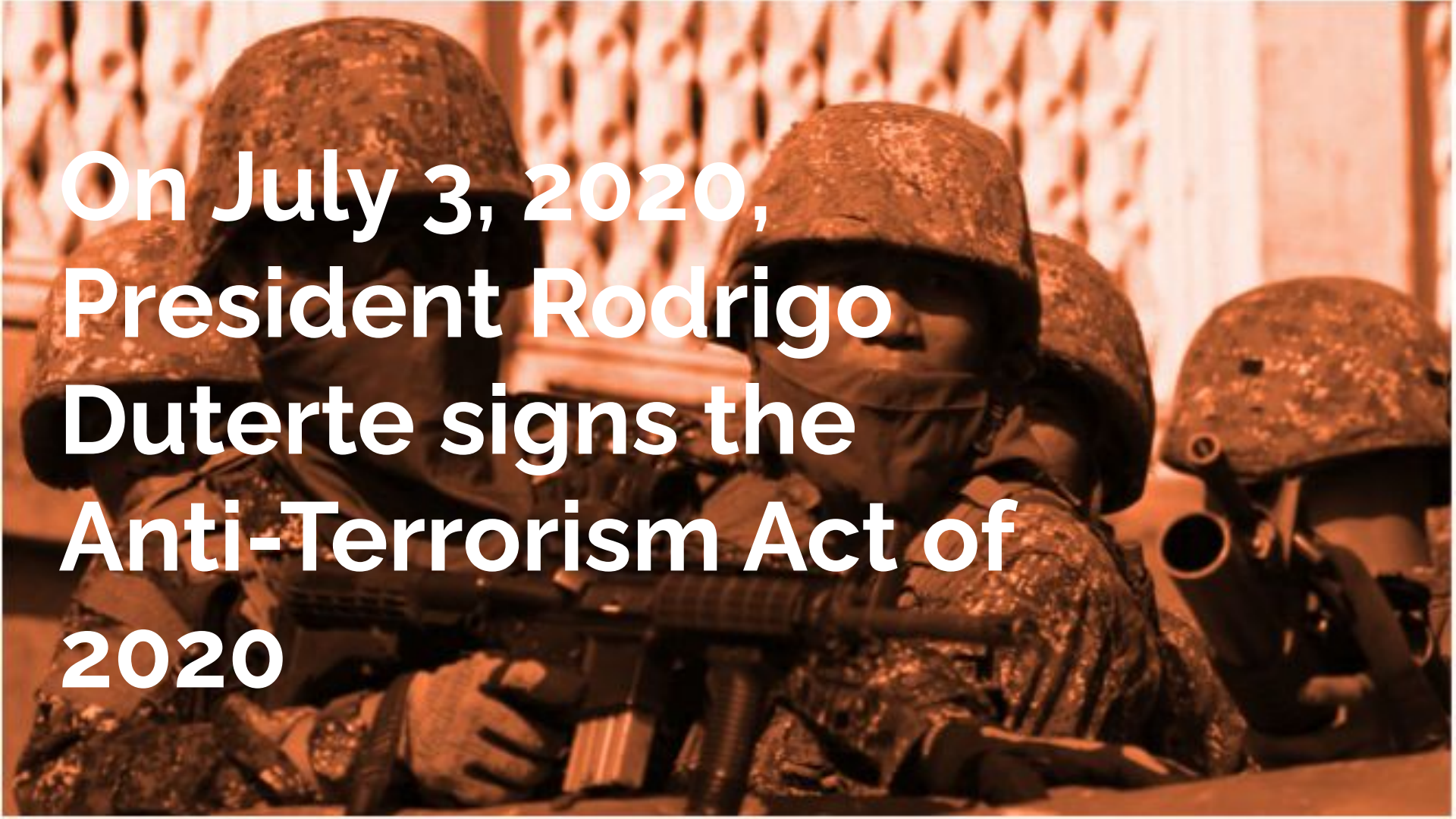
Patterns of Conflict

A report on conflict-related violence in the Philippines


On July 3, 2020,
President Rodrigo
Duterte signs the
Anti-Terrorism Act of
2020

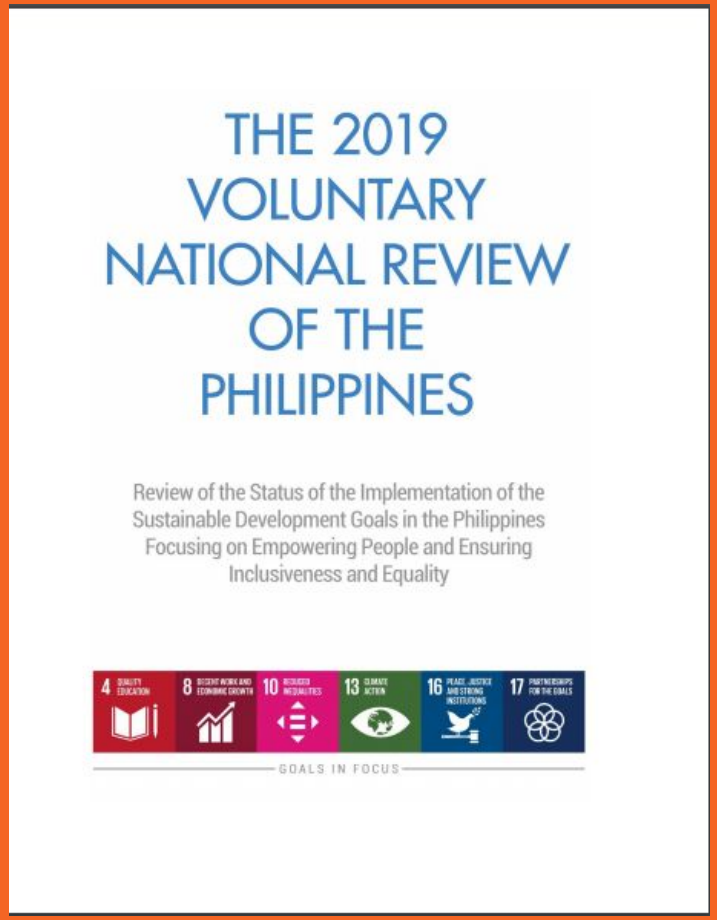
This was met with outrage from the public, triggering protests amidst a pandemic

16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS

GOAL 16

Promote **peaceful and inclusive societies** for sustainable development, provide **access to justice** for all and build **effective, accountable and inclusive institutions** at all levels

Conflict-related Violence

