the survey are a substantial leap from other estimates. We have consistently stated that no comprehensive figure exists for the number of deaths post-2003. However, the Lancet figures are substantially higher than those released by the Iraq Government or Iraq Body Count, an NGO count based on media reports. There is no reason to assume the Lancet figures are any more accurate than previous figures. However, according to the MOD’s Chief Scientific Advisor, caution should be exercised in criticising the study's methodology. We continue to maintain the view that the Iraq Government is best placed to monitor the deaths of its own citizens.

4. The Foreign Secretary Margaret Beckett made a statement in response to the Lancet report on 11 October (see chronology)

5. Lord Lamont of Lerwick has asked parliamentary questions on Iraq in 2004 and 2005 on a variety of subjects, including civilian casualties. He submitted a similar oral question in June 2005, prompted by the Lancet's first report on Iraqi civilian casualties published in 2004. The question was subsequently withdrawn.

6. Full Iraq supplementaries will be submitted separately.
Lords Oral PQ answer of 17 October 2006

HOUSE OF LORDS STARRED QUESTION

Head of: IRAQ POLICY UNIT

Type: House of Lords - Lords Oral Answer

Date Tabled: 17 October 2006

Please submit draft answer and background to Lord Triesman's Office copied to PRDT at pq@fco.gov.uk.

Before:

For Answer On: 19 OCTOBER 2006

For Biographical Information, visit: /www.politicallinks.co.uk
Login/Password: FCO/elibrary
Click the link for guidance on Parliament and Devolution:

Question From: The Lord Lamont of Lerwick

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs,

What assessment they have made of the estimate that the total number of deaths in Iraq following the invasion in 2003 could have been 655,000.

Minister responsible: Approval By:
Minister answering: LORD TRIESMAN Approval By:

Draft

All civilian deaths are a tragedy and of concern in Iraq, however we continue to believe that there are no comprehensive or reliable figures for deaths since 2003. Estimates vary according to the method of collection. The figure of 655,000 given in the recent Lancet survey is significantly higher than other estimates, including those given by the Iraqi Government. We believe the Iraqi Government is best placed to monitor the deaths of its own civilians.
Email re supps line from Iraq Policy Unit to Lord Triesman of 18 October 2006

Please see attached the latest Iraq supps - background for Lords oral PQ from Lord Lamont on Iraqi civilian deaths.

What about all the civilian casualties?

We condemn them unreservedly. Recent attacks have deliberately targeted civilians and public places.

This is why we must do all we can, along with the rest of the international community, to support the Iraqi Government and Security Forces in their efforts to improve their capacity and effectiveness in tackling the security situation. The Iraqi government is committed to tackling the terrorists, militias, and criminals responsible for the violence. Violence is in no-one’s interest. It offers the Iraqi people only fear and instability.

Paper from Africa Directorate on African conflict statistics of 26/09/07:

CONFLICT: AN INTRODUCTION TO CURRENT THINKING

Introduction

This paper aims to inform policymakers new to conflict-related policy of the major trends in conflict research and thinking. The paper looks at what conflict is, why conflict is relevant to the UK, how and why to understand conflict, what causes conflict, and how to relate policy towards a conflict to the stage the conflict has reached. It also suggests ways in which the FCO can and does add value in addressing conflict. Finally, the paper suggests where to look for further information.

What is conflict?

‘Conflict’ refers here – and throughout the Conflict Toolbox - to armed violence within states. This is often referred to as ‘intra-state conflict’. It includes cases where neighbouring states, or more distant ones, are involved in such a conflict (‘internationalized intra-state conflict’). But this paper does not address conflict directly between states (‘inter-state conflict’).

‘Conflict’ is often used, as here, as shorthand for armed conflict. But the two are not identical. Conflict itself is a normal feature of politics. When two parties hold goals which are mutually incompatible, they are in conflict. The vast majority of political conflict worldwide is peaceful: the question is what makes people turn to violence to further their goals? Action to address conflict can have two facets: to promote a political order in which the parties can continue their conflict but using peaceful means; and to resolve the underlying incompatibilities between the parties’ goals. Some commentators refer to the result of the first as ‘negative peace’, and to that of the second as ‘positive peace’.
Academic statistical studies of conflict set their own thresholds for what constitutes an ‘armed conflict’. They vary, and all are necessarily arbitrary. The threshold of 1,000 battle deaths for a ‘war’ or ‘major armed conflict’ is widely used, but researchers disagree for example on whether this is an annual or a cumulative total, and if annual whether the threshold needs to be met in each individual year of a ‘war’. The Uppsala Conflict Data Program (www.ucdp.uu.se) uses three categories for conflicts:

- **Minor armed conflicts**: at least 25 battle-related deaths per year and fewer than 1,000 battle-related deaths during the course of the conflict.
- **Intermediate armed conflicts**: at least 25 battle-related deaths per year and an accumulated total of at least 1,000 deaths, but fewer than 1,000 in any given year.
- **War**: at least 1,000 battle-related death per year.

**Why is conflict relevant to UK?**

The human cost of conflict is immense. Quite apart from those killed in battle, health and other social services often fall apart during internal conflict. Many of the world’s worst genocides (e.g. Holocaust, Rwanda) and famines (e.g. Ethiopia) have occurred during or shortly after wars. The human cost of conflict is also extremely difficult to quantify. However, recent research, much of it summarised in the 2005 Human Security Report (www.humansecurityreport.info) shows that:

- The number of conflicts, and of those killed in them, has declined since 1992.
- The most rigorous and up-to-date global figure for those killed in political violence is 27,314 (for 2003).
- Rival statistical indices of conflict deaths often do not compare like with like. Combatant deaths (i.e. those amongst soldiers), battle deaths (i.e. those killed directly in violence) and war deaths (i.e. those in excess of ‘normal’ mortality rates in the country concerned, usually because of disease) are very different concepts.
- The oft-quoted figure that 90% of those killed in war are civilians is a myth.

The economic cost of conflict is also huge. Paul Collier (Oxford University, formerly World Bank) has calculated the average economic cost of civil war in a low-income country to the country itself and its neighbours to be at least $54 billion. Not only is this a lower-bound estimate, it also does not include the costs civil war imposes on the international community in terms of increases in drug trafficking, disease and terrorism.

‘Intra-state’ conflict has consistently been the most prevalent type of armed conflict since 1945. But since the end of the Cold War, conflict within states has represented
an even higher proportion of all global conflict. According to data published in the *Journal of Peace Research*, of 118 conflicts between 1989 and 2004, 90 were intra-state conflicts, 21 were internationalized intra-state conflicts, and only 7 were ‘traditional’ inter-state conflicts. Inter-state conflict is not dead, of course: border disputes remain, such as that between Belize and Guatemala, and can become militarised (as between Ethiopia and Eritrea). Inter-state conflict may also continue in the form of Great Power intervention – as in Iraq and Afghanistan – to counter direct threats or respond to massive human rights violations.

Conflict is relevant to the UK, as it is to all countries with aspirations to global influence. States have for long enhanced their international profile through their involvement in mediation (e.g. Norway, South Africa) and peace-keeping (e.g. India, Jordan, Canada). As a permanent member of the UN Security Council, the UK shares in the Council’s ‘primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security’ (UN Charter, Article 24.1). The UK is also assessed as the fourth largest contributor to the UK peacekeeping budget, paying over £200 million in 2005/6.

Within Whitehall, conflict in far-off countries hinders departments’ ability to achieve their objectives, for example whether they be on security (MOD and others), poverty reduction (DFID), or immigration and drugs (Home Office). The relationship between terrorism and conflict is well-publicised. The causal links in all these cases are highly complex, as is the relevance of conflict to these issues compared to other factors. But it is undoubtedly true that less conflict would be to HMG’s advantage in each instance.

Two further specific developments have enhanced conflict’s relevance for the UK and others:

- The so-called ‘globalisation of conflict’. Civil wars have always had international dimensions. But improvements in communications and the deregulation of financial flows has increased belligerents’ ability to obtain funds and weapons from abroad. The UK will likely be relevant to those engaged in a conflict, irrespective of HMG’s particular approach to it.
- Increased international attention to conflict prevention and resolution. Many argue that improved international cooperation is the reason for the decline in conflict since 1992. Addressing conflict is a core task of organisations such as the UN and the EU (e.g. through ESDP). As such, the UK has no choice but to be engaged.

A caveat. Conflict is important to the UK, but so too is prioritisation. This means prioritising between countries, and prioritising action within them. Political violence is endemic in many societies worldwide, perhaps most. A key task for policymakers is to assess when such low-level violence is likely to erupt into more intense clashes requiring increased UK involvement.

*How and why to understand conflict*
No two conflicts are exactly alike. And no individual conflict has only one single cause or explanation. But there are a number of important schools of thought on conflict that highlight different facets of how and why groups within a state engage in political violence. Some of these focus on specific aspects of conflict (e.g. disarmament and demobilisation, mediation, grassroots peacebuilding) and are addressed in separate papers in the Conflict Toolbox. Other schools of thought attempt to provide an explanatory framework for conflict as a whole. Rather than go by neatly-labelled names, these frameworks mostly focus on what causes conflict to break out: major ones are listed in the next section below.

