

CONFLICT TRENDS (NO. 13):

REAL-TIME ANALYSIS OF AFRICAN POLITICAL VIOLENCE, APRIL 2013

This issue of ACLED *Conflict Trends* marks a year since ACLED began publishing monthly updates summarising and analysing real-time data on conflict in the African continent. Past issues of *Conflict Trends* are available online at acleddata.com where analysis has included regional conflict trends, the highest violence states at present and in historical perspective, and states displaying unique or paradigmatic violence profiles. Special issue topics have included the urbanization of conflict, electoral violence, violent Islamist groups in Sub-Saharan Africa, and profiles of some of the most dominant violent groups including Boko Haram and Al Shabaab.

This issue of *Conflict Trends* focuses on recent developments in **Central African Republic (CAR)**, **Kenya**, **Mali**, **Nigeria** and **South Sudan**. The special focus section this month provides a conceptual and methodological overview of ACLED terminology and categorisation of violence, and its relevance to the analysis and understanding of discrete patterns and dynamics of conflict.

Elsewhere on the continent, violence declined in **Sudan** after a period of relatively elevated conflict there, as in **Namibia** after a period of unrest. Conflict escalated in **Egypt**, while levels remained largely unchanged in **DR-Congo**, **Zimbabwe** and **Somalia**.



Decreasing Ongoing Escalating

Conflict trajectory, March 2013

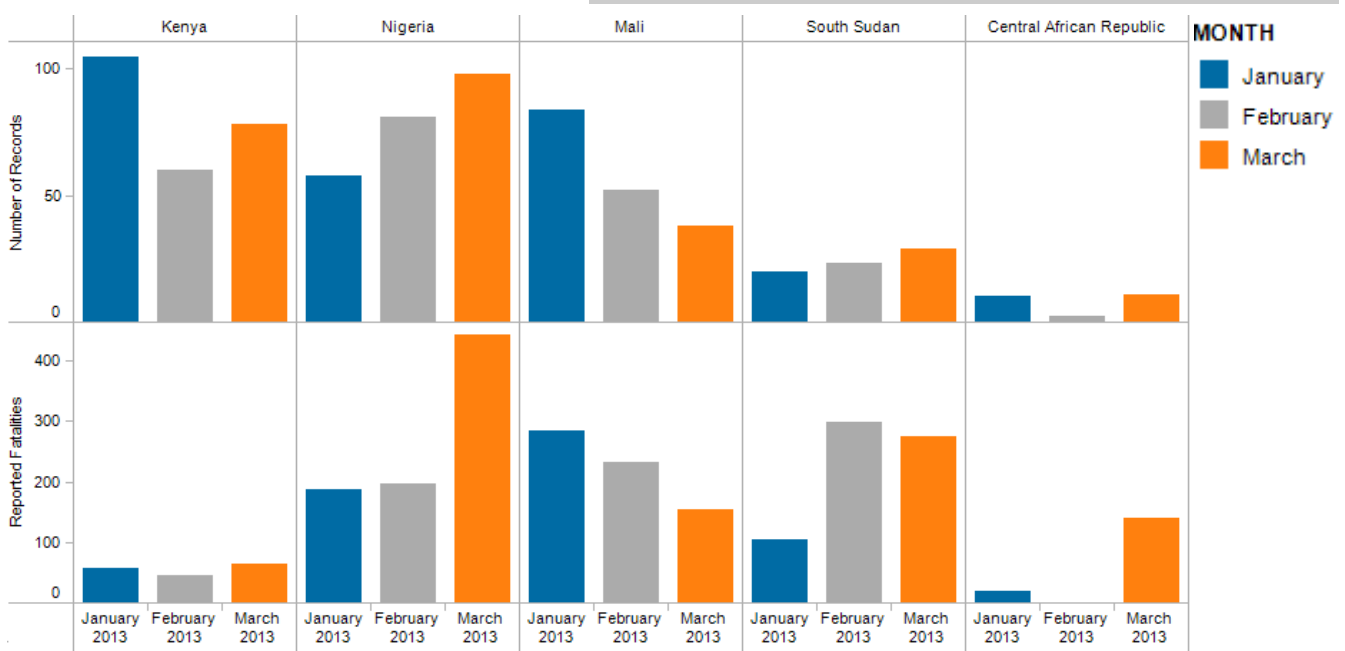


Figure 1: Conflict Events and Reported Fatalities, January - March 2013.