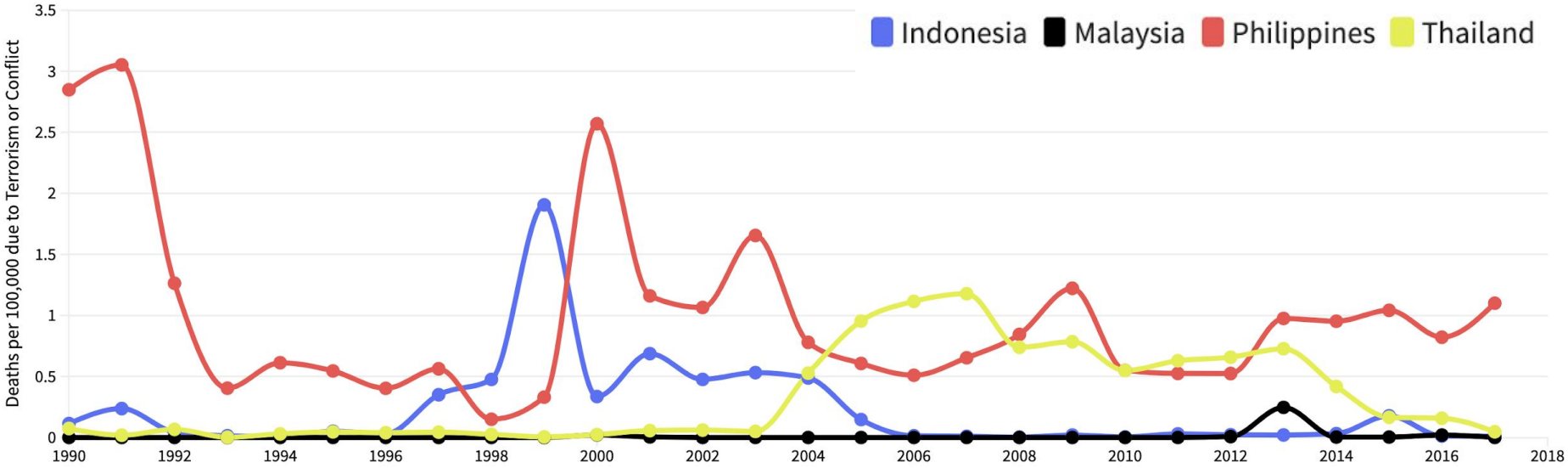


What We Found

- **No mention of data** on conflict-related casualties
- Briefly mentions the **Bangsamoro Law** as a step towards achieving lasting peace

Trends in Conflict

- **No significant improvement** in conflict related death rate
- Statistically speaking, there is no clear direction in which we are heading
  - Linear regression shows that the Philippines' death rate will **decrease by 0.024 per 100,000** annually – which is **close to nothing** (Kendall-Tau test; α = 0.05; p-value: 0.9531)
- The Philippines **performs worse** than Southeast Asian neighbor countries