No single theory explains any one conflict. Claims that “the war in x is all about” economic exploitation, religion, deprivation or any other such factor are almost always wrong. Within any party to a conflict, leaders, fighters and civilian supporters often have different motives. Individuals themselves often act for multiple reasons, and these change over time. Rather, generic approaches offer different lenses through which to view belligerents and their behaviour. Their relative usefulness will vary from conflict to conflict, but it is worthwhile considering them all to challenge preconceptions and derive possible policy options.

Explicitly considering the relevance of the range of generic approaches to any particular conflict is important, because all attempts to understand conflict draw on wider assumptions about conflict. Many such analyses use generic approaches implicitly not explicitly, and are the weaker for it. For example, it is now generally accepted that ‘History’ does not cause conflict, in particular the ‘ancient hatreds’ generated by it. Identity and the past do influence conflict, but research in the Balkans and elsewhere has shown that more important than what happened in the past is how the (mis-)remembrance of the past is mobilised by political elites.

Researchers have rigorously examined many other general assumptions about conflict. Examples include ‘an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure’, ‘civil wars finish when the combatants are exhausted’, ‘conflict can only be resolved if its root causes are addressed’, and ‘greed is more important than grievance as a source of conflict’. Policymakers should be wary of attempts to impose such assumptions on countries where they are working. They are often used by belligerents to influence outsiders’ policy to the conflict, or by outsiders looking to promote a particular policy response. Conflict Issues Group and/or Research Analysts (ISGIRG) can provide detail on the generic questions involved.

Conflict evolves. And so do individual conflicts. The end of the Cold War, globalisation, and 9/11 and the response to it all influenced a number of conflicts worldwide. Within conflicts, movements that begin with popular legitimacy can descend into almost purely criminal or terrorist enterprises (e.g. the RUF in Sierra Leone). And vice versa. Early analysis of a conflict is important, but policymakers need to keep their minds open to changes within it.

The ‘conflict cycle’ is a phrase often used. It is helpful but can mislead, since conflict rarely follows a simple linear progress. Conflict prevention, management, settlement, resolution, peace-building and reconstruction must be closely linked. And many peace settlements fail: on average, one of the two armed conflicts that break out each year is a resumption of a conflict ‘settled’ in the recent past. In some situations, conflict
prevention and post-conflict reconstruction are processes which have to go hand in hand with one another. In reality, though, the phases of conflict are rarely so clear cut. Usually, the conflict itself (i.e. the incompatibility between the competing parties) is present long before violence breaks out and lasts long after it finishes. What changes is merely the intensity of the conflict, and the means by which it is conducted.

**What causes conflict?**

Understanding a conflict’s causes is important for devising policy. Addressing only the conflict’s consequences (e.g. through humanitarian aid) may be necessary but will probably not stop the conflict itself. But causation in conflict is complex. No conflict has only one cause. The causes of a conflict’s onset, duration and intensity may well each be distinct. Regarding conflict onset, some commentators usefully distinguish between background or structural causes (e.g. social and economic cleavages) and proximate causes or triggers (e.g. specific decisions by political leaders to use or risk violence).

Policymakers and NGOs often refer to ‘drivers’ of conflict. The term is problematic, because it elides a number of the more specific types of causal relationship mentioned above. But the same factors can also make it useful, particularly when the causal relationships are not yet clear. Similarly, correlations can yield insights, for example that high male youth unemployment goes hand-in-hand with high levels of conflict. But correlations do not themselves reveal which causes which. It is important not to stop at ‘drivers’ or correlations. Effective policy towards conflict requires in-depth understanding of its various causes.

A number of broad schools of thought shed light on the causes of conflict within states. The thumbnail sketches below introduce them. For further detail on any, contact CIG or ISGIRG/RA.

- **Human needs** – conflict may arise when the state fails to meet the needs of groups of its population for security, recognition, access to political institutions and economic participation. A key concept here is ‘relative deprivation’, where a group feels a mismatch between what access to power and prosperity it has and what it deserves. Th ‘human needs’ approach emphasises the deep structural and socio-economic roots of conflict.

- **Underdevelopment** – though ‘poverty’ itself is rarely a primary cause of conflict, some theorists argue that economic decline or uneven distribution of the benefits of economic growth can boost the pool of recruits for armed factions. Conflict does occur more frequently in poor countries, though their poverty may be as much a consequence of conflict than a cause of it.

- **Identity** – ‘ethnic conflict’ was a fashionable concept in the early/mid-1990s. Many have since questioned its utility, pointing especially at the ‘imagined’ or ‘socially constructed’ character of social identities. Radicalised identity is often a product of political-religious leaders’ strategies. But whatever their origins, identity politics are very strong. Once mobilised they can exert a powerful influence on the course of conflict, particularly when identity groups within a state possess markedly uneven economic opportunities.
• **Conflict finance** – the presence of commodities/the availability of finance for conflict actors can make a country more prone to violence. Whatever grievances motivate rebel groups, to organise effectively they usually also need money. High value natural resources – gems, oil, drugs, timber – provide a major source of such revenue. So can large diaspora communities, and well-disposed outside powers.

• **Criminal intent** – for some, financial gain may be an end of conflict in itself, rather than merely the means by which belligerent groups support themselves. Many individuals and groups do well out of war, and seemingly opposing factions may share an interest in prolonging it. During conflict, the dynamics of violence may crowd out ideology in favour of predation. However, ‘greed’ should be distinguished from the petty criminality to which populations often resort to cope with conflict.

• **Power politics** – leaders make political and moral choices to use violence. They do so because of disagreements over the form of political organisation of the state, or over the distribution of power within it. They mobilise sections of society behind them. But the interests they pursue in conflict and those of their supporters may diverge, and become more apparent in the course of conflict. A power politics approach need not deny the existence of deep-rooted social conflict, but tends to downplay its role versus that of political elites.

• **Crisis of governance** – a state’s inability to provide services or exert meaningful power beyond its capital does not automatically lead to conflict. But such a situation could exacerbate the other factors listed above and below. Low state capacity often occurs when governments receive the lion’s share of their revenue from natural resources. Over-dependence on (e.g.) oil reduces the incentive for states to tax their citizens directly, and to offer the services that citizen’s demand in return for paying their taxes. What appears to outsiders as a rebellion against central government may be rather the exercise of power by local leaders filling a vacuum vacated by the formal legal authorities.

• **Neighbouring countries/regional tensions** – cross-border flows of weapons, refugees, ideas, armies, mercenaries and smuggled commodities can reinforce destabilising tendencies within a state. While ‘bad neighbourhoods’ can promote conflict (e.g. the Great Lakes and Mano River regions in Africa), simplistic and automatic notions of ‘contagion’ should be avoided. Active decisions by belligerents in a conflict, and by regional leaders, play a key role in how regional factors influence a conflict.

• **Global dynamics** – the activities of Great Powers and international organisations can both exacerbate and ameliorate conflict. Funding for belligerents or peace groups, markets for ‘conflict commodities’, unilateral or multilateral interventions, and the policies pursued by the international financial institutions can all influence the onset, intensity and duration of violent conflict. HMG is unlikely to agree, but many blame developed countries’ current (e.g. financial) and past (e.g. colonial) practices for contemporary conflict in the developing world.

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The shape of conflict and opportunities for prevention

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14
Conflict prevention, conflict resolution, conflict management, peacemaking and peacebuilding have all been used to describe outsiders’ attempts to promote peace. Sometimes these terms are used interchangeably. Others make distinctions between them. But there is no general agreement on what those distinctions are. Broadly, where these terms are given specific meanings:

- **Conflict prevention** is often used for activity undertaken before violence breaks out. Many practitioner experts disagree. They see *all* efforts to deal with conflict as ‘conflict prevention’, at whatever point they come. This paper follows that line.

- **Conflict resolution** often refers to addressing the underlying social, economic and/or political causes of conflict. It is not just concerned with ending a war.

- **Conflict management** sometimes refers to surface efforts by outsiders to deal with only particular aspects of a conflict, especially those affecting themselves.

- **Peacemaking** refers to efforts by mediators to get belligerents to reach a peace agreement. It is sometimes confused with ‘peace enforcement’, which involves the use of force to achieve peace.

- **Peacebuilding** is sometimes used to refer specifically to post-conflict efforts to promote peace. (See Toolbox paper on Peacebuilding.)

Neither the general nor the specific uses of the terms above are necessarily right or wrong. But they illustrate the room for misunderstanding. Semantics aside, preventive activity can and should be taken at all stages of conflict. UK policy is to move towards long-term structural prevention wherever possible.

The type of preventive activity appropriate depends on the stage of the conflict. The evolution of the conflict process may be likened to an hour-glass:

- Before conflict commences, and while ‘normal politics’ continues, the political space open to outside actors is wide. Conflict prevention here consists not so much in addressing specific ‘causes’ of conflict, so much as reducing the proneness of the state to conflict. Measures may include reducing dependence on primary commodities, improving respect for human rights, alleviating inequalities between identity groups, and so on.

- As the parties to a conflict form, militarise and mobilise, the space for intervention narrows. Conflict prevention focuses on analysing and manipulating the incentives of the various conflict actors.

- When violence becomes widespread, the hour-glass is at its narrowest. Outside actors attempt to mediate a settlement, to provide humanitarian aid, even perhaps to intervene to enforce a settlement. Their focus is largely on stopping the violence rather than on resolving the underlying conflict.

