This conflict trend report from ACLED is the fourth of our monthly reports that focus on regional conflict trends within Africa. In this issue, we concentrate our analysis on recent political violence in **DR-Congo, Libya, Mali, Nigeria, Somalia and Sudan**. Analysis of these countries is focused on the month of June 2012, with reference to violence patterns over the course of ACLED's dataset. Present conflict patterns are compared with recent violent trends, highlighting new patterns, actors and locations.

In addition, at a half-way point in 2012, we review the six months of violence data collected to date and compare this with patterns and levels of violence over the course of the ACLED dataset (1997—2012). This allows us to analyse present day political violence in the broader context of violence patterns and processes on the continent, and review some of the key countries, actors, and modalities of violence regionally over the past fifteen years.

ACLED data is disaggregated by violence type, group and location. Recent additions to the dataset include records of reported fatality numbers, which we present alongside the recorded number of events below (*see* Figure 1). As in previous months, Somalia witnessed the largest number of overall events on the continent over the course of the
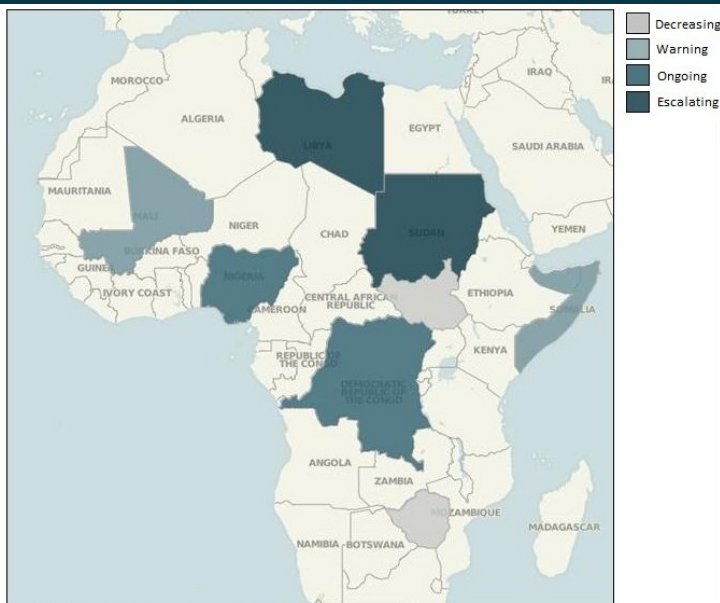
Conflict trajectory, June 2012

month, while Nigeria has been overtaken by Sudan in light of the recent wave of anti-regime riots and demonstrations there. Fatality numbers were high in Nigeria and Libya, in the latter, due to a small number of highly fatal attacks. Fatality figures fell in DR-Congo, although a myriad of actors continue to destabilise its eastern region. Mali remains at the centre of international attention with its double-crisis, as violence continues in the north.
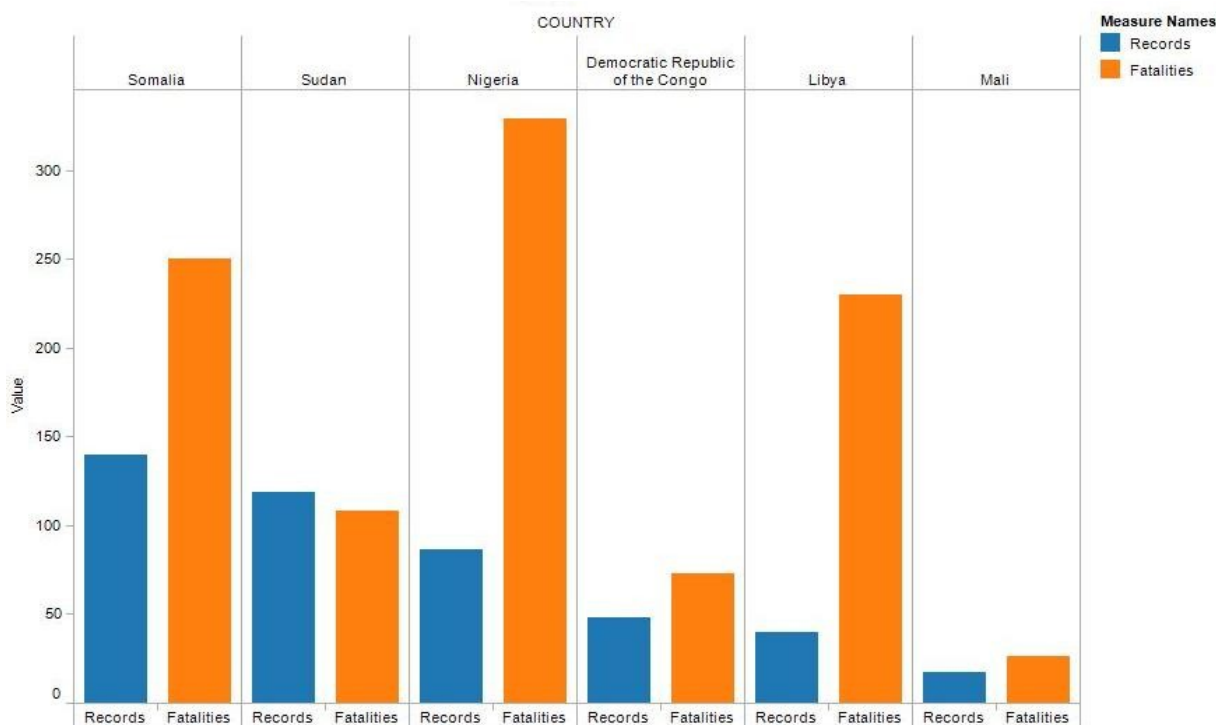

Figure 1: Conflict events and fatalities by country, June 2012

CONFLICT TRENDS (NO. 4):
REAL-TIME ANALYSIS OF AFRICAN POLITICAL VIOLENCE, JULY 2012

DR-Congo

There is global attention on eastern DRC following the publication of the addendum to the interim report by the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, on 26th June, in which Rwanda is charged with providing direct assistance to the creation of the M23 movement, in addition to directly intervening in the Congo in order to reinforce the M23 movement. A review of ACLED data indicates that the overall level of violence has increased though not dramatically since the establishment of the M23 movement (*see* Figure 2). The Group of Experts addendum suggests that support from Rwanda has been ongoing for a series of military mutinies and actions by other groups, suggesting that the violence now being committed by M23 is a concentration of previous dispersed and diffuse actors.