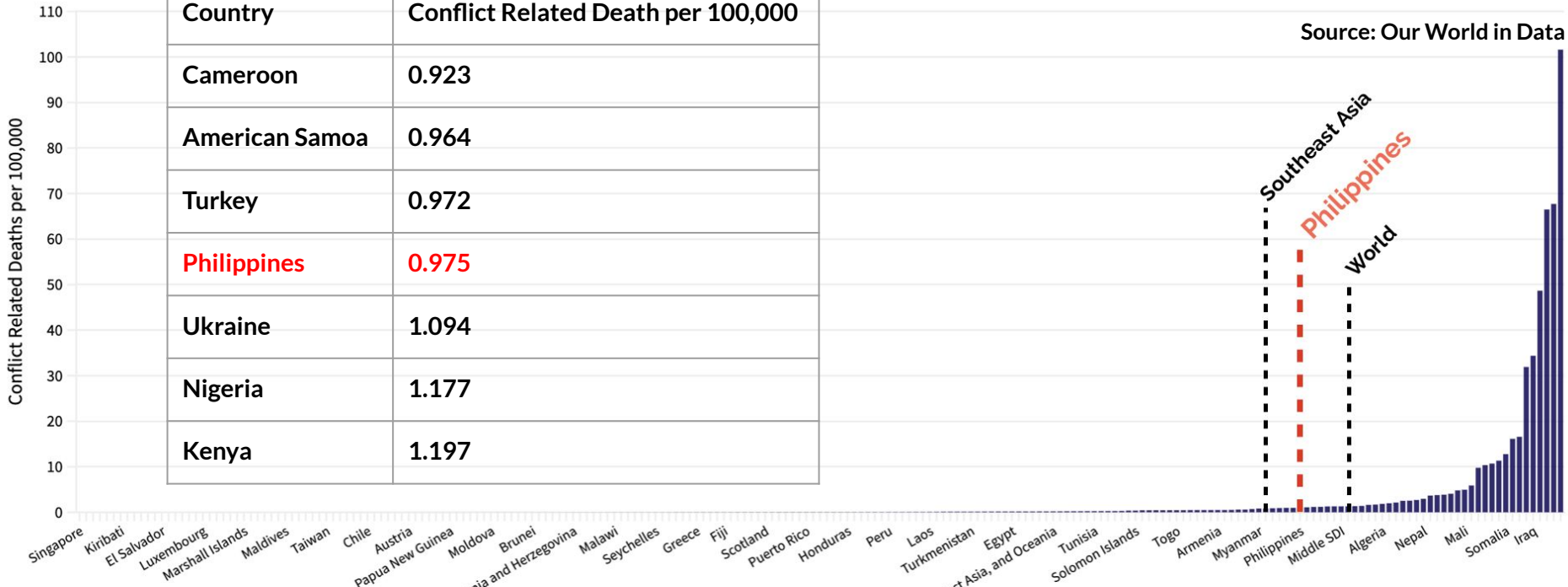


Source: Our World in Data

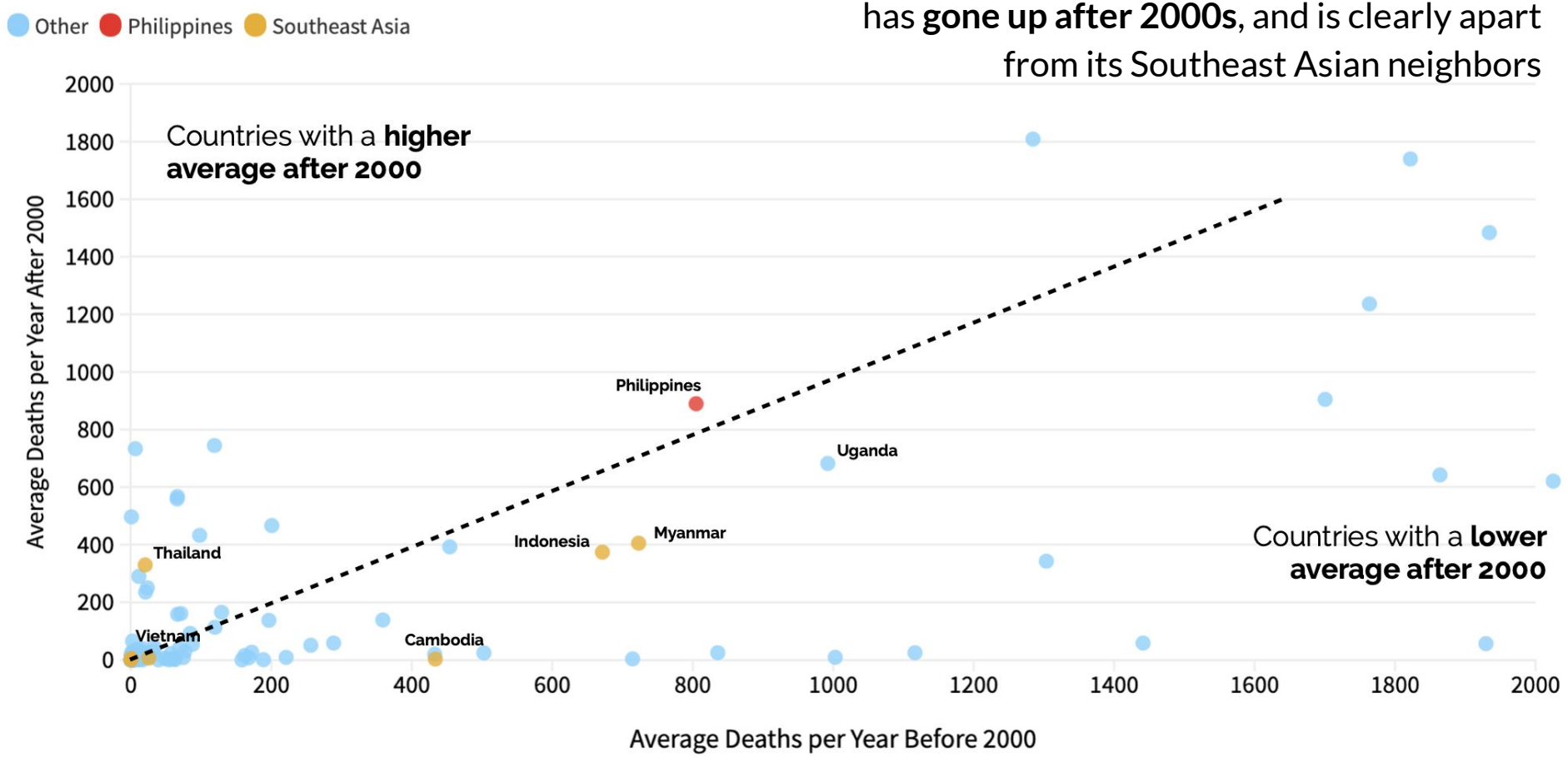
Global Performance

- The Philippines is **among the top 50 countries** with the highest conflict related deaths per 100,000 (Averaged from 2000 to 2017, ranking 182 out of 227)
- The Philippines is **close to other conflict-prone countries**