- When a settlement is reached, political space begins to widen again. The primary tasks for outsiders are to help the country stabilise politically, to provide reconstruction assistance and, often, to provide peace-keeping forces. Particular challenges here include: to address key ambiguities and issues left open in the peace settlement; to prevent the ‘freezing’ of the conflict; and to involve civil society actors, whom violence may have excluded from the peace process.
As the situation stabilises, opportunities for prevention expand further. Preventive action follows similar lines to that at the ‘pre-conflict’ stage. But if the difficulty at that early stage is for outsiders to gain entry to the country’s internal political system, at this ‘post-conflict’ stage it is to work round the traumatic effects produced by violence on the country’s polity and society. Critical markers in the recovery from conflict include: the holding of a second post-conflict election; a peaceful (and peacetime) handover of power; and the passing of the first decade from settlement without a resumption of violence.

How the FCO can add value in addressing conflict

Working with the whole of government – successful conflict prevention requires a wide range of tools, including aid, diplomacy and sometimes military. The cross-government Conflict Prevention Pools reflect that. But running conflict prevention projects needs to be tied in to wider policy towards a conflict. And conflict prevention policy must at least not conflict with other UK policy towards the country in question.

Providing detailed political analysis – generic understanding of conflict can help, but devising policies towards conflict-affected countries requires in-depth analysis of those countries’ politics. The FCO needs to provide this even when the UK’s primary involvement in the country is development-related or military. And it needs to provide it both in structured formal assessments (see separate Toolbox paper on Conflict and in its regular reporting.

Using its diplomatic tools – whether negotiating UN Security Council resolutions or talking to local leaders in remote regions, the FCO has numerous conflict prevention tools of its own. A common feature of conflict is belligerents’ overoptimistic views of the reaction outsiders will give them if they escalate the conflict. Good diplomacy can reduce the risk of this.

Talking to all levels of society – especially to those below the political leadership level. Political leaders have influence, and the UK has to deal with them. But they may also have incentives to distort the views of the communities they claim to represent, and to overstate their own personal role within them.

Devising creative policy – this paper focuses on analysing and understanding conflict. And good analysis of a conflict is a prerequisite for effective policy design. But analysis itself rarely makes it readily apparent exactly which conflict prevention measures to apply and how. A healthy policy-making process allows time and space for both analysis and response.

Avoiding duplication – before deciding what conflict prevention measures to employ, a thorough assessment should be made of what international organisations, NGOs and other states are already doing in the field. At best, the various actors’ conflict prevention activities complement each other. But they can also undercut each other, for example by encouraging ‘mediator-shopping’ amongst belligerents.
‘Doing no harm’ – once international actors involve themselves in a conflict, even with preventive intentions, they effectively become parties to the conflict. Great care should be taken at all stages that belligerent parties do not exploit outsiders’ well-intentioned efforts to exacerbate rather than resolve conflict.

Taking a long-term view – conflict prevention is a long-term activity. And its results are not easily measured. Qualitative critical assessment of how effective UK policies have been cannot ‘prove’ their effectiveness in the way that statistics or facts can (or claim to). But clear assessments by people who know the country and UK policy well can improve that policy further.

Where to find out more about conflict

Within the FCO:

- Conflict Issues Group (CIG) is the policy lead on the functional/thematic aspects of conflict. For example, CIG leads on peacekeeping, peacebuilding, civilian policing and secondments, justice and the rule of law, and conflict prevention. CIG produces the Conflict Toolbox.
- Research Analysts can provide expertise on thematic issues in conflict, and on individual conflicts. For thematic issues (and multilateral organisations), contact the International Security and Global Issues Research Group (ISGIRG/RA). For specific conflicts, you can also contact ISGIRG, or the relevant geographical analyst directly. RA has a virtual Conflict Team, bringing together thematic and geographical expertise when needed.

Publications – a large literature exists on conflict generally, on specific aspects of it, and on individual conflicts. A few introductory books are listed below, along with some of the major relevant academic journals. ISGIRG/RA keeps track of this literature, and can advise which works will be most suitable and helpful for your purposes.

- Peter Wallenstein, Understanding conflict resolution: war, peace and the global system. Sage, 2002.
- SIPRI Handbook, available online.
- Journal of Peace Research
- *Journal of Conflict Resolution*
- *International Peacekeeping*
- *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*
- *Civil Wars*

**Websites** – serious material on conflict is generally published in books, research papers and refereed academic journals. Some of these may be available for download (e.g. through ISGIRG/RA), but they are usually not published as web-pages. A notable exception is the site [www.beyondintractability.org](http://www.beyondintractability.org), which provides a wealth of essays and articles on various aspects of conflict.

Much statistical material on conflict – casualties, numbers of conflicts etc. – is also published on the web. Some of the best can be found from:

- Uppsala Conflict Database ([www.pcr.uu.se/database/index.php](http://www.pcr.uu.se/database/index.php)).
- Correlates of War project from the University of Michigan ([www.correlatesofwar.org](http://www.correlatesofwar.org)). Comment: the classic dataset on armed conflict, but very difficult to use.
- University of Maryland’s annual survey of Peace and Conflict ([www.cidcm.umd.edu/peace_and_conflict.asp](http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/peace_and_conflict.asp)).
- Arbeitsgemeinschaft Kriegsursachenforschung (AKUF), in German only ([www.akuf.de](http://www.akuf.de))
IRAQ: CIVILIAN CASUALTIES

1. Your note of 25 October asked Government Departments to attempt to quantify the number of Iraqi civilian casualties for a 4-week period starting on 1 November. The MOD is looking at statistics available through the military net; the FCO is tasked with compiling statistics from open sources.

2. Open source material means eyewitness reports, mostly as quoted in the media, and the figures quoted by hospitals, compiled by the Iraqi Ministry of Health. We have a good idea of the kind of figures given by eyewitnesses to date. They have been compiled by various NGOs with varying results, some of which were outlined in Kara Owen's letter of 14 October. Given that we would be using similar sources to the NGOs we can expect similar results - or possibly higher, on a monthly basis, as November may produce unusually high civilian casualty figures due to possible large-scale action by the Multi-National Force against the insurgency. Among NGO figures, which we do not endorse, Iraq Bodycount's figures for the last 30 days suggest a third more casualties have been caused by military action as compared to those casualties caused by terrorism.
4. As discussed with you by phone, we therefore propose to give these statistics as they stand, without any endorsement or amendment and solely for the purpose of comparison. The focus of our work will instead be on the figures produced by the Ministry of Health (MOH). As we have set out in the letter of 14 October, these too have their limitations. However, we will work with the MOH during the next few weeks to see if these statistics can be improved. Our officials in Baghdad are due to meet with the Iraqi Director General responsible for collating the figures in the next few days.
From: [Redacted], Head of Iraq Inquiries Team, MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
Floor 4 Zone 1, Male Building, Whitehall, LONDON SW1A 2HB

2 plq received in regist

Deputy Head Iraq Policy Unit
Foreign & Commonwealth Office
King Charles Street
London
SW1A

13 October 2004

Dear [Redacted],

We spoke about David Quarrery's request for "our best estimate of civilian casualties since military action was launched last year". I can confirm what I told you by telephone. The MOD does not estimate civilian casualties because we believe there is no reliable method for doing so. This is not merely our "public line" but our genuine judgement. So the answer to the Prime Minister is exactly the same as the answer we have given to Parliament!

In any case, as you are aware, the UK area of operations is limited to southern Iraq, so even if we were to have accurate information, this would not meet Mr Quarrery's request.
Against this background, I am afraid the position remains as I told your colleagues earlier in the day. Namely, the MOD does not produce an estimate of civilian casualties, either within our own area of operations or across Iraq. We have no methodology which would enable us to do this; nor do we believe it possible to define a methodology that would produce figures meaningful enough to help alleviate No10’s concerns about public presentation.
From: [Redacted]
IPU
Date: 04 November 2004
cc: [Redacted] Click here to see copy address(e)s and originator’s contact details

To: Private Secretary

CIVILIAN CASUALTIES IN IRAQ:

1. [Redacted]

2. [Redacted]

3. [Redacted]

4. [Redacted]

5. In particular, we have undertaken (Foreign Secretary’s interview this morning – transcript at B) to present to Parliament an assessment of the Lancet report claiming 100,000 extra civilian deaths since the invasion of Iraq. One option for this is that we rely on assessments from the Iraqi Ministry of Health; another is that we draw on the help of MOD experts. We have already had the views of the MOD chief scientific adviser, at C.
It is not a promising start. We are awaiting a report from the Iraqi Ministry of Health setting out their assessment of civilian casualties; we believe this will be a better line of response. We will submit further on Monday. In the meantime however we should seek further assessments from MOD experts. No10 is separately seeking advice from the Department of Health.

6. In the meantime we propose Ministers should use the following lines:

- It is genuinely difficult to estimate civilian casualties in Iraq. We know who our own casualties are because we recover them. We do not have the same level of knowledge regarding Iraqis.

- While we do all we can to avoid civilian casualties, they can be caught in airstrikes or in crossfire. Terrorists display no such concern for loss of civilian life. In many cases we are not on the scene; when we are, we cannot be certain of the numbers involved nor whether they are civilians or insurgents.