Central African Republic

Events in the Central African Republic took a dramatic turn in March, as the Libreville power-sharing deal collapsed and, on Sunday 24th March, the Séléka Rebel Coalition seized control of the Central African Republic capital, Bangui. As the president Bozize fled CAR for Cameroon, the general of the Séléka, Michel Djotodjia, declared himself the new state leader and outlined plans to run the country until elections in 2016. Meanwhile, a summit of the Economic Community of Central African States in Ndjamena decided that Djotodjia wouldn't be recognised as president, and that elections must be organised as soon as possible.

The developments took place two months after the signing of the Libreville peace agreement between Bozize's government and Séléka, and three months months after Séléka's first offensive. That mediation resulted in a substantial change to the government including integration of opposition parties (notably Nicolas Tiangaye) and members of the Séléka. The rebel coalition comes mainly from the Northeast of CAR, a Muslim-majority region,

characterized by the International Crisis Group as "geographically isolated, historically marginalized and almost stateless," and is supplemented by military power from Chad mercenary forces.

The Libreville Agreement was broken after the Séléka accused the government of not respecting the provisions of the peace pact (e.g. not freeing their prisoners and the presence of foreign armies such as South African troops in CAR). However, both sides failed to respect the agreement: Séléka was still present in seven towns although they were supposed to be quartered in three (see Figure 2).

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The offensive in December mainly consisted of non-fatal actions (e.g. looting). In the more recent March offensive, Séléka engaged in battles with the military forces of CAR and the international force MICOPAX. This use of violence through a clustered strategy brought the rebels to Bangui. But after the coup they are using a reverse strategy to overcome the local resistance in places such as Mbkaïé, Bouar, Paoua and Nola, where they had established headquarters.

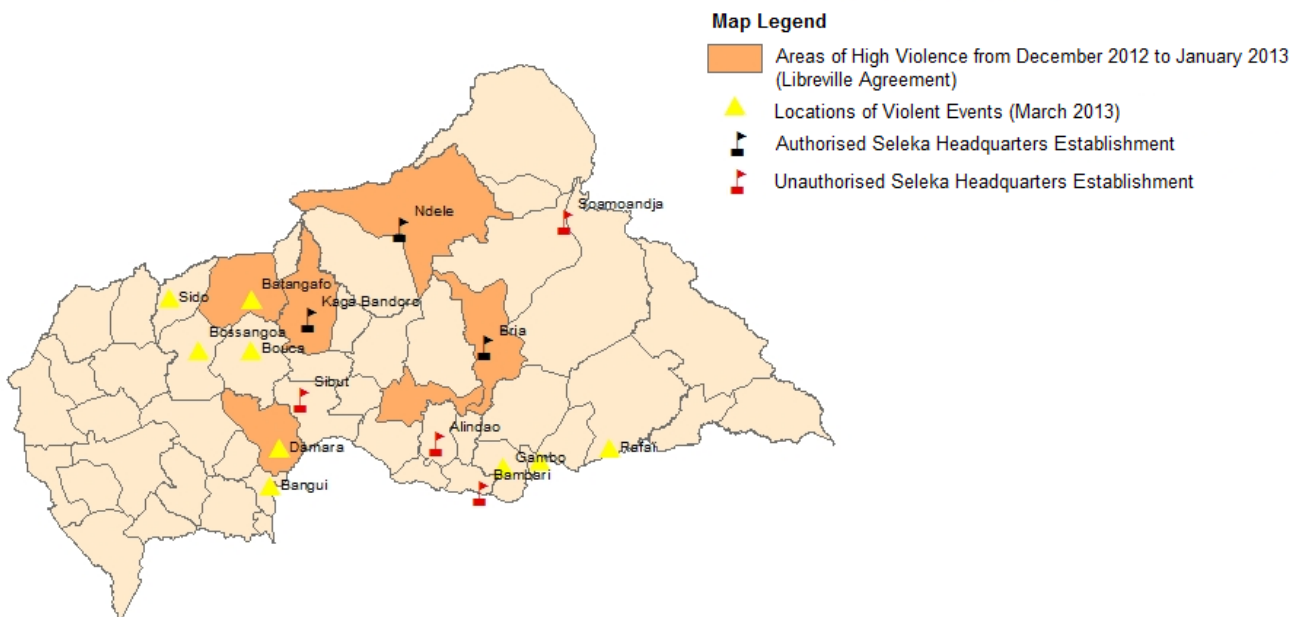


Figure 2: Map of Areas and Locations of Violence and Séléka Headquarters, CAR, Dec 2012 - Mar 2013. 2

Central African Republic

The security situation in Bangui is described by NGO’s and UN agencies as unpredictable, with widespread looting and sporadic gunfire. Overall 120 fatalities have been reported. The humanitarian situation has been worsening as a direct consequence of the coup as insecurity is rife, and areas of Bangui do not have electricity or running water. Concerns over food security are increasing as there is little access to seeds and agricultural inputs in markets and the borders have been closed. There is an overall decrease in humanitarian access in places controlled by the Séléka, especially after Bangassou attack: only 33% of those are reportedly accessible, while the UN estimates that 1.5 million of people have been affected by that crisis since December 2012. At a regional level, refugees started to arrive in Cameroon (5000), in Chad and in Democratic Republic of Congo (29000), for a total of 175 000 displaced persons.