Country	Conflict Related Death per 100,000
Cameroon	0.923
American Samoa	0.964
Turkey	0.972
Philippines	0.975
Ukraine	1.094
Nigeria	1.177
Kenya	1.197



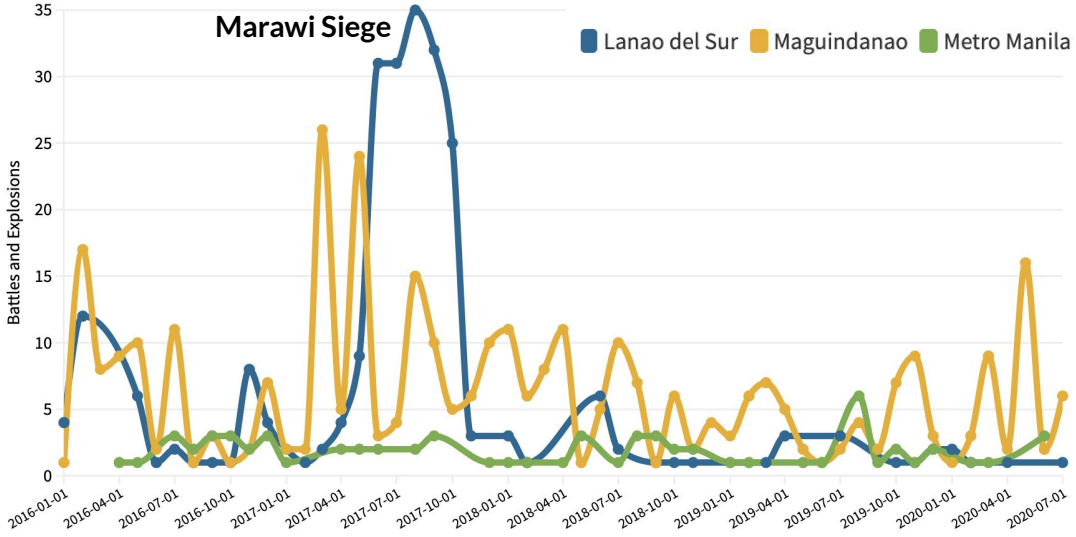
The Philippines' conflict related death rate has **gone up after 2000s**, and is clearly apart from its Southeast Asian neighbors