- Instead we rely on the Iraqi government to have this information. The Iraqi Minister of Health made the following statement on 1 November:

"The Ministry of Health has been collecting information on civilian casualties based on hospital admissions for the last six months. Every hospital reports daily the number of civilians (which may include insurgents) who have been killed or injured in terrorist incidents or as a result of military action. All casualties are likely to be taken to hospital in these circumstances except for some insurgents (who may fear arrest) and those with minor injuries.

The figures show that between 5 April and 5 October 2004, 3853 civilians were killed and 15,517 were injured. I am satisfied that this information is the most reliable available.

"This contradicts the claim that more than 100,000 civilians have been killed by military and terrorist action since the war. The claim was based on article published in the Lancet on 29 October."

7. On the Lancet article, besides the comment of the Iraqi Minister of Health, we can add:

- This was an estimate of total deaths in Iraq, not deaths of civilians. The authors acknowledge "many of the Iraqis reportedly killed by US forces [in their survey] could have been combatants". The greatest increase they report in deaths was among
15-59 year old men, while for instance among the elderly in their survey there was a much more limited increase in deaths.

- The scientists responsible have themselves said that the data they based their projections on was of "limited precision". They were based on extrapolating from an increase of 61 deaths in the households surveyed, across the whole of Iraq. These included deaths from heart attack and road accidents.

- However there is an immense discrepancy between the 'Lancet' article statistics and the figures produced by Iraqi hospitals and compiled by the Iraqi government. Likewise the Lancet figures differ greatly from those produced by NGO's (Iraq Bodycount – hardly a pro-war organisation – estimates between fourteen thousand two hundred to sixteen thousand three hundred and fifty two Iraqi civilian casualties caused by the war, including victims of terrorist action).

- We will set out our view on the article in detail and lay it before Parliament.

8. We should be careful about the Iraq Bodycount estimate – this is of civilian casualties of violence, whereas the Lancet figure is for all casualties (so the discrepancy, though still large, is not as great as it first seems).
COUNTING IRAQI CASUALTIES

Following the Secretary of State's meeting this morning, I have looked through the Lancet article. My initial thoughts are as follows:

I agree that the statistical methodology appears sound. The authors accept that there is considerable uncertainty over their central estimate of excess deaths, and provide a careful assessment of various possible statistical biases. Their conclusion is that, despite these, the results are sufficiently strong to raise concern and at the very least justify further study.

The method involves taking 33 random samples from the Iraqi population, each comprising 30 households living in the same neighbourhood. Interviews were used to establish how many deaths occurred in each cluster of households in the 17.8 month period after the invasion compared with the 14.6 month period preceding it. Provided the samples are genuinely random, statistically valid inferences can be drawn for the Iraqi population as a whole. Survey techniques of this kind are widely used (e.g. in measuring unemployment in the UK). There are five main types of question worth asking in judging the validity of this particular study:

- Was the sampling genuinely random? The authors have tried hard to achieve this despite sometimes severe constraints on where their survey staff could go.
  One reason for dropping the Falhaja sampling point from the calculations behind the headline estimate was that the authors could not be sure the cluster of households in the Falhaja district was selected in a genuinely random way. Equally, while they sought to reduce the travel and risk faced by interviewers by dropping certain Governorates from the sample, they did so in such a way as to ensure the overall sample was not biased.

- Was the information provided by interviewees accurate? The paper discusses the possibility of "recall" bias – i.e. that deaths before the invasion were not remembered as accurately as those after. However, they argue – pretty convincingly – that deaths are unlikely to be forgotten. Another possibility is that families might exaggerate the number of deaths since the invasion because of hostility to the coalition/interim government. Death certificates were only sought in 78 out of 988 households. In these cases there was a high rate of confirmation (63 out of 78, with plausible explanations in all cases where
certificates could not be produced). However, it is possible that this gives a biased picture of accuracy if interviewers tended to ask for certificates mainly when the information they had received was most plausible and hence the risk of causing offence minimised.

- **How accurate were the inferences made about the broader population?** One possibility is that the size of households was under-estimated (because respondents wished to protect members who were insurgents) in which case the scaling up would have over-estimated the total number of deaths. However, the authors argue that the bias may just as likely go the other way as families might seek to justify higher ration distributions by overestimating household size. Another possibility is that the sampling strategy might have missed various categories of people - homeless, soldiers etc. This seems likely to have been more of an issue. But the bias introduced - particularly vis-à-vis soldiers - could be to underestimate the figure for excess deaths.

- **Even if the estimates of excess deaths are sound, can the same be said of the breakdown between different causes of death, and in particular the extent to which additional deaths were caused by air attacks from coalition forces?** The scaled up estimates of deaths from particular causes will be more uncertain than the estimates of excess deaths in total, simply because the samples are smaller still. It is also possible that interviewees might exaggerate the proportion of deaths caused by coalition action vis-à-vis other causes not directly linked to the activities of coalition forces.

- **If the methodology is sound, how can one reconcile the 28,000 death estimate with other data?** In particular (a) the much lower casualty estimates based on press reports; and (b) the lack of anecdotal evidence of much larger numbers of injured attending Iraqi hospitals. The divergence with estimates based on press reports might be explained through the passive nature of press reporting and the partial territorial coverage of journalists. However, it would seem much harder to explain the mismatch between the estimated number of deaths and the anecdotal evidence on injuries. Assuming a ratio of four injured for every death (as reflected in the Iraqi MOH figures from hospital admissions) would suggest 400,000 injuries (although given the variability in death/injury ratios with different conflict circumstances some caution needs to be exercised here too).

**Conclusions**

Overall, it is perhaps not surprising that the methodology appears sound, since the Lancet's pre-publication reviewing process should have revealed significant methodological weaknesses.

The authors describe a series of possible biases in both directions, but none of these (or others noted above) seems at first sight so striking as to invalidate the overall findings. The hardest discrepancy to explain is the lack of anecdotal evidence of injured people in proportion to a 28,000 central estimate for deaths.

In commenting on the study we should certainly continue to emphasise the considerable uncertainty around the central estimate (reflecting the small sample...
size), as well as the lack of corroborating evidence - particularly evidence of injured in the numbers one might expect. We could also highlight some of the factors which might bias the study towards an over-estimate of deaths. However, there are as many reasons why the study might be biased in the other direction (so probably safer not to go down this road).

There are various ways to try and check the validity of the estimates using data from other sources (hospital reports, casualty figures reported by soldiers and police, reports of funerals etc) and trying to refine it to remove biases. It might also be possible, as Gerard Russell has suggested, to try and validate the study's pre-invasion estimate of mortality by checking it against unpublished MOH health figures. But there is (a) no certainty at this stage that this kind of work would invalidate the Lancet findings, or (b) any guarantee that if it does produce a different answer, that the rejection of the Lancet findings would be conclusive. In the absence of a detailed census (impossible in the current security environment), the best way of narrowing down the uncertainty in the Lancet article is likely to be to conduct a similar survey with a significantly larger sample.

Chief Economist

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1 While at the same time avoiding belittling the efforts of the interviewers who faced considerable obstacles and risk.
Iraq: Civilian Casualty Figures

You asked us to look again at the question of civilian casualty figures in Iraq, following a request from the Prime Minister.

We recommend that we do not take any ownership of figures of civilian casualties in Iraq. Overall, none of the estimates available is reliable, and we would have great difficulty defending the methodology behind them to the media or to Parliament.

We would likewise have difficulty compiling our own statistics. We very rarely have our own people on the ground following terrorist attacks, often relying on press statistics. But their figures result in widely differing estimates, as the journalists themselves are not there to produce a precise body count.

We regard hospital and mortuary admissions as the most reliable figures available. These are collated by the Iraqi Ministry of Health, and we use them in our correspondence with the public (although they too are deficient in some ways). They differ greatly from the statistics used by the US, which are often very loose estimates. The Foreign Secretary did once draw in Parliament on a figure of 10,000 civilian deaths provided by the NGO Iraq Bodycount, but did not imply that the government was confirming the statistic.

The Iraqi Ministry of Health (MOH) estimates that 3,617 Iraqi civilians were killed and 14,554 injured during the period 5 April 2004 to 25 September 2004. This estimate, which is public, does not distinguish between military and terrorist action.
We should be wary of being caught in a public debate over which of these figures are accurate. We should also be wary of being drawn into giving an estimate of the numbers killed by the MNF and Iraqi forces as against those killed by the insurgents. If we are able to give the one, pressure will build to release the other.

The Embassy in Baghdad report that the MOH information is generally reliable but has some deficiencies. Figures from recent monthly reports do not tally with the six-month figures of 3,617 killed and 14,554 injured. Civilians taken to hospital injured but who subsequently die are not currently added to the total, thus underestimating the number of civilians killed. Additionally, hospital staff have come under pressure to inflate the casualty figures when they release these locally to the media. (The MOH have tried to ensure that the same data is also given locally to the media, and say that this happens much more often now). The MOH are currently in discussions on how to rectify these issues. We may be able to pass you more reliable figures in due course.

The Iraqi Ministry of Interior collects its own information about casualties from police forces etc on the ground - but it is regarded as much less reliable.

You asked for statistics produced by NGOs. These are very varied and their methodology is crude. Iraq Bodycount report a figure between 15,182 and 15,248 for the whole period since military action began in March 2003. MEDACT’s figures, covering the period from March 2003 to October 2003, vary between 22,000 and 55,000.