Rwanda's interest, and influence, in the Kivus is not new, although the rumours of supporting the territories' secession is a significant escalation. One possible motivation for Rwanda to support such a move is to bolster their claim for free reign and immunity in seeking out former *genocidaires* and FDLR troops who have been operating within both provinces for almost twenty years.

Libya

Libya witnessed a sharp increase in activity and fatality rates in June (*see* Figure 3). The country remains affected by ongoing violence between rival militias concentrated in Al-Kufrah and Gharyan. Violence is being carried out along both political and ethnic lines affected by overlapping cleavages as ethnic allegiances between distinct groups are also shaping loyalties to distinct political factions. There has also been an increase in unidentified armed group activity in recent weeks – suggesting either groups are taking advantage of chaos to operate, or nascent or less formal groups may be emerging or in flux.
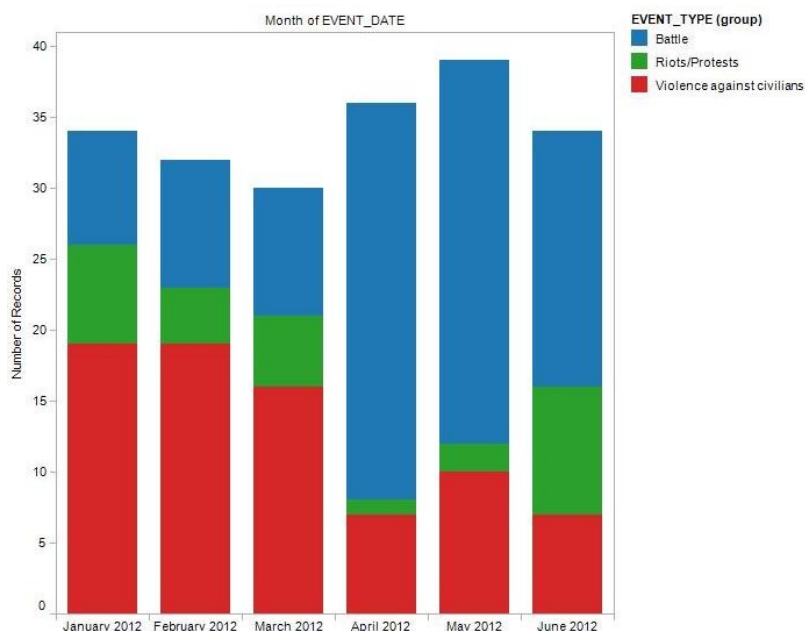

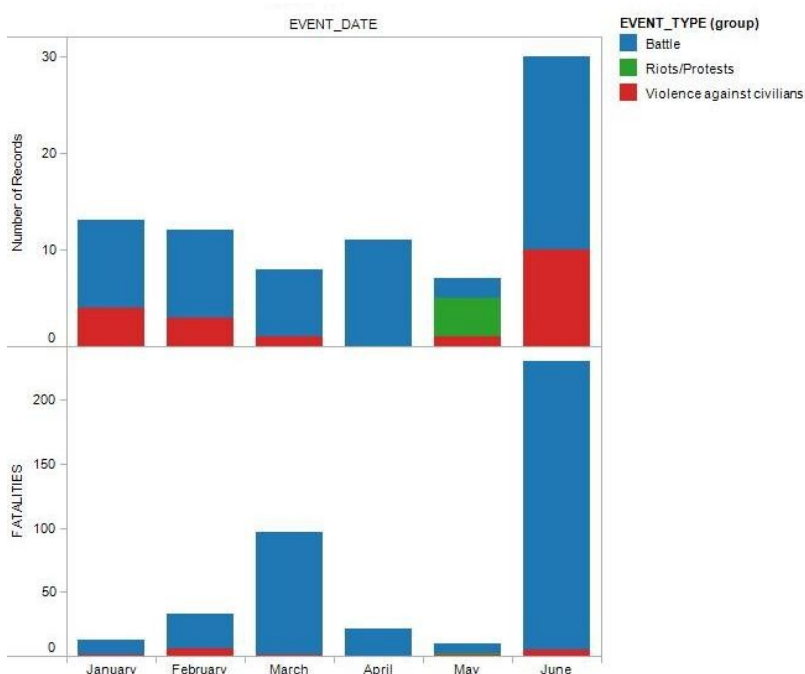**Figure 2: Conflict events by type, DR-Congo, Jan - Jun 2012.**

Figure 3: Conflict evens and fatalities by type, Libya, Jan - Jun 2012.

Mali

June witnessed a drop in activity overall in the country, although several significant developments took place. Over the course of the month, tensions between MNLA and Ansar Dine spilled over into open conflict after days of protest against their rule in Kidal, northern Mali. Ansar Dine proceeded to take control of Timbuktu, Kidal and Gao over the following weeks. The primacy of hardliners will make a negotiated settlement to the conflict less likely, as Tuareg separatists had always indicated they were more open to negotiation than regional intervention.