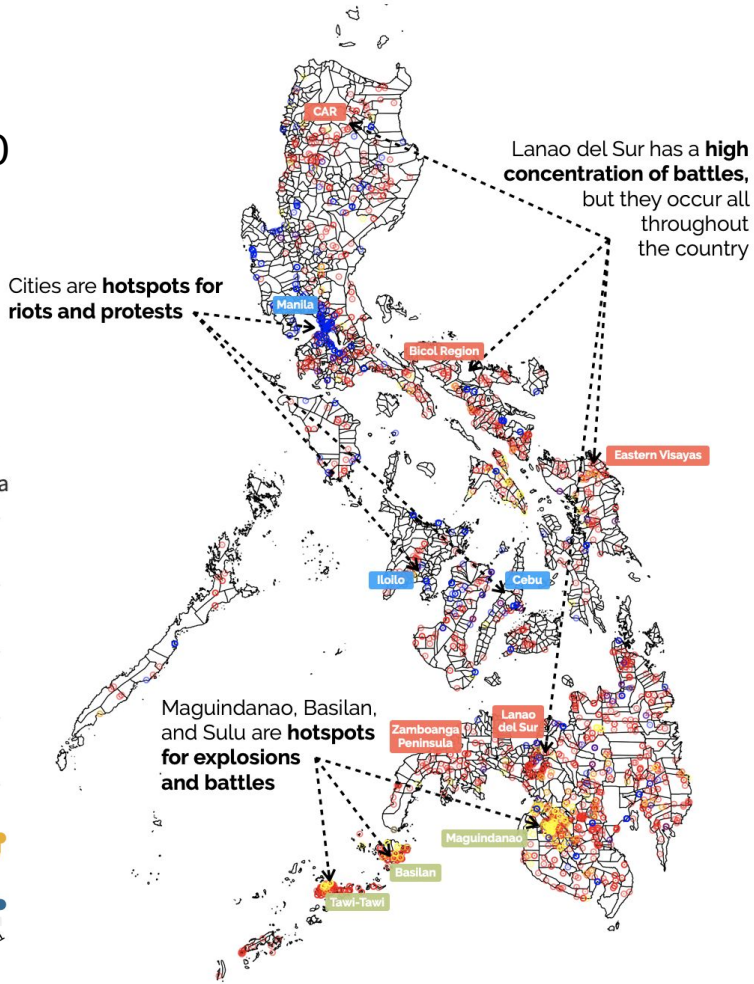


Source: Our World in Data

Conflict at the Local Level

- List of ~10K conflict-related events from 2016-2020
  - Data from Humanitarian Data Exchange
- **Maguindanao and Lanao del Sur** are hotspots for explosions and battles respectively, although conflict is spread throughout the country





Source: Humanitarian Data Exchange

Conflict at the Local Level

- Out of 73 provinces, **29 have an upward trend** in violence, 44 have an downward trend
- However, **only 5** of these negative trends are **statistically significant** ($\alpha = 0.05$)

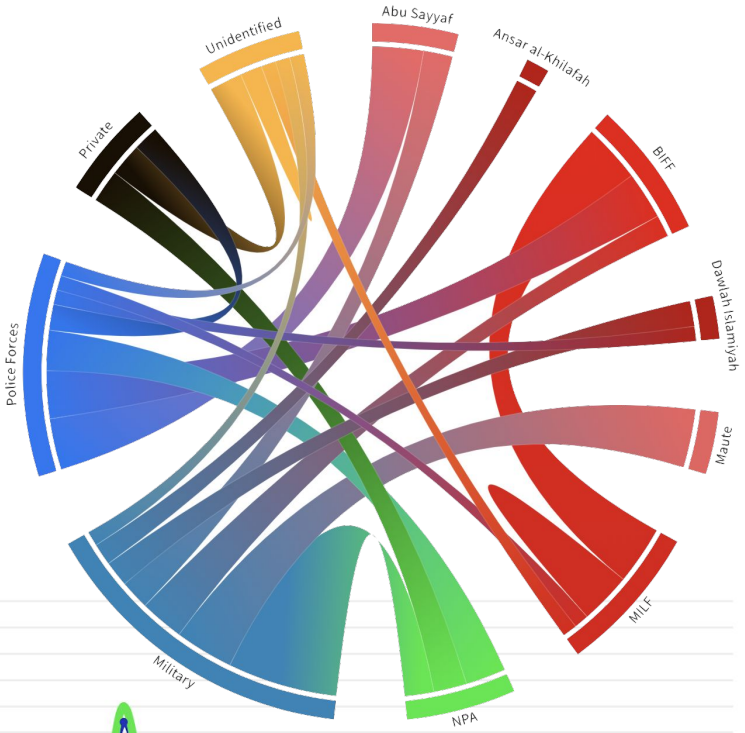
Province	**Change in Number of Battles per Month**	**p-Value**
Bohol	-0.528	0.0440
Lanao del Sur	-0.245	0.0399
Davao de Oro	-0.385	0.0098
Camarines Sur	-0.371	0.0213
Basilan	-0.415	0.0003
Agusan del Sur	0.450	0.0112