Washington have conducted an open source search of what US institutions are saying about civilian casualties in Iraq. Again there is a huge variation in the figures. The Brookings Institute gives a figure from 11,400 to 22,200 killed as a result of violence from war and crime for the period from 30 April 2003 - 30 July 2004. On 25 September the Washington Bureau quoted the previously mentioned MOH figures of 3,617 Iraqis killed and 14,554 injured.
The US have, like ourselves, stuck to the line that there are no comprehensive figures for civilian casualties and do not comment on suggested figures. The Embassy in Washington has asked for the US's official estimate of civilian casualties in Iraq. We still await the responses from the State Department and Department of Defense.

In sum, if we produce a figure that differs from the Iraqi government figures, we will have to defend it - and the way it was arrived at - before Parliament and the media. We recommend that for the moment we continue to put our public emphasis on specific atrocities against civilians, such as the mass killing of Iraqi children in Baghdad on 30 September, and their attempts to thwart our efforts to stand up independent Iraqi security forces.

Yours,

Private Secretary

10 Downing Street
D/CSA/11/6 (388/04)
29 October 2004

D News

Copy to:

APS/Secretary of State
PS/PUS
PSO/CDS
DG Op Pol

IRAQI CIVILIAN DEATHS: LANCET ARTICLE

1. Further to your discussion with CSA this morning, Professor Anderson has quickly reviewed the recent Lancet article on Iraqi civilian deaths.

2. CSA has concluded that the design of the study is robust, the methodology section is (unusually for the Lancet) long and detailed and that good quality statistical advice has been sought and applied in the presented analysis. He therefore believes that the paper is a sensible one, except perhaps for some of the language in the final paragraph, and that the results are probably as robust as one could have achieved in the very difficult circumstances. He therefore recommends that we should proceed with caution in publicly criticising the paper.

3. He would, however, add three caveats. First, the extrapolation from a very small sample size to the whole of Iraq is a weakness, especially given the rather small sample size (a total of 58 excess deaths) on which part of the extrapolation is based. Second, there are weaknesses in the way that deaths have been recorded. Attempts to get families to provide death certificates as evidence of death often met with a hostile response, so sub-sampling was adopted, further reducing the net sample of “confirmed” deaths. This means that in many cases the only evidence of a death having occurred, and of the cause of death, was the verbal information provided from (not necessarily disinterested) family members. And finally, as the penultimate paragraph of the paper notes, there were excess of deaths amongst males, possibly indicating that some of those who died were combatants rather than civilians.

[original signed]

PS/CSA
Level 5 Zone G Main Building 86588WH
Epidemiology

Iraqi Death Estimates Called Too High; Methods Faulted

A new estimate of the number of Iraqis who have died as a consequence of the U.S.-led invasion in March 2003 has ignited a firestorm of its own. At 400,000 to 800,000 deaths, the new number is at least 10 times higher than estimates cited by the Iraqi government and U.S.-led coalition. U.S. President George W. Bush immediately dismissed the study, characterizing its methodology as "pretty well discredited." Other administration officials charged that the study, released with significant publicity 4 weeks before U.S. midterm elections, was politically motivated. Researchers who spoke with Science disagree that the authors' motives are suspect but raise several questions about the methodology of the study, which was published 11 October in The Lancet.

Experts on both sides of the debate concede that it is notoriously difficult to get an accurate count of casualties in Iraq. The Iraqi Ministry of Health has estimated up to 40,000 violent deaths so far, based on death certificates reported by hospitals and morgues. That figure falls within the range published by Iraqi Body Count, an independent London-based group opposed to the war that compiles casualty numbers from media reports. There is little doubt that the real number of deaths is higher than this, because only a fraction of deaths are officially recorded or reported by journalists. But just how small is that fraction?

The Lancet study, designed by researchers at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland, is based on a survey conducted between May and July by a team of 10 Iraqi health workers. (The Johns Hopkins researchers met with the Iraqi team twice on the border in Jordan to advise on the survey techniques.) The team visited 47 neighborhoods in 18 different regions across the country, going door-to-door and asking families about recent deaths. They collected data from a total of 1849 households containing 12,801 residents. For the 14 months before the invasion, the Iraqi families reported 82 deaths, an annual death rate of 5.5 per 1000 people. Within the same households, 547 people died between the start of the invasion and July of this year—an annual increase of 7.8 deaths per 1000. By applying this rate to the entire population of 27 million, the researchers conclude that 655,000 more Iraqis have died than would have if the invasion had never happened. About 8% of these extra deaths are attributed to deteriorating public health, but an estimated 601,000 are violent—56% from gunshots and about 13% each from air strikes, car bombings, and other explosions. The researchers calculate a 95% probability that the true number of violent deaths lies between 426,369 and 793,663.

Many academics spoke up in defense of the study. "I too find the survey's estimates shockingly high, ... [but] the choice of method is anything but controversial," wrote Francesco Checchi, an epidemiologist at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine on 12 October on a humanitarian Web site. The statistical technique used, called cluster surveying, divides the population into different regions, neighborhoods, and households, in contrast to a random sampling of people on the streets.

The method may be sound, but several critics question the way it was carried out in this study. Madelyn Hicks, a psychiatrist and public health researcher at King's College London in the U.K., says she "simply cannot believe" the paper's claim that 40 consecutive houses were surveyed in a single day. "There is simply not enough time in the day," she says, "so I have to conclude that something else is going on for at least some of these interviews." Households may have been "prepared by someone, made ready for rapid reporting," she says, which "raises the issue of bias being introduced."

Lead author Gilbert Burnham, an epidemiologist at Johns Hopkins, counters that "40 adjacent households is entirely achievable in a day's work if well organized." Les Roberts, also at Hopkins, adds that 80% of the 547 deaths were corroborated with death certificates. The fact that hundreds of thousands of death certificates seem to have gone unregistered by the Ministry of Health is no surprise, says Roberts, because "those have always been grossly underreported."

Neil Johnson and Sean Gourley, physicists at Oxford University in the U.K. who have been analyzing Iraqi casualty data for a separate study, also question whether the sample is representative. The paper indicates that the survey team avoided small back alleys for safety reasons. But this could bias the data because deaths from car bombs, street-market explosions, and shootings from vehicles should be more likely on larger streets, says Johnson. Burnham counters that such streets were included and that the method section of the published paper is oversimplified. He also told Science that he does not know exactly how the Iraqi team conducted its survey; the details about...
neighbors surveyed were destroyed "in case they fell into the wrong hands and could increase the risks to residents." These explanations have infuriated the study's critics. Michael Spagat, an economist at Royal Holloway, University of London, who specializes in civil conflicts, says the scientific community should call for an in-depth investigation into the researchers' procedures. "It is almost a crime to let it go unchallenged," adds Johnson.

Co-author Roberts is no stranger to such controversy. He led a smaller study of Iraqi casualties, published in *The Lancet* in 2004, that estimated 100,000 deaths. That work was criticized for relying on too few samples. This time, he says, "we took enough samples, and if anyone wants to verify our results, it's easy."

The study suggests that close to four times the number of deaths occurred in the first half of 2006 than in the first half of 2002, he says, "and anyone could simply pick four to six spots in Iraq and go to the local graveyards. The increase ... should be obvious."

For now, Spagat says he is sticking with casualty numbers published by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). A UNDP survey of 21,668 Iraqi households put the number of postinvasion violent deaths between 18,000 and 29,000 up to mid-2004. "When a survey suggests so much higher numbers than all other sources of information," he says, "the purveyors of this outlier must make a good-faith effort to explain why all the other information is so badly wrong."

-JOHN BOHANNON

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**ECOLOGY**

**Report Warns of Looming Pollination Crisis in North America**

California almonds are a huge food crop in the United States, and land devoted to almond trees is expected to increase another 50% by 2012. But that growth depends on a large part on availability of the almonds' pollinator, the honeybee.

And honeybees are in trouble, according to a report on North American pollinators unveiled this week by the National Research Council (NRC) of the National Academies. According to the report, the mite, *Varroa destructor*, which sucks the life out of larvae. According to the report, the mite, which first showed up in 1987, is even overshadowing the Africanized honeybee, which has spread and is now being steadily encroaching in the southern United States and muscling aside the gentler European honeybee population.

Roughly one-third of the North American diet comes from food—fruits, vegetables, seeds, and nuts—that rely on animal pollinators, which include bees, butterflies, flies, beetles, hummingbirds, and bumblebees. But the king of pollinators is *Apis mellifera*, the European honeybee. Much preferred over its African cousin, it's a "generalist" that pollinates a huge variety of crops. It is also highly social and thus easy to muster. The NRC report notes that just as modern agriculture relies too much on monocultures, there is too much reliance on honeybees, which beekeepers truck around from one crop to another, like migrant workers.

Almonds are particularly vulnerable, says Kevin Hackett of the Agricultural Research Service, because their trees flower early in the year when honeybee colonies are weakened from winter mite infestations. He says mites have caused the price of bee rental for almond growers to go from about $30 to as much as $150 per hive.

NRC calls for more research on the mite problem, noting that *Varroa* have become resistant to pesticides. It has been difficult to breed mite resistance into the bees, in part because of the queens' loose mating habits. Hence the need, says the committee, to develop "non-Apis" pollinators such as the alfalfa leaf-cutter bee, which doesn't have a mite problem.