Opposition to the rebels mobilised not only in the south of the country, but also within the newly established territory. Protests have spread from Bamako and Gao in May to Kidal as well in June, where they were concentrated over the month. In addition, June witnessed the establishment of a group in Timbuktu with the intention of driving out the rebels – the Patriots' Resistance Movement for the Liberation of Timbuktu.

> On the 25th of June, President Goodluck Jonathan stated that Boko Haram "are changing their tactics every day, so you also have to change your staff and personnel."

Nigeria

There was ongoing instability in June, concentrated in Kaduna State, but also significant in Kano, Borno and Yobe. Borno State has experienced the highest rates of violent activity to date in 2012, with activity split between battles and violence against civilians. Borno is followed by Kano, Kaduna and Lagos States, which have all experienced higher levels of rioting as a proportion of overall events.

Boko Haram claimed responsibility for a large number of the attacks on churches, police stations and various institutions over the course of the month, following a relative lull in their activity in May. On the 25th of June, President Goodluck Jonathan stated that Boko Haram "are changing their tactics every day, so you also have to change your staff and personnel." (BBC, 25 June 2012) A review of ACLED data on Boko Haram indicates that the group has indeed changed tactics since its emergence in 2009, as we witness an increased focus on violence against civilians. The internal government re-organization undertaken by Jonathan, however, has not led to a decrease in Boko Haram activities, but is contributing to regional and military sector dissatisfaction with the Jonathan regime. This has led to discussion of the 'Mali precedent' in Nigeria – prompting concern that a civilian government incapable of quelling an insurgency may be brought down by its own internal opposition (*AfCon*, 6th July 2012).
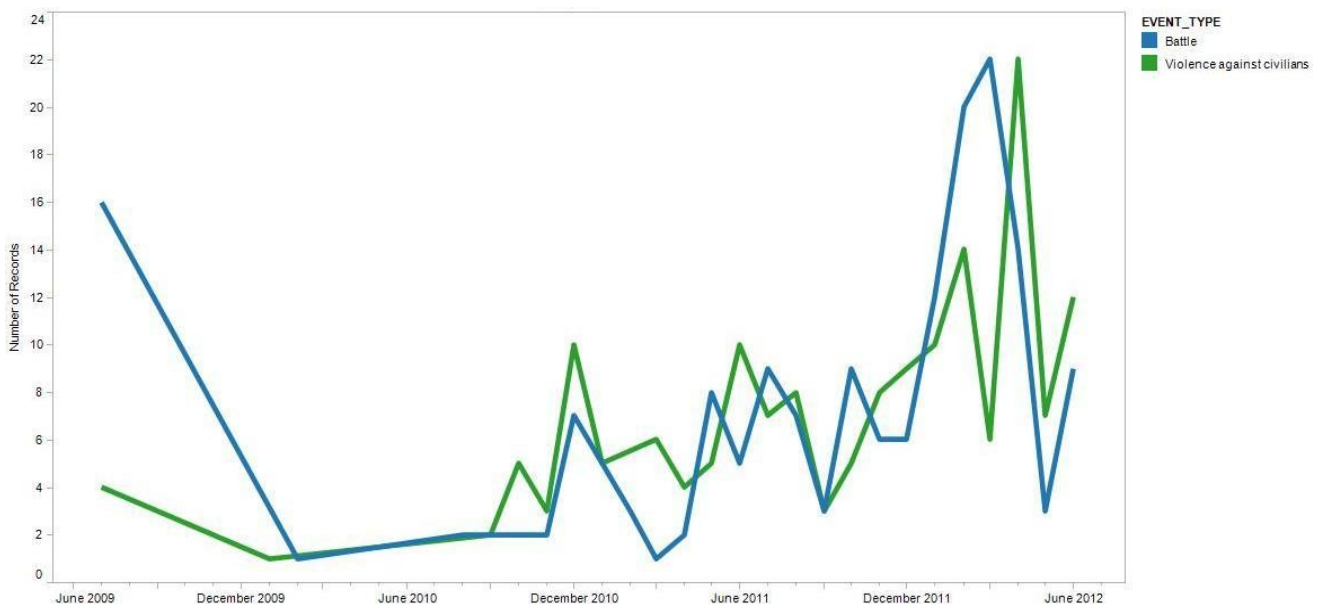

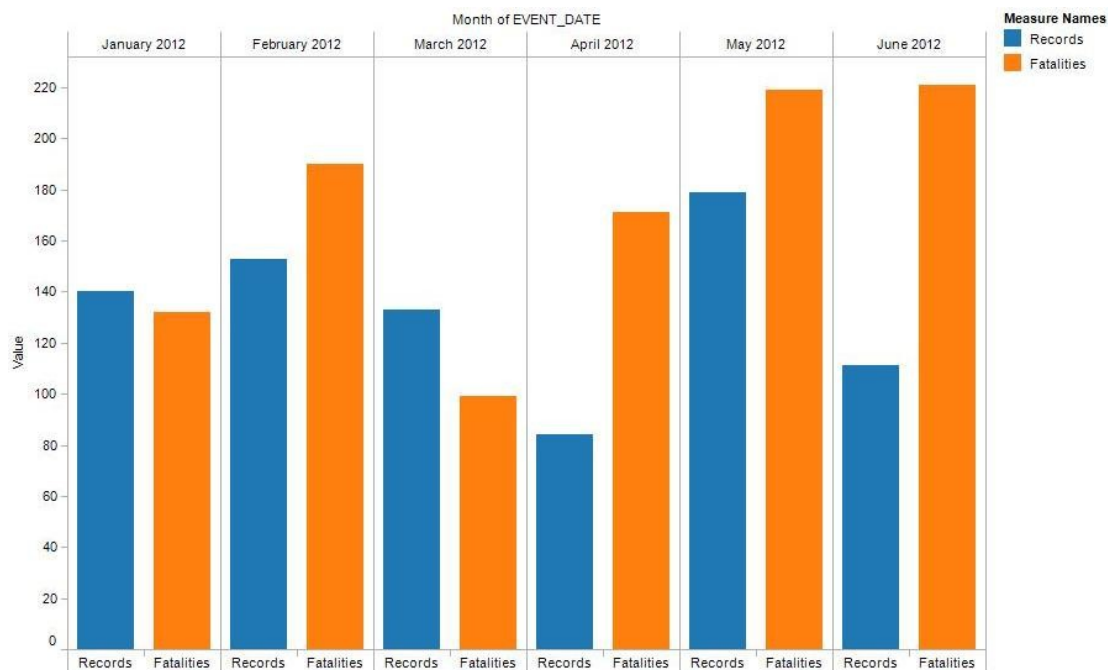Figure 4: Boko Haram activity by event type, Nigeria, Jun 2009 - Jun 2012.