The former French colony has witnessed considerable violence over the past few years (see Figure 3). It is mostly known internationally for the presence of the infamous LRA in its territory, and the – now suspended – international campaign against its militants. In this respect, conflict in CAR has always been more significant as a dimension of regional conflict, than in its own right, and these latest developments are no

The former French colony has witnessed considerable violence in recent years. However, conflict in CAR has always been more significant as a dimension of regional conflict than in its own right. These latest developments are no different.

exception: questions have arisen also about the origin of the arms used by the Séléka, with some pointing to Darfur and South Sudan as the sources. Similarly, violence which erupted in the west, on the Cameroonian border (between a faction of the Séléka and the Democratic Front of the Central African People) under the command of the rebel chief Abdoulaye Miskine) is cause for concern.

However, controversy in CAR’s southern neighbour about its involvement in the conflict has garnered the most media headlines. The deaths of 13 South African soldiers in fighting in Bangui have sparked yet another crisis in that country, with the African National Congress rejecting ‘with contempt’ reports in the *Mail & Guardian* (28 March 2013) that military forces were in the country protecting party business interests – allegations they likened to disrespecting the graves of the fallen soldiers (anc.org.za, 28 March 2013). Shortly thereafter, President Zuma attended the memorial service to the troops killed in Bangui, and sparked further controversy by implying that journalists and others questioning

the reasons for South Africa’s military presence in CAR were out of line, stating ‘The problem in South Africa is that everybody wants to run the country.’ (*Mail & Guardian*, 2 April 2013)

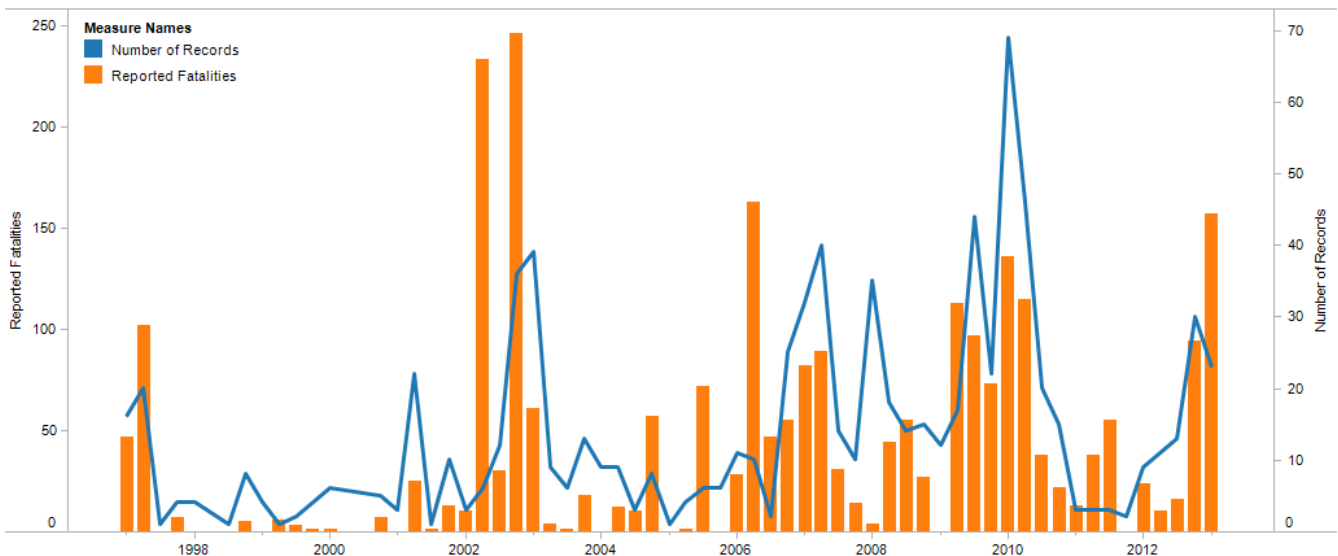


Figure 3: Conflict Events and Reported Fatalities, CAR, 1997 - March 2013 (by Year-Quarter).