The committee also advises that the U.S. government establish discovery surveys for wild pollinators of U.S. crops and of rare or endangered plants. The NRC report adds that beyond increased research and data-gathering, simple steps such as growing wildflowers in golf-course roughs can help keep a diverse array of pollinators in business.

Adding to the buzz surrounding the report, the 3-year-old North American Pollination Protection Campaign (www.pollinator.org) sponsored a symposium this week at USDA to discuss better management of pollinator resources worldwide.

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*Stamps of approval. Next spring, the U.S. Post Office will issue these and other stamps depicting pollinators.*

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*CONTRIBUTED*
Lancet study fundamentally flawed: death toll too high

October 19, 2006 – 1 page – For immediate release:

Researchers at Oxford University and Royal Holloway, University of London have found serious flaws in the survey of Iraqi deaths published last week in the Lancet.

Sean Gourley and Professor Neil Johnson of the physics department at Oxford University and Professor Michael Spagat of the economics department of Royal Holloway, University of London contend that the study’s methodology is fundamentally flawed and will result in an over-estimation of the death toll in Iraq.

- The study suffers from "main street bias" by only surveying houses that are located on cross streets next to main roads or on the main road itself. However many Iraqi households do not satisfy this strict criterion and had no chance of being surveyed.

- Main street bias inflates casualty estimates since conflict events such as car bombs, drive-by shootings artillery strikes on insurgent positions, and marketplace explosions gravitate toward the same neighborhood types that the researchers surveyed.

- This obvious selection bias would not matter if you were conducting a simple survey on immunisation rates for which the methodology was designed.

- In short, the closer you are to a main road, the more likely you are to die in violent activity. So if researchers only count people living close to a main road then it comes as no surprise they will over count the dead.

During email discussions between the Oxford-Royal Holloway team and the Johns Hopkins team conducted through a reporter for Science, for an article to be published October 20, it became clear that the authors of the study had not implemented a clear, well-defined and justifiable methodology. The Oxford-Royal Holloway team therefore believes that the scientific community should now re-analyze this study in depth.

The team can be reached for comment at:

Gourley:       s.gourley1@physics.ox.ac.uk
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SUBJECT: African Conflict Statistics

1. We are often asked to provide statistics on conflict in Africa. The attached paper illustrates and explains the difficulties of doing so. 'Conflict' is a misused term, with no accepted definition and no central international authority to collate figures. Statistics about trends and the impact of individual conflicts are used as ammunition in highly charged political debates, with little reference to their origins, methodology or accuracy. Figures can be - and often are - massaged, misrepresented or simply plucked from thin air, with no attempt to understand the original source.

2. It is difficult to obtain reliable information about conflict-zones anywhere in the world, and particularly so for Africa, where infrastructure is weak and communication difficult. It is also the case that traditional definitions have not been well suited to the multi-layered complex conflict that is perhaps more prevalent in African than elsewhere. It is striking that figures for inter-communal conflict - between two non-state groups - were not systematically collected before 2001. Long-term trends are almost impossible to trace.

3. There is therefore a striking disconnect between rhetoric and reliable data. The Ivory Coast is routinely described as a war though more are killed in Nigeria. The Save Darfur Coalition claimed that 400,000 had been killed by conflict until they were successfully challenged through the Advertising Standards Authority for stating opinion as fact. Conflict in the DRC is routinely claimed to have 'killed' more than 4 million, a figure taken from a broadly defined mortality study, while academic assessments for year-on-year conflict deaths are as much as a hundred times less. It is therefore important to exercise caution when attempting to illustrate trends in conflict, both in being clear in how we are defining conflict and in the origin of figures.

4. Even the most reliable of academic data-sets on conflict can be disputed. This paper cites one of the best researched and most reliable sources, compiled by the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP), which is to be recommended as presenting a comprehensive view that is well-tuned to the particularities of conflict in Africa. But if we drill-down into even these figures, we can see that their analytical basis is questionable. For instance, the UCDP lists 16 non-state conflicts in Africa in 2005 - defined as conflict between two organised groups, neither of which is a state - that led to more than 25 deaths. Of these, 6 were considered to be clan-based conflict in Somalia, at the same time as none were considered to be taking place in the DRC.

5. The UCDP data is nonetheless probably the most reliable available, and therefore represents a source of figures that are clearly explicable and based on sound research. It suggests that conflict in Africa peaked in the early 1990s, and has been
declining since. This conclusion is broadly mirrored by other respectable sources - statistical spikes due to the Rwandan genocide and the Ethiopia–Eritrea war notwithstanding - though there are suggestions that this steady reduction in African conflict may have slowed or even stopped over the past two years.

6. But it is worth being aware that even this data is partial and based on primary research that might not be systematic. An HMG assessment carried out through the network could perhaps offer the most reliable findings, but would be relatively resource-intensive and comparing to historical trends would still be difficult.
Conflict in Africa – Definitions and Statistics

1. There are many claims made about conflict in Africa; it is central to assessing progress on the continent. The most common portrayal in the mainstream media often matches one author’s description as ‘...the poorest, most backward and yet most violent’ continent in the world. At the same time politicians are swift to claim the end of conflicts in Angola, Liberia, DRC, Sudan and Sierra Leone as marking significant success.

2. African conflict has become key to arguments over aid, development and military intervention. There is a voracious demand for quantifiable statistics (eg on numbers of conflicts or casualties), though it is frequently unclear where data originates. Statistics are often mutually contradictory and sometimes misleading. This brings obvious risks for politicians, NGOs and media seeking to take a position on conflict in Africa.

Defining Conflict

3. This confusion is due to a number of factors. The first is the lack of official conflict statistics. While UN agencies compile reliable data on poverty, development and health, there are no comparable UN figures for conflict. The lack of a single authoritative source allows radically different methodology and criteria to be used, giving very different results.

4. The second is a problem of definition. ‘Conflict’ is a subjective and contentious term; does a dispute have to be between states? Involve at least one state? Or can it involve no state parties at all? There are more than 40 different sets of conflict data available, each using its own definition, and dividing conflict into different categories – from inter-state war to communal conflict. We must also ask what level of violence is sufficient to register as a formal ‘conflict’. If 25 combatants have been killed, or 100? Cumulatively or in a calendar year? Do civilians hit by stray bullets count? Or those that die because of knock-on effects on the economy or healthcare?¹

5. Political sensitivities also serve to distort perceptions. There has been very little open fighting in Ivory Coast since 2003, causing very few deaths, but it continues to be described as an ongoing war. By contrast, there are scores of deaths annually in Nigeria, in the Niger Delta and elsewhere, often in fighting between organised and well-armed groups, but it is nonetheless not typically seen as war. The arbitrary nature of this distinction blurs statistical categories. And the use of a conflict label, as in the Ivory Coast, brings a policy perspective – a peacekeeping mission rather than capacity building – that may occlude tackling the structural issues, be they corruption or access to political power, that caused the problem in the first place.

6. Even if there were an accepted definition, the measurement of the impact of conflict is extremely difficult, particularly in terms of death rates. The World Health Organization estimated 172,000 global war dead for 2002; an academic assessment gave a figure of 19,368 – nearly ten times less. Information will inevitably be patchy, politicized and approximate.

7. It is therefore worth being wary when figures related to conflict in Africa are cited in speeches or articles. The methodological variability and conceptual flexibility of conflict data allows statistics to be matched to requirements. A speech by Gareth Evans, President of the International Crisis Group, provides a good example. In this he begins by offering the good news of decreasing African conflict, backed by what he calls ‘compelling’ figures from the Human Security Centre. Later in the speech he highlights unresolved conflict in Africa by citing a figure of 200,000 deaths in Darfur. In contrast, the Human Security Centre offers a best estimate for all conflict-related deaths in Sudan from 2002 – 2005 of 13,402. Neither figure is incorrect – they are simply based on different assumptions – but it is worth noting how radically an unseen switch in sources can alter the vision of Africa projected. Methodology matters.

Conflict in Africa

8. The above-mentioned difficulties of definition and measurement are particularly acute for Africa. African conflict is typically chaotic and multi-faceted, involving hydra-headed rebel coalitions, civilian militia and national armed forces that are both ill-disciplined and frequently divided. Conflict is also predominantly internal, though this is complicated by the commonplace use of indirect cross-border proxies.

9. The global problems of obtaining accurate information from conflict-zones are exacerbated by poor transport and communications infrastructure across the continent. African conflict often happens far from the attention of the outside world, and media and governments frequently commit far fewer information-gathering resources to Africa than elsewhere. Information is therefore often exclusively supplied by local or international NGOs, pressure groups or political movements whose methodology and impartiality cannot be verified. It is easy for figures so produced to slip into common usage, and from there gain the status of self-evident truth.

10. Conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo provides an excellent example of these difficulties. The DRC conflict involved the armies of nine African countries, pitted government forces against rebels, and was fought between a dizzying array of militias and armed groups. Many of the interlocking sub-conflicts had local causes entirely distinct from national dynamics. Others were a product of regional geopolitics. It is not clear whether the DRC war should be considered one conflict or many; inter-state conflict, civil war or communal dispute. There is no single correct answer.