Figure 5: Conflict events and fatalities, Somalia, Jan - Jun 2012.

Somalia

Somalia witnessed a drop in violent activity in June, after exceptionally violent May. Fatality levels remained comparable, however. There are several ongoing processes in Somalia shaping the topography of violence in the country.

In the first instance, TFG-allied forces are fractured, and are reportedly weakened by internal fissures and the inability to coordinate. Early in the month, Al-Shabaab made several successful attempts to regain territory in Hiraan and Galgaduud, as Ethiopian troops and ASWJ withdrew from areas, allegedly following disagreements between the two forces, and mounting pressure on supply routes. The TFG reported that ASWJ had withdrawn from towns as they were following Ethiopian orders – a claim ASWJ then refuted (Shabelle Media Network, 13 June 2012). Al Shabaab is undoubtedly weakened, as the loss of territory in Lower

> **TFG-allied forces are fractured, and are reportedly weakened by internal fissures and the inability to coordinate. A weakened Al Shabaab still made several successful attempts to regain territory in Hiraan and Galgaduud, as Ethiopian troops and ASWJ withdrew from areas.**

Juba and push into Lower Shabelle indicate. That the rebels managed to overtake territory at all is a sign of the destructive cleavages in the TFG alliance.

In the second instance, there is increasing evidence that Al Shabaab is turning on perceived enemies closer to home in the territory it still holds by turning on civilians it believes are engaged in espionage. Arrests and attacks on civilians were carried out in Gedo and Galgadud. Some of the attacks were directly attributed to Al Shabaab, while others appear to have targeted perceived Al Shabaab enemies but been undertaken by unidentified armed groups. This may be a measure by which Al Shabaab hopes to at least nominally distance itself from the violent disciplining of civilians, although some attacks on alleged spies by the group have been carried out publicly, which suggests they are not seeking to conceal this activity. It may also be a reflection of the increased pressure on the group leading to the contracting out of violence to smaller, disparate or less formal units. While weakened within Somalia, Kenya has witnessed a sharp increase in attacks attributed to Al Shabaab and affiliates since its incursion into Somalia in October, further indicating the group's scope and influence beyond its formal structures and membership.

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Elsewhere in Somalia, the constitution-making process continues apace, with ongoing negotiations on the nature of a newly (re)formed state. Several events underscored a narrative of change in the country over the course of the past few weeks. In late May, the US gave military vehicles, uniforms and water tanks to the Somali National Army (NSA) in Mogadishu (*ARB*, June 2012). In early June, the US Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs visited Mogadishu, the highest-ranking US official to visit the capital since the 1990s (*The Washington Times*, 10 June 2012). On the 15th June, President Obama acknowledged publicly for the first time that the US directly engages in strikes in Somalia, stating that "In a limited number of cases, the U.S. military has taken direct action in Somalia against members of al-Qa'ida, including those who are also members of al Shabaab, who are engaged in efforts to carry out terrorist attacks against the United States and our interests." (Quoted in the *Wall Street Journal*, 15th June 2012). Finally, on the 24th and 25th of June, AllPuntland.com and Radio Gaalkacyo were both reporting the arrival of US troops in Mogadishu – allegedly to train Somali government forces in the capital. Although there has been no verification of these reports, all signs appear to point to a process of rapid transformation underway in Somalia.

Figure 6: Conflict events by type, Sudan, Jan-Jun 2012.

protesters, in a bid to wear down security forces and have maximal impact (*Af Con*, 6th July 2012). This latest wave of protests attests to a continued situation of multiple threats to the Khartoum regime, which although not coordinated, are responses of multiple groups to a regime perceived to be weak (*see* Figure 7 of discrete actor count of non-state actors). The inability of regime to quell capital protests, Darfuri and Southern insurgencies, could be a situation of death by 1000 cuts. However, there is very little research being done on how the internal regime politics is responding to this situation.

