

Opportunities for peace and risk scenarios in 2016



“Opportunities for peace and risk scenarios” is an annual publication linked to the yearbook *Alert! Report on Conflicts, Human Rights and Peacebuilding*, which identifies and analyses scenarios and issues on the international agenda that may enable peacebuilding or lead to an increase in violence and instability in the short or medium term. For more information on the contexts studied, see the [ECP Database on Conflict and Peacebuilding](#).

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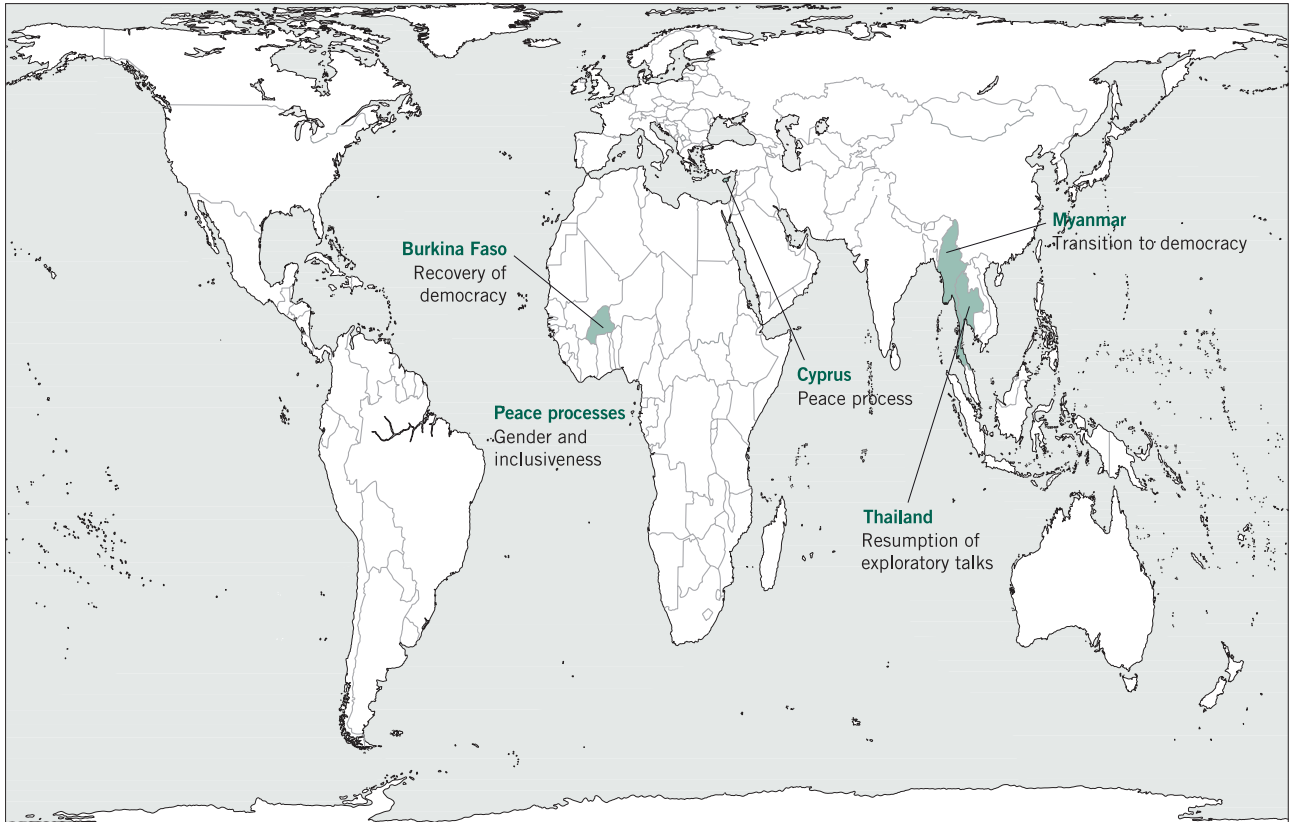
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Opportunities for peace in 2016



■ ■ **Cyprus:** The resumption of peace negotiations in 2015 and the confluence of factors linked to them (the commitment of local leaders, international support and the mobilisation of non-governmental actors from both communities of the island in favour of dialogue, as well as tangible results including but not limited to significant confidence-building measures) provide a historic window of opportunity to achieve a definitive agreement despite obstacles related to the circumstances and the background of the dispute.

■ ■ **Burkina Faso:** The country has put an end to the transition begun after the fall of the regime of Blaise Compaoré by holding the presidential and legislative elections that had been postponed following the failed coup d'état in September 2015. The elections returned control of the country's political institutions to the Burkinabe people after an 18-month interim government, ushering in a new period of democracy for Burkinabe society.