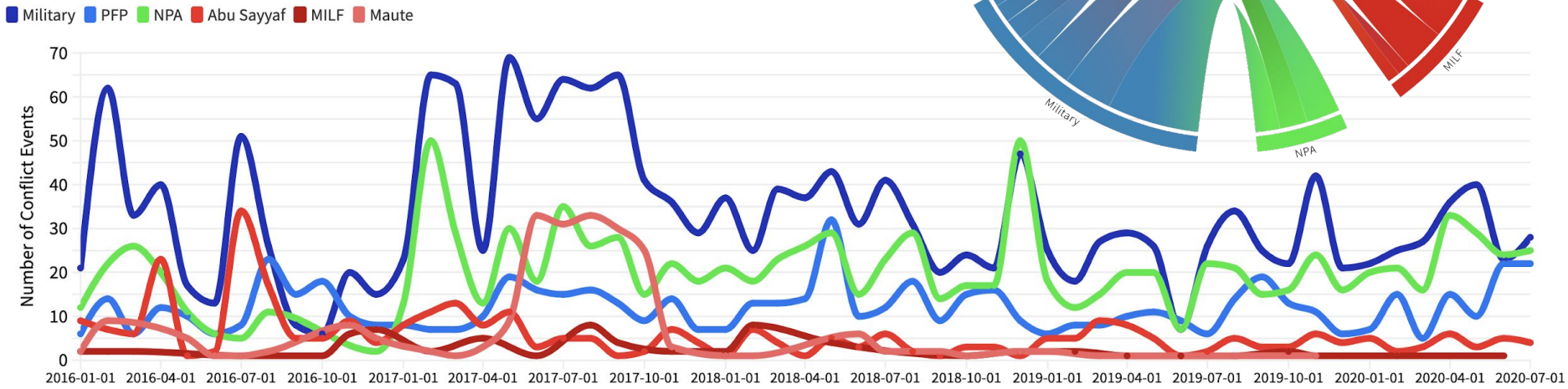
Source: Humanitarian Data Exchange

Impact of Conflict

Who are fighting, and who are affected?

- Over **80 groups** in battle-related conflict
- **Strong government participation**
  - Military engaged in the most battles from 2016-2020
  - Most often in conflict with NPA (green; see trendlines), and Islamic separatist groups (red)