Sudan

June saw a large number of events in Sudan, representing a significant increase over previous months. Anti-regime protests and the state's response constituted the largest share of the increase, which included riots, protests and reports of violence against civilians by security agencies. At first glance, the sheer number of events seems enormous, but the format of the protests shaped this: diffuse, discrete gatherings of small numbers of protests spread across multiple locations in Khartoum and other cities have been coded distinctly. This was a deliberate strategy on the part of
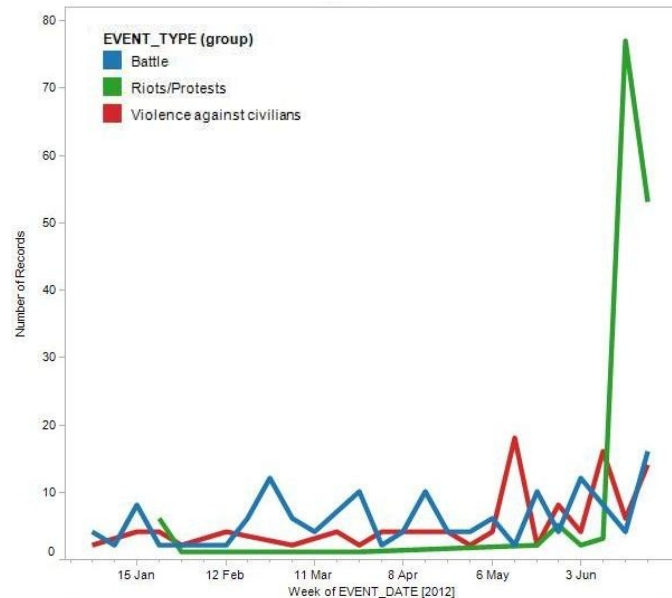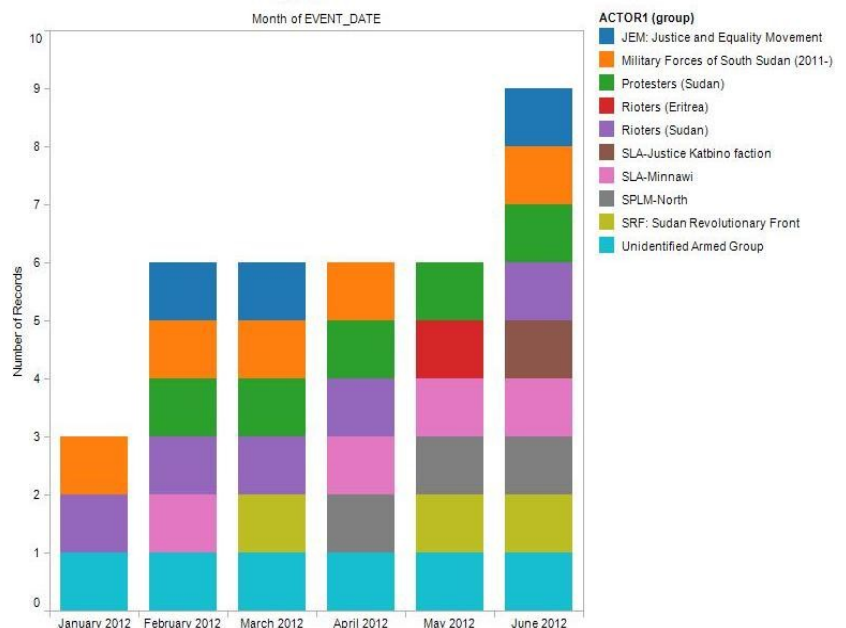

Figure 7: Discrete count of non-state actors, Sudan, Jan-Jun 2012.

2012 in review

At the mid-point in the year, June provides us with an opportunity to review the first half of 2012 in relation to previous year's data. Comparing to ACLED's 1997—2011 data, we find that 2012 has been an extremely violent year, and with only six months of data, it has already surpassed the level of recorded data for several years in the dataset (*see* Figure 8). Even when we exclude non-violent activity (reporting of which has increased in recent years), we still find that 2012 is more violent than over half the years in the dataset (*see* Figure 9).

There are several possible factors contributing to this increase in conflict data. ACLED is now producing continent-wide real time data which has led to an increase in the number of countries being reported upon: 50 to date in 2012, compared to 45 in 1997 for example. Increased and more comprehensive coverage in a larger number of countries may be a contributing factor in the higher levels of conflict data recorded to date in 2012.

Other factors which may contribute to a higher volume of events being captured are the changes in the nature of reporting on complex emergencies. Increased access to conflict-affected areas over the past 15 years may have contributed to an improved level of information on conditions in these countries. Additionally, the growth in the digitisation of news sources, and greater access to a wider number of regional, national and local sources may also mean 2012 data is a greater reflection of the lived experience of political violence on the ground in many of the countries covered than in previous years. The number of discrete sources being utilised by ACLED coders has more than tripled in the 15 years of coverage.

ACLED researchers are continually working to systematise and standardise the coverage and
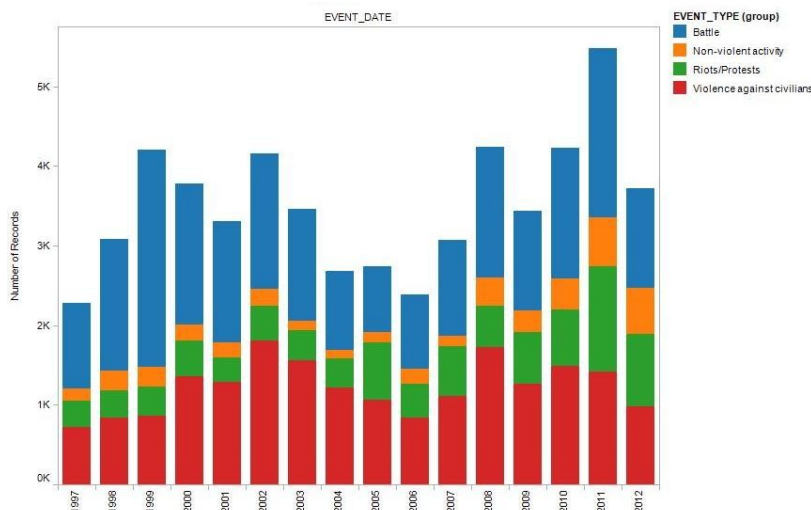

