Who, what, and where? Linking violence to civil wars

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The Paper at a Glance:

We discuss the **challenges of attributing violence events to civil wars** and introduce an approach that links different forms of war-related violence to specific civil wars using data on actors, locations, and conflict zones. We also present an **R package** that integrates battle and war-related violence data from the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP).

The Attribution Problem

- Civil wars involve a complex network of actors perpetrating different violence that is intricately tied to the ongoing conflict (for example, fights between rebel groups, or targeted violence against civilians).
- Studying violence within such complex civil wars is **conceptually and empirically challenging**, scholars face a double attribution problem:
  1. responsibility for an event must be assigned to an actor
  2. **linking events to specific civil wars** (what is war-related violence?)
- We focus on the latter, addressing challenges in attributing events to civil wars when actors participate in multiple conflicts within the same country or when perpetrators have never directly rebelled against the government

Our Approach: `ucdplink`

`ucdplink` **links violent events** from the UCDP GED **to armed conflicts** in the UCDP ACD **using actor and location data,** creating a **conflict-month dataset** with casualty information. It follows three steps:

1. Converts ACD data: Transforms UCDP/PRIO ACD annual data into conflict-month format (`acdtomonthly`).
2. Prepares GED data: Processes UCDP GED, splitting multi-month events and coalition actor events (`gedprep`).
3. Links violence to conflicts: Assigns casualties to conflict episodes via actors or, if unavailable, event location, using information on the location of conflicts from the WZONE Conflict Zones Data (Kikuta 2022).