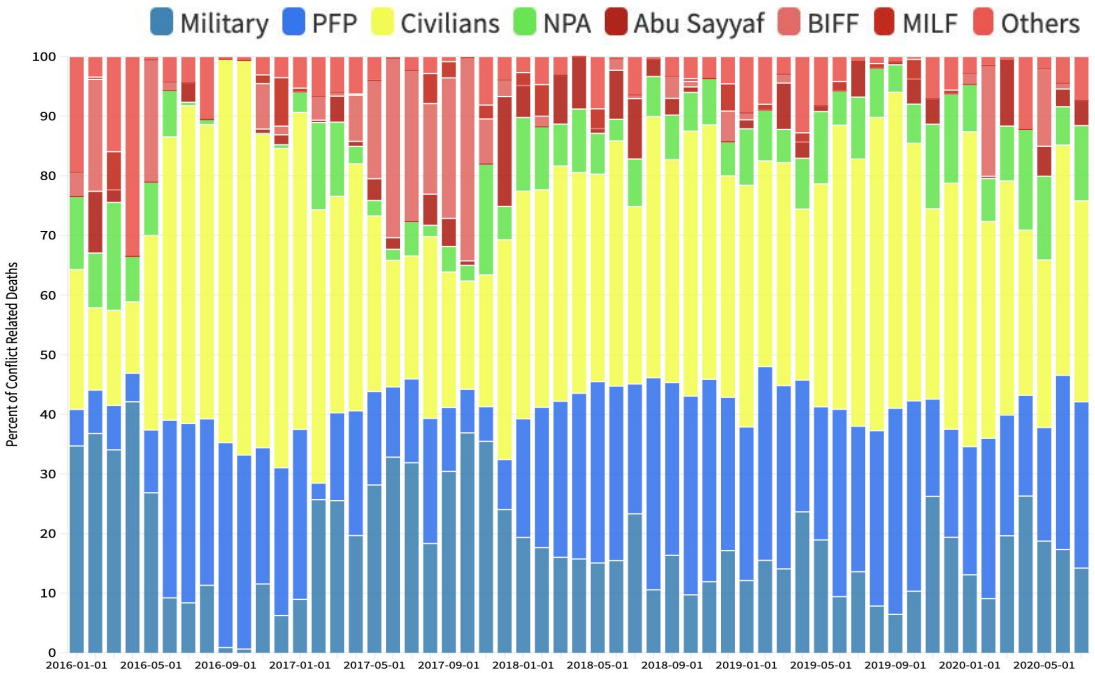


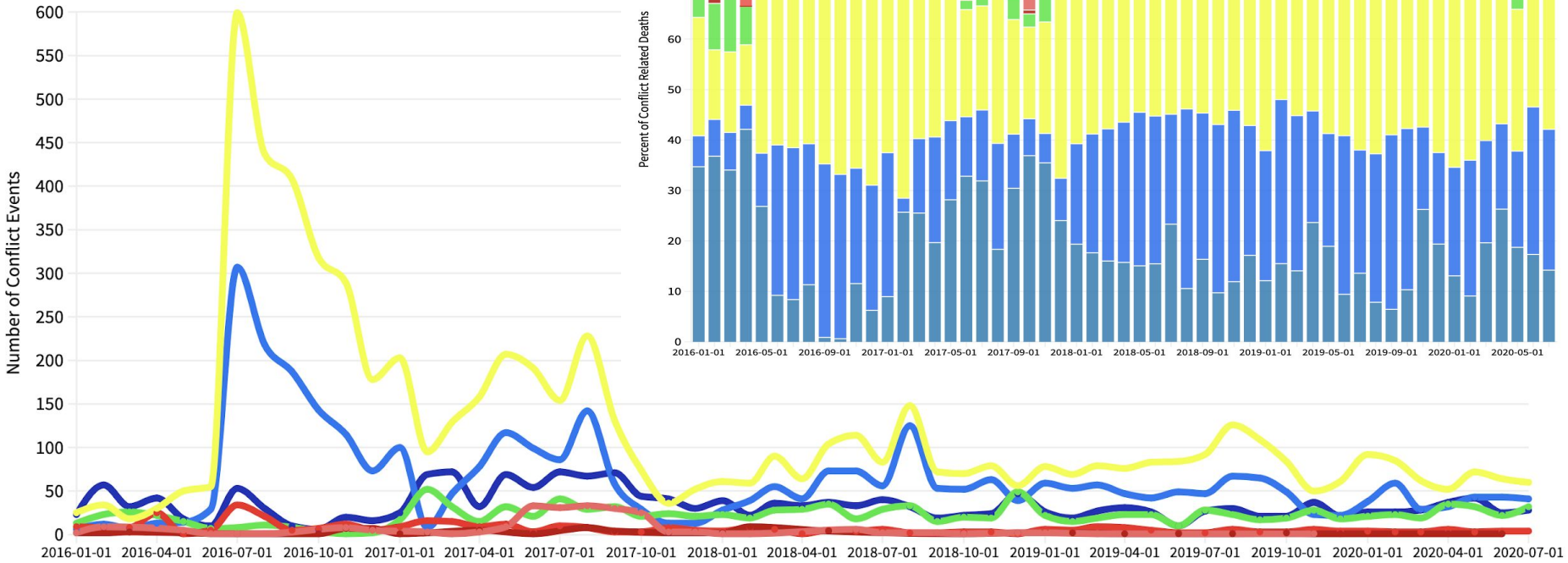
Source: Humanitarian Data Exchange

Impact of Conflict

Who are fighting, and who are affected?

- Significant proportion of **civilian deaths** (8,201 cases; 2016 – 2020)