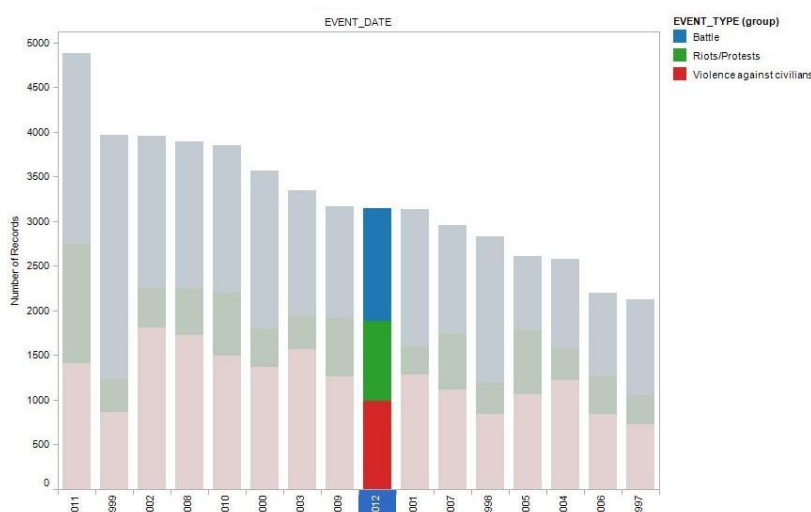Figure 8: Conflict events by activity type, all countries, 1997 - Jun 2012.

Figure 9: Violent events by type, all countries, in order, 1997- Jun 2012.

data sources utilised in earlier years of the dataset to ensure consistent, comprehensive and reliable coverage of the entire African continent from 1997 to the present day.

However, these methodological issues alone cannot explain all of the increase witnessed in the volume of data. When disaggregated, distinct patterns emerge which are worth considering in further detail.

The top 10 most violent countries to date in 2012 are Somalia, Nigeria, DRC, Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, South Africa, Kenya, Libya, Mali, Egypt and Zimbabwe. There has been a particularly sharp increase in violent events in Somalia and Nigeria over the course of the dataset's coverage, where the high volume of events in these acute crisis conditions has driven up the overall level of the data.
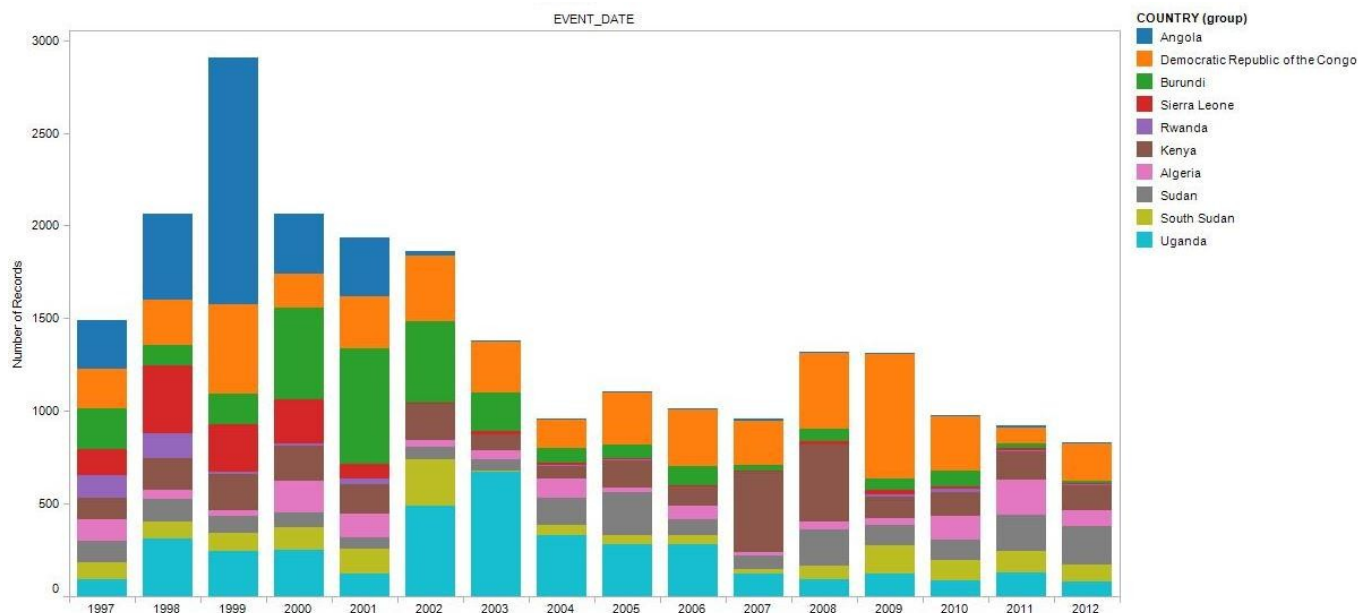
Figure 10: Top 10 most violent countries (1997 ranking), 1997 - Jun 2012.

Events associated with the North African Spring increased the volume of conflict data in 2011 in Libya in particular, and while events have dropped in 2012, they still remain considerably above their 1997 – 2010 levels. The same is true of Egypt, and lower down in the rankings, Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia. Mali's