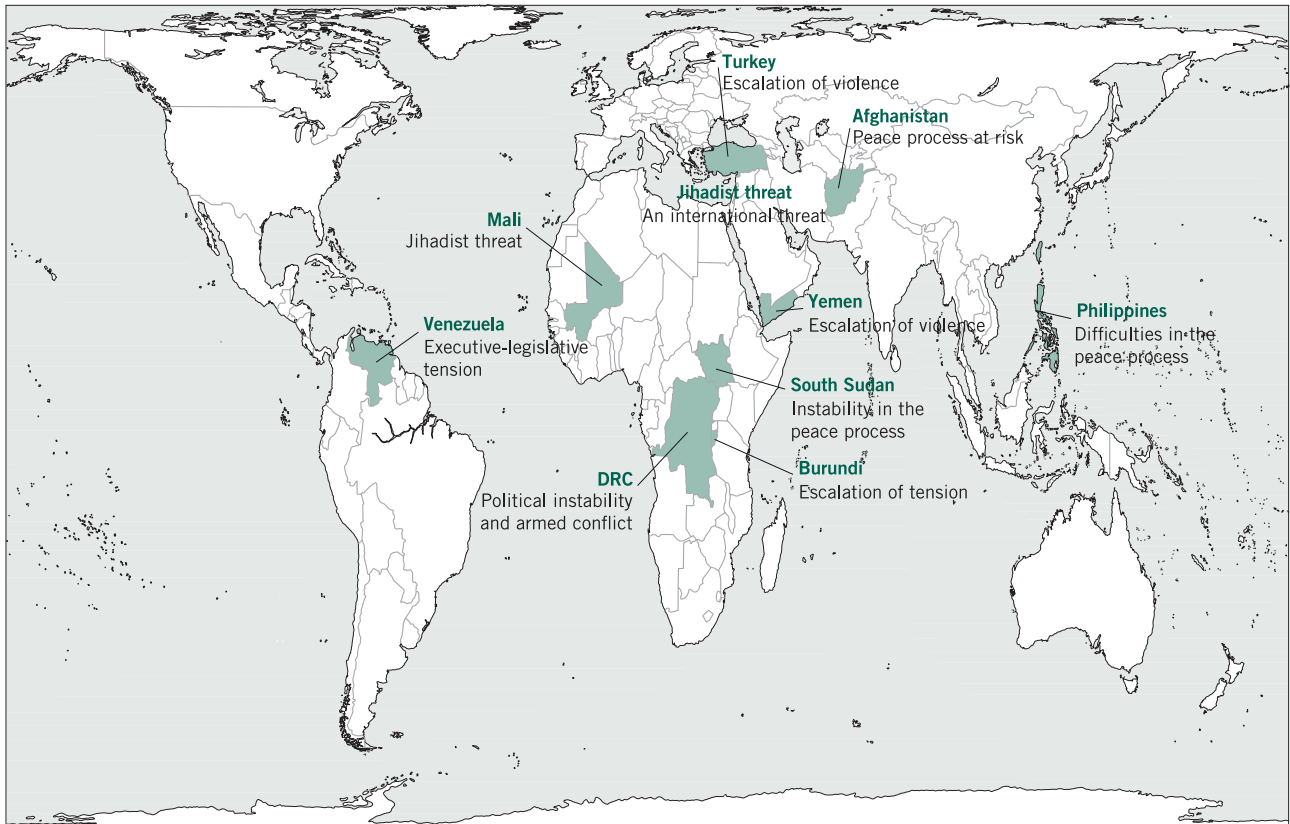
■ ■ **Myanmar:** The results of the general elections, which gave an overwhelming majority to Aung San Suu Kyi's

opposition party (NLD) and will lead to the formation of a new government without military guardianship, together with the ceasefire agreement signed with eight insurgent organisations, portends progress on the path to democracy and peace in the country during 2016.

■ ■ **Thailand:** Exploratory talks were resumed in 2015 between the military junta and Mara Patani, an organisation uniting the main armed groups operating in the southern part of the country. The unification of the insurgent movement's demands and the state's recognition that dialogue is necessary to resolve the armed conflict are two mandatory conditions for building trust between the parties.

■ ■ **Peace processes:** Recent research shows that peace processes that are inclusive and incorporate a gender and civil society perspective are more sustainable and more likely to result in the signing of a peace agreement than those that do not. Moreover, the participation of women could also help to draft agreements that address equality-related issues.

Risk scenarios in 2016



■ ■ **Burundi:** There has been a significant deterioration of governance in the country in recent years. Growing authoritarianism and the controversial candidacy of President Pierre Nkurunziza, along with the atmosphere of political violence and human rights violations, are different aspects that reveal the seriousness of the situation and have pushed the country to the brink of armed conflict in recent months.