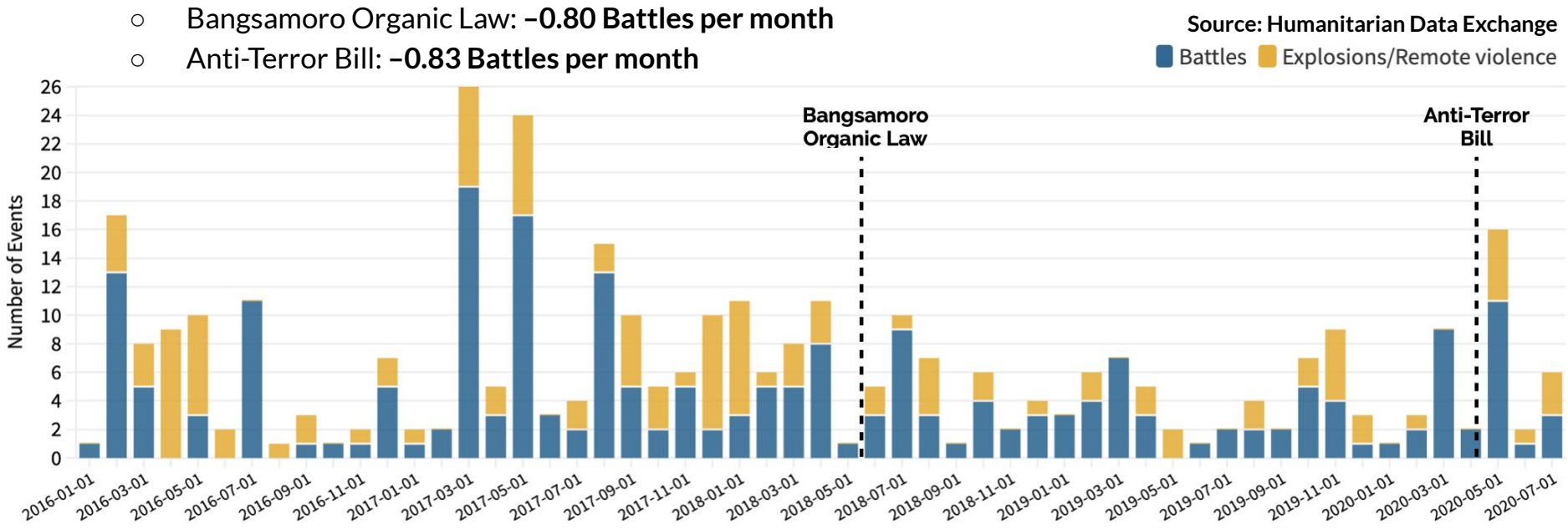
Caveat: Casualties were split evenly between parties, actual results will likely reveal more civilian deaths

Source: Humanitarian Data Exchange

Impact of Government Intervention

How did the Bangsamoro Law and Anti-Terror bills impact battles in Maguindanao?

- Estimated the effect **directly attributed** to the bills using **difference in differences** method
  - Used Sulu as a counterfactual based on k-Nearest Neighbor algorithm on monthly events before June '18
- Results show **relatively small effects** on conflict reduction
  - Bangsamoro Organic Law: **–0.80 Battles per month**
  - Anti-Terror Bill: **–0.83 Battles per month**



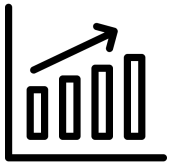
Caveat: Data for anti-terror bill calculated with only 2 months of data, may not reflect long-term effect

Sources of Conflict & Policy Recommendations

- Literature states that conflict is linked to **political instability, economic inequality, and weak government institutions**
- Philippine data **support these claims**
  - Municipalities that have experienced battle conflict
    - **Have significantly higher poverty rate** (p-value: 2.26e-12)
    - **Have significantly higher number of protests and riots** (p-value: 0.0031)
    - Using rank-sum test; $\alpha = 0.05$; Based off conflict from 2016 to 2020
- Suggests that in order to solve conflict, the government must **address longer-term issues** of political instability and poverty
  - **Difficulty to establish causal effects of such factors** due to a lack of longitudinal, granular data, and the overall complexity of conflict as a phenomenon

Source: PSA Small Area Poverty Estimates 2012, Humanitarian Data Exchange

Summary



Trends in Conflict

How has the Philippines done? Where will we be in 5 years?

- No significant reduction in conflict related deaths since SDGs started
- Estimated 0.024 less death per 100,000 people every year

Global Performance

How does the Philippines compare in the global context?

- Performing significantly worse than Southeast Asian peers
- Similar in conflict-related death rate to Turkey, Ukraine, Nigeria

Conflict at the Local Level

How are provinces doing in terms of conflict reduction?

- Identified Maguindanao and Lanao del Sur are conflict hotspots
- Only 5 out of 73 provinces showed strong signs of conflict reduction
- Civilians most impacted by conflict

Impact of Government Intervention

Have the government's efforts reduced conflict?

- Bangsamoro law and anti-terror bill have a small effect on reducing battle and explosion related conflict

Sources of Conflict & Policy Recommendations

What factors are related to conflict reduction? What can government do to achieve this goal?

- Data supports claims that conflict is tied to political instability and poverty
  - **Recommendation**: Government should pursue long term solutions that address political instability and poverty, in order to reduce conflict
- Lack of data on conflict resolution needed to better understand the situation
  - SDG matrix categorizes the indicator as Tier 3 (no methodology and regular data collection)
  - **Recommendation**: Regularly collect granular data on conflict and related indicators