Level of violence has ranked it in the top 10 most violent countries to date in 2012, where it has witnessed a significant increase on previous years (with only 15 violent events recorded in 1997, compared to 115 to date in 2012). The prominence of these countries is in direct contrast to their almost total absence from data in the earliest years of ACLED's dataset, where they featured very little if at all. In fact, of the top 10 most violent countries in 2012, only Kenya has witnessed relatively
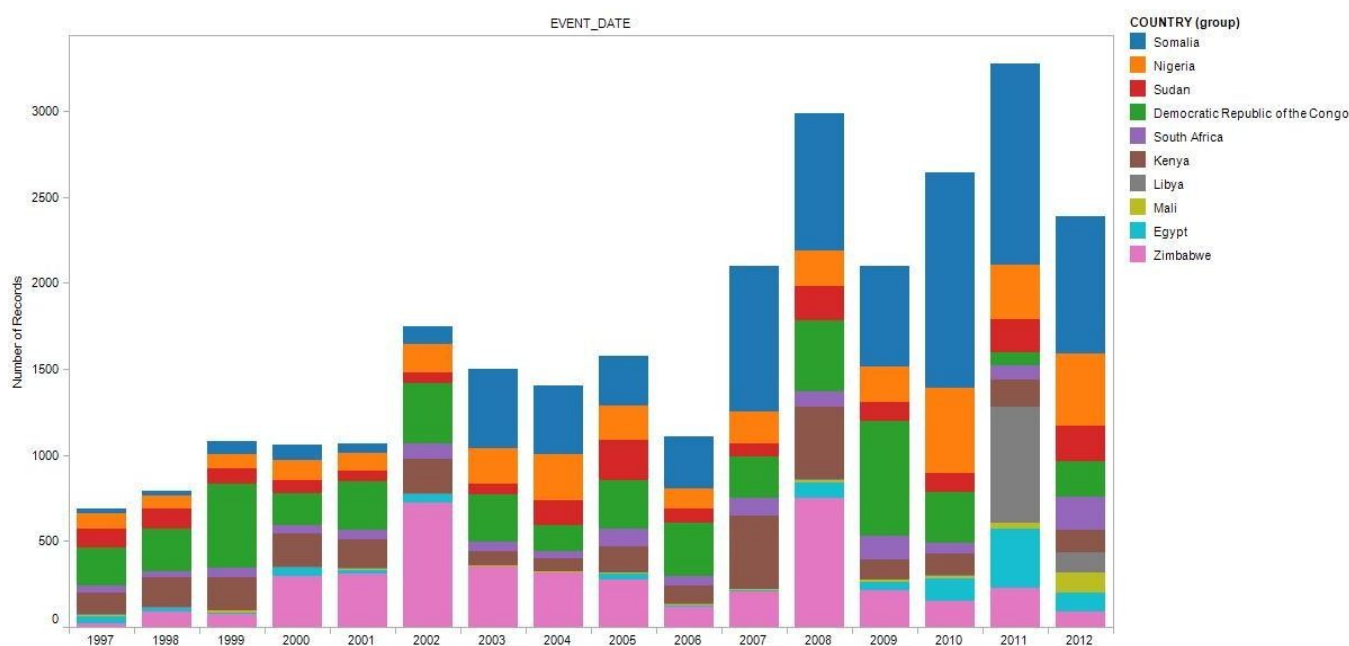

Figure 11: Top 10 most violent countries (2012 ranking), 1997 - Jun 2012.

stable levels of events over the course of the dataset's 15-year coverage, with the exception of 2007-2008, which saw a sharp increase in overall violent activity. In other years, however, the number of events has remained roughly between 150 – 200 per year. 2012 has witnessed 136 recorded events to date, suggesting this may be a particularly violent year for the country.

Violence in Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo and Zimbabwe has varied more widely. Conflict trends in Sudan have been punctuated with extremely sharp increases in 2005, 2006, 2008, 2011 and now 2012, with a general increase over the course of 15 years. The trend line in DR-Congo is much flatter, in spite of volatility in 1999, 2008 and 2009. Zimbabwe's present-day violence can be traced back to a sharp increase in events in 2000, followed by conflict which has very clearly matched electoral patterns in the country, with extremely sharp increases in 2002 and 2008. 2012 has been relatively calm in the country.

The types of actors involved in conflict have also changed over 15 years. Political militias have overtaken rebel groups as the second most significant conflict actor.

Of the most violent countries in 2012, only the DRC, Kenya and Sudan rank among the most violent countries in 1997. Analysts considering conflict on the African continent fifteen years ago would have been primarily concerned with conflict in Angola – which was to increase substantially until 2001 – before considering the DRC, Burundi, Sierra Leone and Rwanda. Uganda would also have ranked among the most violent countries in 1997, and would persist as a priority on the continent until 2006.

The types of actors involved in conflict have also changed over the course of 15 years. In 1997, government forces and rebels were clearly the most significant types of actors involved in conflict on the African continent. Analysis conducted on 2011 data revealed that political militias had overtaken rebel groups as the second most significant actor involved in violent conflict, and this remains the case in 2012 data.