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11. Establishing the death toll of conflict is equally problematic. The DRC is commonly cited in the media as having 'killed' more than 4 million people between 1998 and 2004, more than 500,000 a year. Another assessment lists just 4,061 deaths for 2002. Three different methods of interpreting and ordering data about Darfur from 2002 to 2005 gave rival mortality figures ranging from 72,000 to 7,173 or 250,000 deaths. The Save Darfur Coalition claimed a 400,000 death-toll before being successfully challenged at the Advertising Standards Authority for stating opinion as fact.

12. A further problem is that the paradigm reflected in conflict data through most of the post-war era may have overlooked much conflict in Africa. The pre-eminent research project of the Cold War years, the Correlates of War, was predicated on large-scale war – with more than 1000 battle-related deaths per calendar year necessary to register – that involved at least one state. Later studies, notably the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) extended the boundaries to include minor conflicts – with more than 25 battle-related deaths per year – and have backdated their analysis to the end of WWII.

13. But there was little systematic data collection of ‘non-state conflict’ or ‘communal conflict’ – violence between two or more non-state groups – before 2001. Some studies indicate a significant increase in what was termed ‘inter-communal conflict’ in Africa in the 1990s, reaching a peak in the middle years of the decade. But as information was routinely suppressed during the Cold War era, and researchers were far more concerned with war directly involving states, we cannot be certain that this apparent ‘spike’ is not at least in part due to improved understanding and information rather than increased violence.

14. It is therefore extremely difficult to map long-term trends with any degree of confidence. Non-state conflict may have been a pervasive feature of Africa throughout the post-war period but would simply have not been captured in official statistics or histories.

Trends in Conflict in Africa

15. Given these difficulties, what is it possible to state with confidence about conflict in Africa? Firstly, that the short-term trend seems to be downwards, although there is some evidence that this may have begun to level out (see annex 3). Since 2002 there has been systematic, reliable collection of conflict data that reflects African realities, setting the threshold at 25 deaths in a calendar year and including inter-communal conflict and ‘one-sided violence’ as well as more conventional state-based war.

16. These figures show that Sub-Saharan Africa was the only region in the world to experience a decline in conflict between 2002–2005. Conflict involving at least one state was down by 60% to 2005, though it subsequently increased slightly in 2006\(^4\).

\(^4\) UCPR Human Security Report Project Dataset - www.hsgroup.org
\(^5\) Political Instability Task Force, Uppsala Conflict Data Program and the Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism.
\(^6\) See Annex 1 for CoW data on major African conflict 1945 - 1997
\(^7\) See Annex 2 for UCDP data on conflict (including minor conflict) in Africa 1945 - 2001
Instances of non-state conflict reduced by 42% between 2002 – 2005 and one-sided violence fell 43% in the same period. In old-fashioned terms, 2005 was also the first year that Africa did not experience a war, though two wars, in Sudan and Chad, were recorded for the following year.

17. Secondly, we can be relatively sure that long-term trends in conflict involving the armed forces of at least one state – known as state-based - are falling. Figures from the 2005 Human Security Report (see Annex 2) show that state-based conflict tended to increase after WW2, reaching a peak in the late 1990s, before dropping sharply to 2005. The most recent figures show a slight increase in 2006, with new conflicts emerging in the Central African Republic and Somalia, though this should be balanced against on-going peace negotiations in Uganda and Burundi. It is possible that incidents of state-based violence have reached an equilibrium following the shocks of the post-Cold War period.

18. Impact assessments back up both of these contentions. A 2006 UK-funded study used a methodology incorporating numbers of casualties, displaced populations and infrastructure damage, among others9 to measure the impact of armed conflict in Africa. It confirmed that conflict in Africa had increased through the period of decolonisation and the Cold War, leading to a peak in 1991. This is followed by a gradual downward trend to around half that level in 2004, despite two spikes in the statistics caused by the 1994 Rwandan genocide and the Ethiopia-Eritrea conflict of 1998–2000.

19. Figures for one-sided violence have also been collected in Africa, with a new UCDP/Human Security Centre dataset covering the 1989 – 2005 period. According to this data, Africa suffered some 143 incidents of one-sided violence between 1989 and 2005, with campaigns of one-sided violence hitting a peak around 1994 and staying at a relative constant level since. However, the death-toll in one-sided violence has typically been lower than in other forms of conflict, with the majority of the estimated 555,869 deaths for the period attributed to the Rwandan genocide.10

20. As discussed it is much more difficult to be categorical about long-term trends in non-state conflict, since the data was simply not collected during the post-war years, and retrospective studies have yet to be completed.

AFRG
September 2007

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9 Defined as unilateral use of force against civilians.
12 Defined as 1000 or more battle-related deaths in a calendar year
14 The UCDP estimate is 500,000, lower than the most commonly-cited figure of 800,000 (which is the total of its high estimate)
Annex 1

The Correlates of War (CvW) project was started in the mid-1960s and tracks armed conflicts that result in more than 1000 fatalities in a calendar year. Data is only available between 1945 and 1997.

Africa, 1945 – 1997

2 Inter-state Wars (state vs state)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conflict</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopia – Somalia</td>
<td>1977</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda – Tanzania</td>
<td>1978</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8 Extra-state Wars (between a state and a non-state group fought on the territory of a third state)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conflict</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>France – Madagascar</td>
<td>1947</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK – Mau Mau</td>
<td>1952</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cameroon</td>
<td>1955</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angola – Portugal</td>
<td>1961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guinea – Portugal</td>
<td>1962</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mozambique</td>
<td>1964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Namibia</td>
<td>1975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Sahara</td>
<td>1975</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

33 Intra-state Wars (state vs a domestic rebel group)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conflict</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zaïre (Katanga)</td>
<td>1960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudan (Anyu Nya)</td>
<td>1963</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rwanda (Tutsi)</td>
<td>1963</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda (Buganda)</td>
<td>1966</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chad (FROLINAT)</td>
<td>1966</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria (Biafra)</td>
<td>1967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burundi (Hutu)</td>
<td>1972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zimbabwe (ZAPF)</td>
<td>1972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopia (Eritrea)</td>
<td>1974</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angola (UNITA)</td>
<td>1975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopia (Somalia)</td>
<td>1976</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopia (TFL)</td>
<td>1978</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mozambique (Renamo)</td>
<td>1979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chad (FROLINAT)</td>
<td>1980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria (Muslims)</td>
<td>1980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda (NRA)</td>
<td>1980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somalia (clani)</td>
<td>1982</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudan (SPLA)</td>
<td>1983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria (Muslims)</td>
<td>1984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burundi (Hutu)</td>
<td>1988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberia (ami-Doé)</td>
<td>1989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rwanda (Tutsi)</td>
<td>1990</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Annex 2

The graph below comes from the 2005 Human Security Report, based on UCDP data, and shows all armed conflict in Africa from 1945 – 2002, including inter-state, extra-state and intra-state conflicts with more than 25 battle-related deaths per calendar year. It does not include incidents of non-state or one-sided violence.

![Graph showing armed conflict in Africa from 1945 to 2002](image)

Annex 3

Obviously there are many valid ways of conceptualizing and ordering conflict statistics. Equally, we may disagree with the categorisation of some of the individual conflicts identified. But these limitations notwithstanding, the UCDP data gives a comprehensive and reliable contemporary picture of conflict in Africa.

**African Conflict 2002 – 2005**

State-based conflict UCDP data points to a decrease in state-based conflict in Africa across this period, with a possible levelling-out in 2006; it is possible that conflict has

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14 2006 data is only available for state-based conflict; it has yet to be collated for non-state conflict and one-sided violence.
reached something of an equilibrium. In 2002 there were 13 ongoing conflicts; this was
down to 6 in 2005, though it increased again to 8 in 2006. Battle deaths from state-based
conflict were estimated at 1,851 in 2005.

**Non-state conflict** Non-state conflict has also decreased in recent years. There were 24
non-state conflicts in 2002; a figure that was down to 16 by 2005. Fatalities associated
with non-state conflict have also reduced, from 4,465 in 2002 to 909 in 2005.

**One-sided violence** There were assessed to be 8 incidents of one-sided violence in
2005, killing an estimated 3,373 people. This again marks a reduction from the 2002
level of 14 examples and 4,924 deaths.

**African Conflict in 2005/6**

**8 state-based conflicts (2006)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Conflict</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Burundi</td>
<td>Govt. vs FNL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somalia</td>
<td>Govt. vs ICU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAR</td>
<td>Govt. vs UDPR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>Govt. vs OLF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>Govt. vs ONLF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>Govt. vs LRA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudan</td>
<td>Govt. vs NDA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chad</td>
<td>Govt. vs KDL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**16 non-state armed conflicts (2005)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Conflict</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>2 tribal/political conflicts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ivory Coast</td>
<td>2 political conflicts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>3 political/tribal conflicts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somalia</td>
<td>6 clan-based conflicts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudan</td>
<td>2 tribal/political conflicts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**8 instances of one-sided violence (2005)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Conflict</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DRC</td>
<td>2 instances (FNL and Mayi Mayi)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>1 instance (Bakassi Boys)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rwanda</td>
<td>1 instance (Rastas)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudan</td>
<td>3 instances (GoS, GoSS and Janjaweed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>1 instance (LRA)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
On 02 December 2004 I attended a seminar at the Overseas Development Institute on the subject of mortality in Iraq. It was presented by Richard Garfield, one of the authors of the recent report published in the Lancet, which gained widespread media attention primarily due to its estimate that 86,000 excess deaths had been caused by the military invasion of Iraq in 2003.