Kenya

Conflict in Kenya rose slightly in March over February levels (see Figure 4). However, concerns over the possibility of intense violent conflict surrounding the elections were not realized, in spite of political contestation over the outcome. Last month's issue of *Conflict Trends* provided in-depth analysis of patterns of electoral violence in Kenya, and is available at acleddata.com.

Over the course of the rest of the month, political violence was highest in Coast, Nairobi, Rift Valley and North-Eastern provinces. In many ways, the spatial distribution of violence in these distinct areas highlights the discrete dynamics of conflict ongoing there.

Coastal violence is dominated by the re-emergence of the Mombasa Republican Council as a politically violent force, and one which has increased activity significantly in recent months. Calls for secession from Kenya based on ethnoregional identities and claims of socio-economic marginalisation of the region are a particular concern where they overlap with religious narratives employed by Muslim-identified militants in the volatile region.

Violence in the densely populated Nairobi area reflects multiple overlapping, cross-cutting and diffuse faultlines of conflict in the country: expressly political violence was

manifest in (albeit relatively limited) riots and clashes in response to the electoral outcome; while structural issues around institutional weakness and transparency are evident in the number of discrete actors who clash with or engage in attacks on police forces regularly in the capital.

Rift Valley province experienced higher levels of communal violence between ethnic and communal militias in severely under-developed and typically isolated territory. Meanwhile, violence in North-Eastern province is characterized by a higher rate of unidentified armed group attacks on police and other government authority representatives (including the Kenyan Revenue Authority in March), which many analysts have attributed to Al Shabaab, aligned operatives or sympathizers, motivated at least in part by Kenya's military presence in neighbouring Somalia.

These characterisations above are necessarily somewhat simplistic, and obscure some of the variation in violent actions which take place across Kenya. However, the fact remains that much of Kenya's violence is not geographically overlapping, and the drivers of different types of violence are determined at least in part by the geography - spatial, political, social and economic - of the Kenyan state.

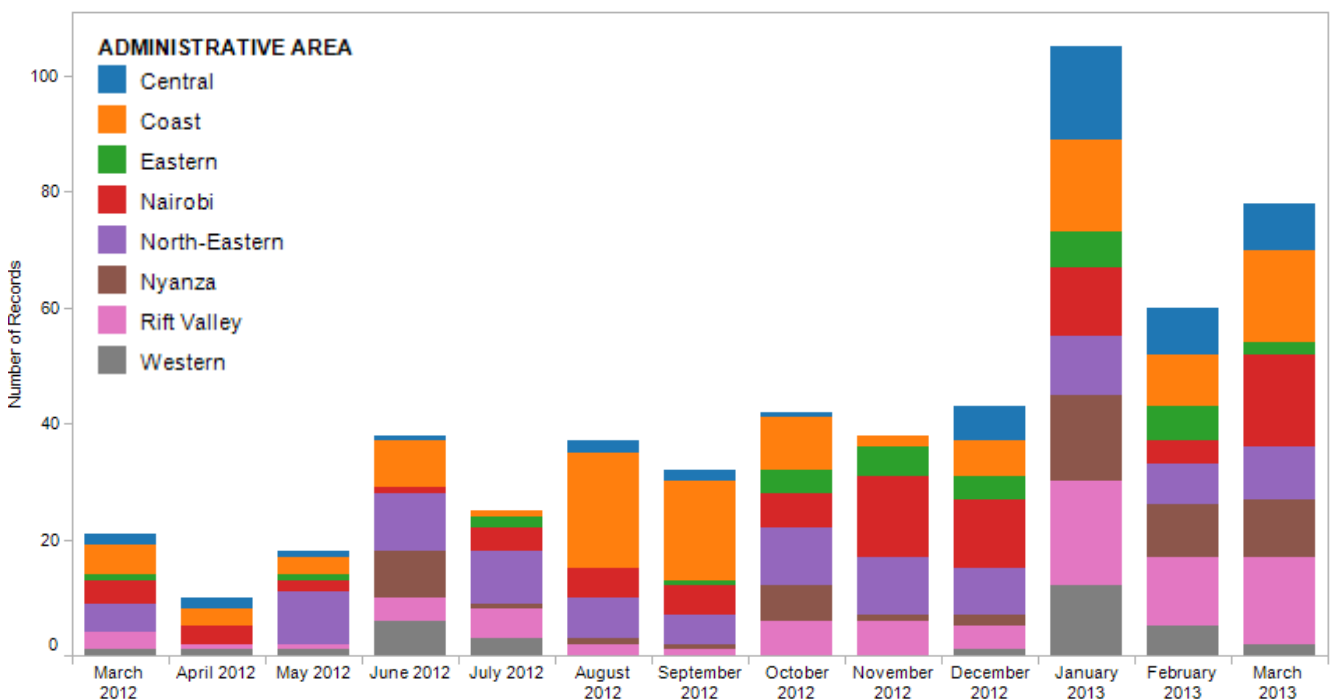


Figure 4: Conflict Events by Administrative Area, Kenya, March 2012 - March 2013.