Political militias and government activity appears closely matched over the past five to six years, dropping in tandem in 2012 to date (*see* Figure 12). Rebel activity has not dropped to the same extent, and the gap between rebel and militia forces in the data appears to be narrowing – this is primarily due to Al Shabaab activity in Somalia, and the mobilisation of rebel forces in Mali and the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the first half of the year.
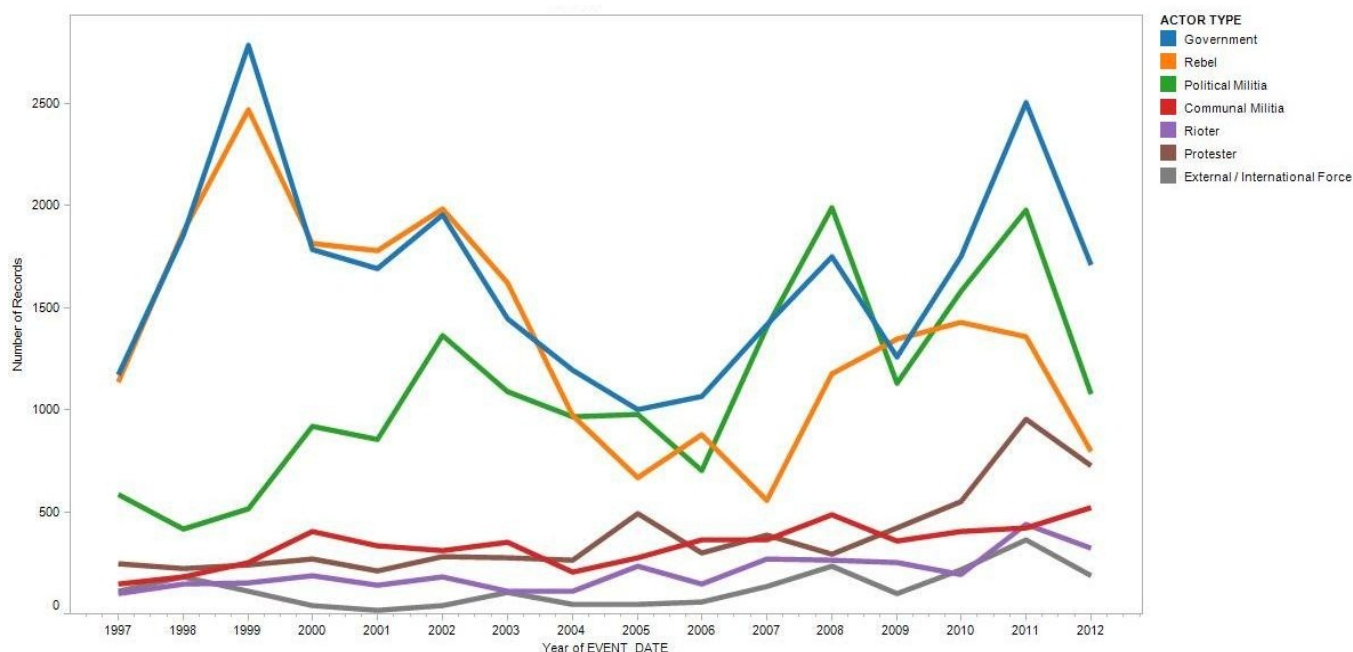

Figure 12: Violent activity by actor type, all countries, 1997 - Jun 2012.
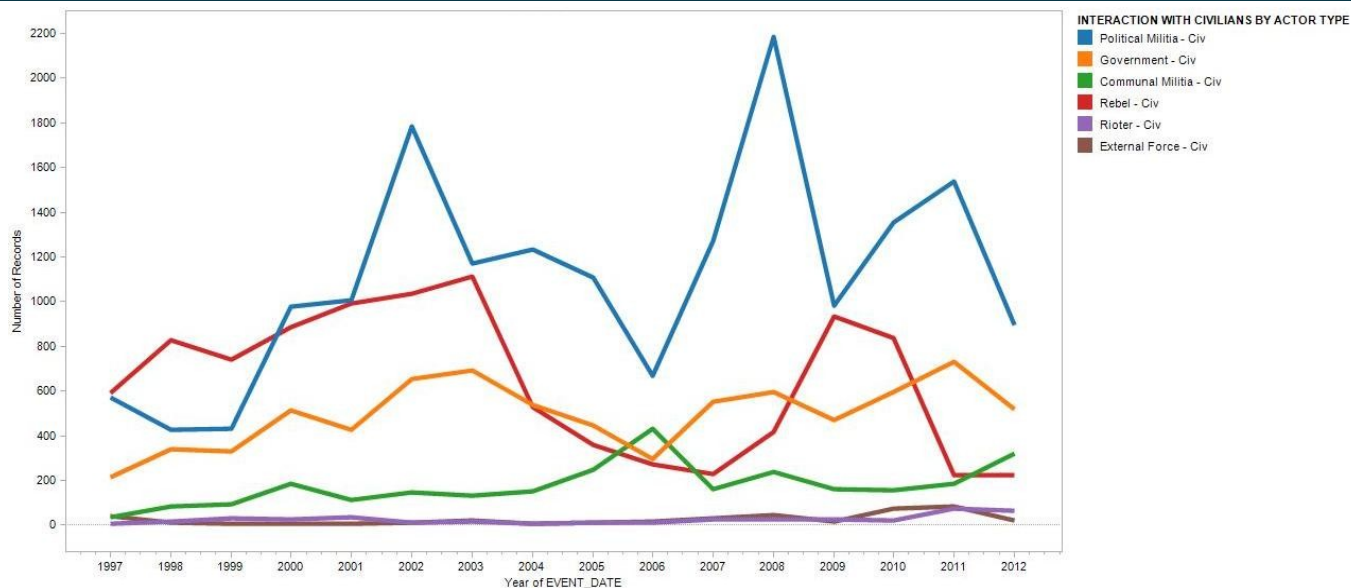
Figure 13: Interactions with civilians by actor type, all countries, 1997 - Jun 2012.

A similar shift has occurred in the groups which engage with civilians in conflict settings. While in 1997, this was primarily rebels followed by militia groups, this has since shifted to militia groups in primary position, followed by government forces, communal militias, and rebels thereafter (*see* Figure 13).

Sources

The information in this issue of ACLED *Conflict Trends* was compiled from a variety of sources. Sources include ACLED data, compiled from local, regional, national and continental news reports, NGO reports, and Africa-focused news reports integrated to supplement daily media reporting. Additional sources include *Africa Confidential* (Af Con), *Africa Research Bulletin* (ARB), media outlets, and reports from the NGO Safety Programme (NSP), specifically concerning Somalia. Further information on sources, coding procedures and data can be found online at www.acleddata.com/data.

Forthcoming special topics

Forthcoming issues of ACLED *Conflict Trends* will include thematic topics of interest. These will include: Islamist Threats across the Continent; Rioting and Protesting Growing; Unidentified Armed Groups; Sources of Conflict Data and Hidden Conflict; Election Violence.
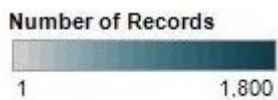

Number of Records

1   1,800

Figure 14: Violence event records, all countries, Jan - Jun 2012.