The Research

Garfield gave a brief overview of the research findings, giving little attention to the methodology or fieldwork of the survey. He expressed his surprise at how few Iraqis had died during the warfighting stage of operations. When considering the amount of firepower used and the geographical and military goals of the coalition, this had been remarkable. However, following the insurgency, the use of overwhelming air power has caused massive problems. Coalition ground tactics remained very successful at limiting ‘inappropriate deaths’.

Chronic illness, and in particular cardiovascular disease, had been the main cause of death before and after the warfighting stage. However, after military operations had been announced as successfully completed in March 2003, air strikes by coalition forces (always described as ‘American’) were reported by interviewees to have been a major cause. Garfield compared figures for the recent post-conflict stage in Iraq to those from previous arenas. Following WW2 invasions in Germany and Japan there had been practically no excess deaths during the respective occupations.

 Asked what improvements he would have made to the survey in hindsight, Garfield admitted that a larger sample would have been desirable. He pointed to research recently undertaken by the New England Journal of Medicine, which had asked homeward bound US service personnel ‘were you responsible for the deaths of civilians?’ Projecting the results suggested 14 deaths per day. By projecting the findings of the Iraq Body Count Website (based on media reports) and the Lancet finds 21 and 107 deaths per day respectively.
Using the report as being based on 'extrapolation' had been a mistake. The research had not been conducted using a 'Representative Population Survey'.

Warning to this theme, Garfield said that the written statement had been inconsistent.

Admitting that the Lancet findings were not comprehensive he was puzzled at how HMG could hold up the MoH figures, which were equally incomplete. Basing findings on hospital admissions failed to take into account the fact that, in some cases, no bodies or body parts were available to record.

By using humanitarianism as a political fig leaf for military action HMG had made a rod for its own back. It was now trying to wash the blood off.

The Way Ahead

Reaffirming that the military had figures for civilian casualties, Garfield suggested that it was important the debate moved on from simply picking numbers. Governments should find researchers to form a 'coalition' with the military. This would require a massive change in military thinking but would be in everyone's advantage. Surely, the military would want to improve its knowledge of the effectiveness of its equipment and tactics?

[Redacted]

Political

Iraq Directorate

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Tel: [Redacted]

Fax: [Redacted]

co.gov.uk

02/12/2004
1. I don't normally push round academic papers for the hell of it, but for anyone with an interest in Paul Collier's work on economic greed and natural resource dependence as causes of civil war, I strongly recommend the following:


2. The conclusion is strong, but I think well supported by the substance of the paper:

"Collier and Hoeffler's findings are unreliable and their conclusions are unjustified. Many of their proxies are arbitrary and spurious, the meaning they assign to the proxies is too restrictive, and it is not clear what the proxies are actually capturing. This lack of certainty renders the results of the regression analysis ambiguous and capable of different interpretations. Collier and Hoeffler's interpretations and their conclusions about rebel behaviour are speculative, based on untested assumptions and inferences rather than on evidence of rebel conduct. As a result of measurement problems associated with geographical scale, endogeneity and inaccurate and missing data, their study is also vulnerable to measurement errors, biased samples and artificial findings. Limited to numerical data at the structural level, their analysis ignores politics, history, ideology, government decisions, the regional context and the constraining effect of repression, all of which are critical to the causes and incidence of civil war. Collier and Hoeffler are unable to develop an adequate understanding of the causes of civil war and the motives of rebels because they do not analyse civil wars and rebels."

3. As a schematic separation of the various levels of causation of civil war, I particularly like the sketch below. It adds a bit more complexity to the usual dichotomy of structural vs proximate causes, while remaining simple enough to be useful for (e.g.) policy papers:

- **Structural conditions.** Certain structural conditions might put a country at risk of civil war and, from a comparative perspective, make some countries more likely than others to experience civil war. The relevant structural issues include political, social and economic factors and often have regional and international dimensions.

- **Dynamic causes.** Civil wars do not arise suddenly out of thin air. They are preceded by a set of significant events that constitute a causal chain or constellation that culminate in large-scale violence between government and opponents.

- **Catalytic events.** In the causal chain or constellation of events leading to civil war, there is sometimes a dramatic event that sparks rebellion and is thus an important proximate cause of war.

- **Actors' decisions.** Civil war entails organised violence on the part of rebels and government. The decision by these actors to engage in or refrain from large-scale violence is therefore a key determinant in the incidence of war, in some cases the decisions of external actors are also among the significant causes of civil war.

- **Soldiers' motives.** Government and rebel soldiers have a range of reasons for joining an army. These reasons might be political, ideological, social, financial etc.
IRAQ: CIVILIAN CASUALTIES

In response to your note of 25 October I attach statistics from 'open sources' on casualties in Iraq. As you will appreciate the UK Government has no ownership of these statistics.

As you can see, this survey sets Iraqi Ministry of Health (IMOH) figures aside those from media outlets and internet web-sites. These other sources are of no real value as an indicator of casualty rates. They do not attempt to give estimates of casualties caused by the Multi-National Force. They do, however, suggest that the IMOH figures are incomplete e.g. table covering 8-14 November. This could be due to e.g. delayed reporting of deaths at hospitals or bodies not being taken to hospitals.

The result of this survey will not answer the questions repeatedly posed by MPs and others who are asking HMG to provide an estimate of Iraqi civilian casualties. They remain unconvinced that, as a member of a military coalition, our military do not, and cannot, know the number of people that that coalition has killed. The only way that a proper comparative analysis of the IMOH figures can be made is if they are set beside those produced by the US and UK military.

In breaking down their figures the IMOH 'military action' definition includes combat action by the Iraq Security Forces and the Multi-National Force against insurgents. It does not distinguish between dead terrorists/insurgents and civilians killed in the crossfire. If casualties are caused by car bombs, IEDs etc, they are classed as 'terrorist action'. If not, they are classed as 'military action'. Hospitals do not try to determine who shot whom in the latter circumstance because it is too difficult for them to do so.

The statistics are based on those brought into hospital. All hospitals are required to provide information every four hours detailing men, women and children killed or injured by (a)
military action, and (b) terrorist action. The information is reported by phone to an operations centre in each Governorate and collated information is then passed to the operations centre in the MOH. A single national return is compiled which is signed by the Minister of Health and issued daily at 0930 after consultation with the Ministry of the Interior (MOI). The latter step is necessary because the MOI collects its own information about casualties from police forces etc on the ground - but it is regarded as much less reliable. Consultation also ensures that the IIG as a whole uses common data.

Media outlets such as www.bbc.co.uk and www.sky.com report only those stories, which are newsworthy on the day of the event. This clearly leads to a great number of deaths going unreported.

Those figures produced by the Iraq Bodycount and Iraq Casualties websites are based on collating worldwide media reports. In addition to the problems related to the media outlets above, these websites update their figures sporadically. This means that those figures currently reported for November may rise if and when the site is updated at a later date.

Regards

Iraq Policy Unit
From: [Email address]
Sent: 10 November 2004 18:23
To: [Email address]
Subject: FW: Iraq Civilian casualties

Interesting and useful, a bit more forward from CSA than his letter I think.

---Original Message---
From: [Email address]
Sent: 10 November 2004 18:23
To: [Email address]
Subject: Iraq Civilian casualties

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Thanks - very helpful. I agree - the extrapolation is based on the increases in mortality generally, not on the 61 deaths reportedly caused by coalition forces (of which, as you say, one may have been a combatant, two were mistakes, and the remaining 58 were from aerial weaponry). So I'd propose to say:

The estimate of deaths is based on an extrapolation from an increase of 33 deaths (excluding the data from Fallujah, as the Lancet researchers did) among the over 7,000 people in the households surveyed across the whole of Iraq.

---Original Message---
From: [Email address]
Sent: 10 November 2004 18:10
To: [Email address]
Subject: Iraq Civilian casualties

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We spoke with regard to the figure of 56 in my note to [another email address] of 29 October.

This figure (which is mentioned halfway down the second column on page 7 of the report) refers to the number of killings of civilians directly attributed to coalition action by those from whom evidence was taken. Arguably, two of three cases attributed to servicemen on the ground might also be included in this number, giving a total of 59.

In fact, the extrapolation to determine the total number of excess deaths (the oft quoted 98,000 figure) is based on the following data:

Number of deaths identified post-conflict - 142 per 138439 person-months

Number of deaths identified pre-conflict - 48 per 110538 person-months, or 57.6 per 138439 person-months

Excluding Falluja (53 of the post-conflict deaths and expected to be 1.4 pre-conflict), this gives a total number of recorded excess deaths over the study period in the 33 cluster areas of (142-53) - (57.6 - 1.4) = 33.

As the CSA made clear in his note, this extrapolation from a very small number of cluster samples to the whole country is the key weakness of the paper, resulting in the very wide error bars (8,000 to 194,000) around the oft quoted 98,000 figure. This uncertainty is why CSA's mind not adequately exposed in the Lancet article and has largely been omitted from subsequent press reporting.

08/02/2005
Please let me know if you need anything more.

PB/CSA

08/02/2003