Mali

One year after the coup in Mali which set in motion a chain of events which would culminate in overlapping and at once cross-cutting crises in the country, and patterns there is evidence that conflict levels are finally in decline, both in terms of events and fatalities (see Figure 5). In spite of this overall pattern of falling conflict levels, rates of violence against civilians remained stable in March, while associated fatalities increased, with Ansar Dine, AQIM and MNLAs perpetrating most of these attacks.

French authorities reconfirmed their commitment this month to a significant troop reduction beginning in April, and aiming to at least halve the number of forces by the time scheduled elections take place in July, although plans to keep a 'permanent' force in-country were still being formed at the time of writing (*France24*, 6 March 2013;

Reuters, 5 April 2013).

This will prove challenging for the establishment of security and order: while levels of conflict are falling, analysis of interaction terms shows that the vast majority of fighting has been led by international forces in 2013; with state forces and rebel interactions constituting a smaller proportion of overall conflict.

An EU military training mission also began in Mali, seeking to address some of the capacity issues which limit the Malian forces, but it is small and – arguably – inadequate: it is premised on the same understanding that led to international troop deployment in the first instance, and has scattered militants in the vast country, though still fails to address drivers of conflict and civilian vulnerability in the marginalized north.

One year after the coup in Mali which set in motion a complex and multifaceted deterioration in security across the country, violence levels are falling, but remain high and disproportionately affect civilians.