■ ■ **Mali:** In June 2015, a peace agreement was achieved between the government and the Arab and Tuareg rebel movements operating in the northern region after three and a half years of armed conflict. However, the exclusion of the jihadist movements from the negotiations and the ineffectiveness of securitization measures to contain their presence pose serious obstacles to ending the violence and may even jeopardise implementation of the peace agreements.

■ ■ **DRC:** The upcoming cycle of new elections is causing an escalation of political violence and general instability as a consequence of the attempts of President Kabila to postpone the presidential election and thereby prolong his rule, as well as the failures of the military operation against the FDLR and the amnesty for and return of the armed group M23, which could lead to a resumption of the conflict.

■ ■ **South Sudan:** After the signing of a peace agreement following 20 months of bloody civil war, the warring parties' lack of ownership of it, the government's unilateral decisions in matters that should be the jurisdiction of the new transitional government that has yet to be created, the repeated ceasefire violations and the emergence of new armed actors are putting the prospects for peace in the country at serious risk.

■ ■ **Venezuela:** The opposition's resounding victory in the parliamentary elections has led to a new political scenario in the country marked by a polarisation of forces between the executive and legislative branches of government. This new political situation, which substantially modifies the power of Chavism after 15 years, may give rise to new tensions and disputes between the government and opposition forces that could further convulse national politics, expand social fragmentation and lead to outbreaks of violence.

■ ■ **Afghanistan:** The negotiating process between the Taliban and the Afghan government hit a roadblock due to an internal crisis within the Taliban movement. The division within its leadership threatens the future of the negotiations. Despite the rising violence, Ashraf Ghani's commitment to the dialogue and to reaching out a hand to Pakistan, which is still providing sanctuary to Taliban leaders, is weakening the already brittle Afghan government. In addition, although Pakistan should participate in the agreement, its desire to control the process is pitting the parties against each other even more.

■ ■ **Philippines:** The problems and delays experienced by Congress to approve the Bangsamoro Basic Law, a kind of statute of autonomy governing the new autonomous entity of Bangsamoro and specifying the contents of the historic peace agreement signed by the government and the MILF in 2014, caused deadlock in the peace process and raised fears of an internal split within the MILF and a resumption of violence in Mindanao.

■ ■ **Turkey:** The conflict between Turkey and the PKK seriously worsened in 2015 due to factors such as the increasingly urban nature of the war, the “Syrianisation” of the Kurdish issue and the irruption of ISIS onto Turkish soil, the deterioration of the social atmosphere, the regression of democracy and questions about sustainable dialogue options. These dynamics could worsen in 2016 if measures to build trust and de-escalate the violence are not urgently implemented.

■ ■ **Yemen:** Violence in the country escalated significantly in March 2015, when an international coalition led by Saudi Arabia decided to intervene to halt the advance of the Houthi militias that had ousted the government at the beginning of the year. Looking ahead to 2016, the situation threatens to worsen due to the growing complexity of the armed conflict, the severe impact of the violence on the civilian population and the obstacles to a political solution to the conflict.

■ ■ **Jihadist threat:** ISIS has established itself as a new model for international jihadism and a competitor with al-Qaeda, demonstrating a greater ability to act around the world. Many factors may favour the increase of jihadist violence in the future, including an intensification in the struggle between ISIS and al-Qaeda, a greater incidence of armed actions by returning militiamen or “lone wolf” attacks and the possible adverse effects of the international response to ISIS.

The Escola de Cultura de Pau (School for a Culture of Peace, hereinafter ECP) is an academic peace research institution located at Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. It was created in 1999 with the aim of promoting the culture of peace through research, parallel diplomacy, training and awareness generating activities. Its main scope of action includes analysing conflicts, peace processes, gender, human rights and transnational justice, and education for peace.

The fields of action of the Escola de Cultura de Pau are:

- **Research.** Its main areas of research include armed conflicts and socio-political crises, peace processes, human rights and transitional justice, the gender dimension in conflict and peacebuilding, and peace education.
- **Second track diplomacy.** The ECP promotes dialogue and conflict-transformation through second track initiatives, including facilitation tasks with armed actors.
- **Consultancy services.** The ECP carries out a variety of consultancy services for national and international institutions.
- **Teaching and training.** ECP staff gives lectures in postgraduate and graduate courses in several universities, including its own Graduate Diploma on Culture of Peace at Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. It also provides training sessions on specific issues, including conflict sensitivity and peace education.
- **Advocacy and awareness-raising.** Initiatives include activities addressed to the Spanish and Catalan society, including contributions to the media.

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