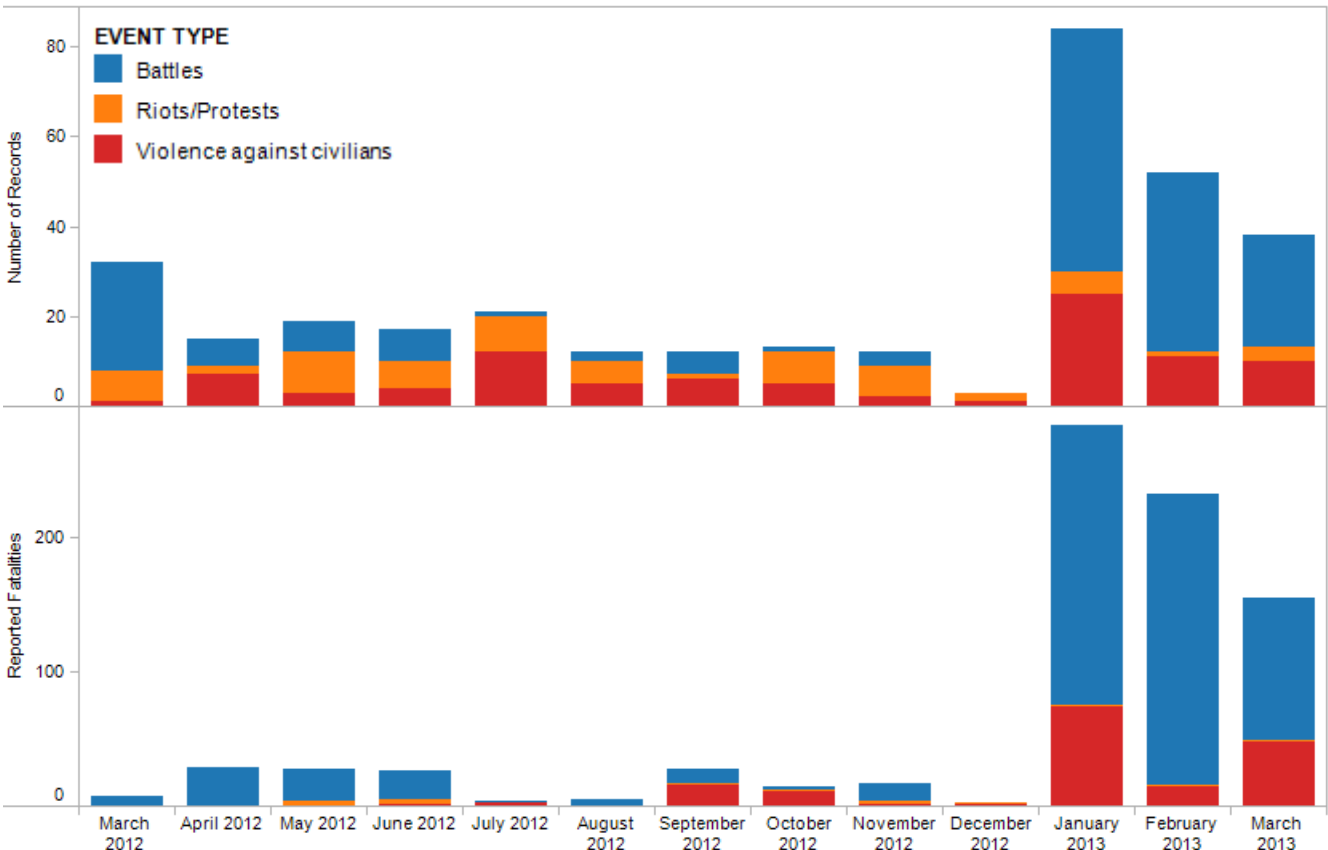


Figure 5: Conflict Events by Event Type, Mali, March 2012 - March 2013.

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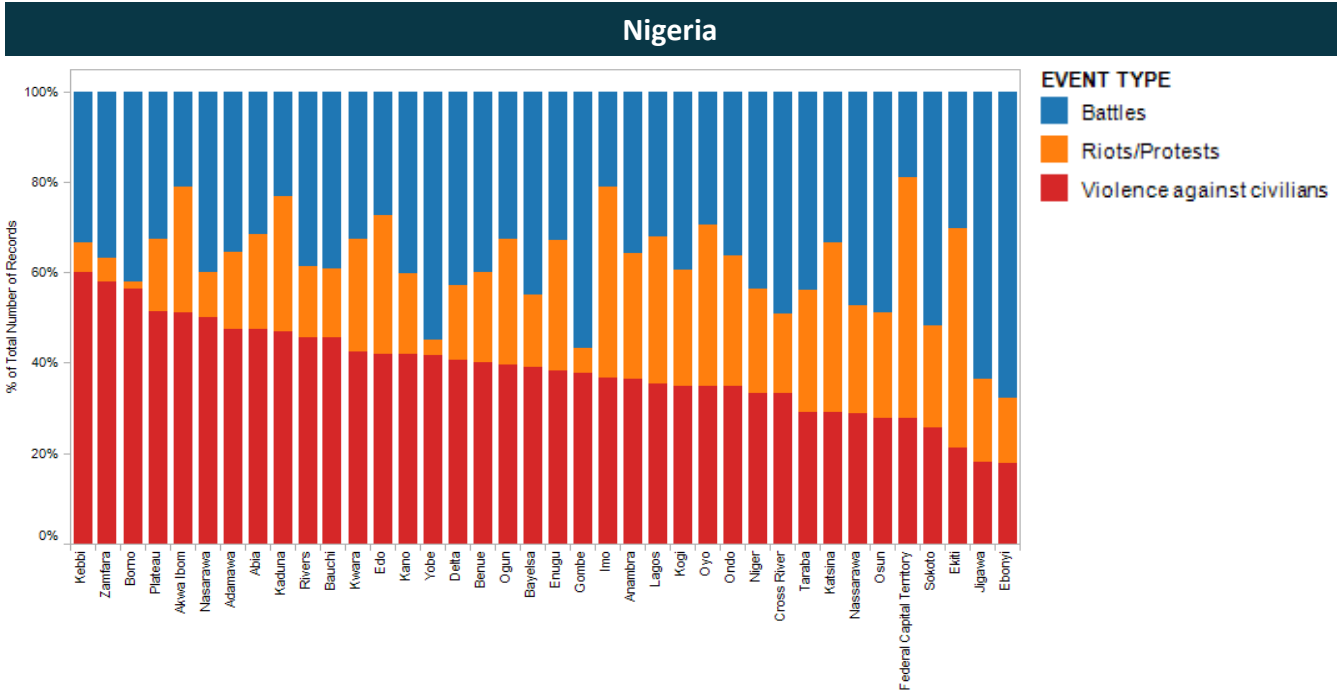


Figure 6: Violence against Civilians as a Proportion of Overall Events by State, Nigeria, all years.

Conflict increased in Nigeria for the third month in a row in March, with a particular increase in events involving civilian targeting. Previous *Conflict Trends* have profiled general patterns of violence in Nigeria and disaggregation of violence regionally and by actor. Here, we focus on highlighting the breakdown of violence by event type at state level: Figure 6 orders state by the proportion of vio-

lence against civilians as a share of overall violence. The highest rates are found in Kebbi, Zamfara and Borno, all located in the northern region. Figure 7 shows absolute numbers of events of violence against civilians. In this representation, Borno, Delta and Lagos witness the highest absolute rates of violence. In absolute counts, population size will influence the overall rates.

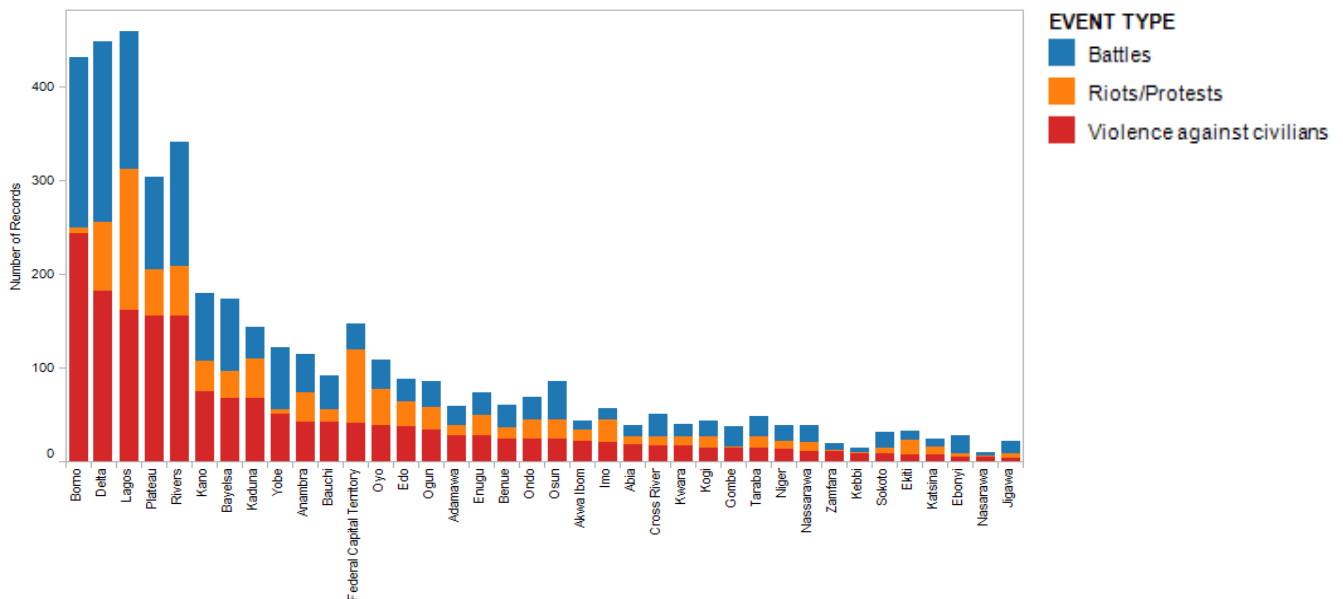


Figure 7: Violence against Civilians in Absolute Terms as Share of Overall Events by State, Nigeria, all years.

South Sudan

South Sudan witnessed an escalation in conflict in March for the second month in a row, with a simultaneous rise in fatality levels.

Conflict has been concentrated in Jonglei, where the military has engaged in several battles with Yau Yau rebels, while chronic communal conflict flared up in the area; while low-level confrontations with the Sudanese military in the border state of Northern Bahr el Ghazal raised tensions.

With the exception of sustained engagement with Yau Yau rebels, many of the other conflict events are part of diffuse and distinct incidents of violence: in spite of the extensive international attention on its relationship with its northern neighbour, South Sudan is not a conflict-affected country facing a singular, cohesive security crisis.

The deterioration of security conditions, the concomitant human costs, and the destabilising effects on the economy and politics speak to broader and

deeper issues of structural weakness and institutionalised violence.

In this way, South Sudan is a paradigmatic example of the post-war – but not post-conflict – state. Violence has remained elevated in the country since the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005, and gaining full independence from Sudan in 2011 has done little to reduce this (see Figure 8).

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Breaking down these patterns into event types, it is not clear that any sustained transformation in event types and their share of overall violence has taken place: violence against civilians and battles continue to constitute relatively stable shares of the violence overall, though there has been a slight increase in riots/protests, in line with general trends on the continent.

These observed patterns point to the importance of divisions and fault lines within the country beyond the national / international conflict.

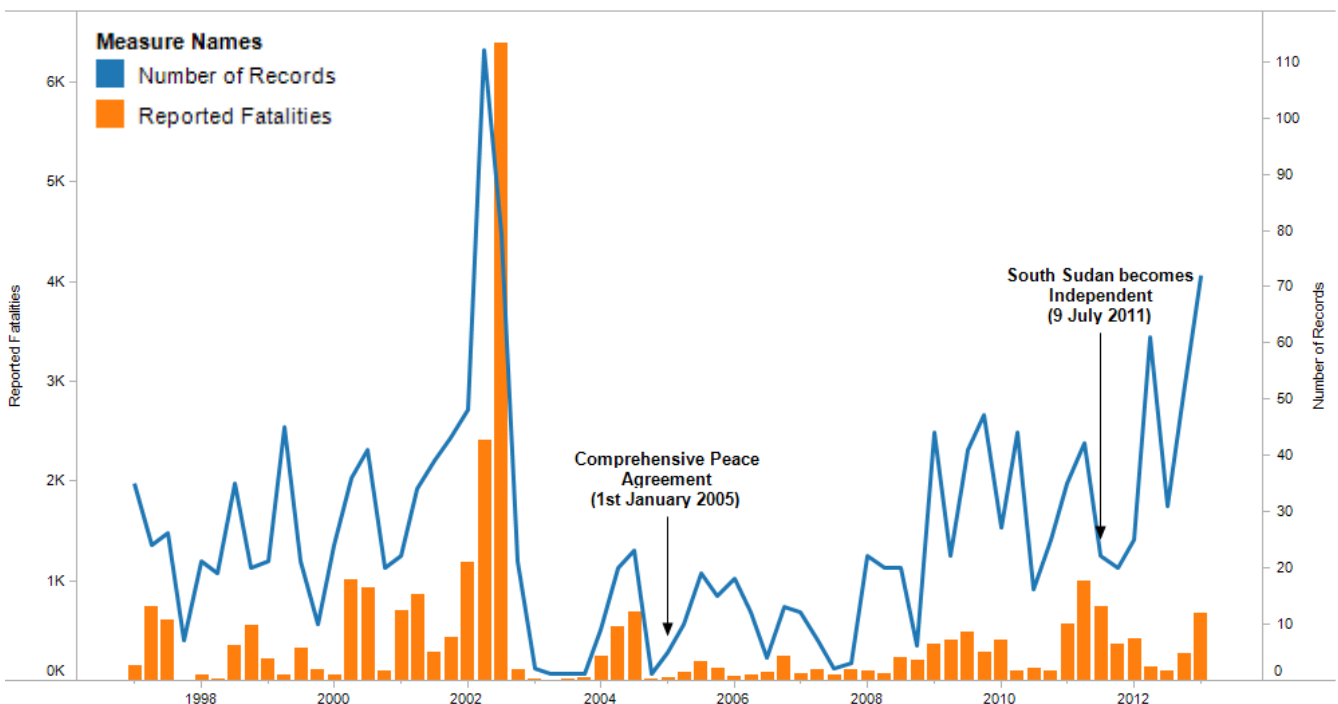


Figure 8: Conflict Events and Reported Fatalities, South Sudan / Southern Sudan, 1997 - March 2013.

Special Focus: Types of Conflict

ACLED trend reports often present real-time information by ‘conflict type’. ACLED distinguishes conflict events in multiple ways in order to enhance its use and highlight various components of each datum. Users can breakdown ACLED data by **actors** (specific name), **event action types** (e.g. battles, violence against civilians) or **interactions** (actor types), location, time periods, etc. One form of breakdown that is particularly useful is by ‘**conflict type**’ that aggregates events into *civil wars, political militia activity, communal violence, rioting and protesting* through the use of interactions. This form allows for users to see the change in how frequent, lethal, widespread, and volatile types of conflict are over Africa, and also compare types to each other.

The chosen ‘**conflict types**’ represent the most common, non-state forms of political violence on the continent: from 1997-2012, civil wars represent over 35% of the overall data; political militia events approximately 30%, communal events 7%, rioting 6%, protesting 10%, and other 11.5%.¹ There is also considerable volatility in types over time (see Figure 9). Government violence is often included as a reference category in the graphs and descriptions below.

These forms exist on a spectrum of political violence that can have multiple dimensions including the overall impacts and consequences of conflict, the ability to upset national stability, the threat to civilians, the longevity of the movement, the political salience/agendas of activity,

and the activity, lethality of the constituent groups (see Figure 2 & 3). Although existing on a several continuums, these forms can be considered non-substitutable, and therefore represent the politically violent expression of distinct groups considering their specific motivations and opportunities.

Conflict categories are developed in a three-step process. The first is to situate active political groups into ‘actors’ whose characteristics are pre-defined by ACLED. The second is create an interaction term for each dyadic and monadic event type, and the final step is aggregating different interaction types into categories of conflict. We review these steps below to explain how we extract civil war, political militia types etc. from the data.

Step 1: Actor Designations

‘Valid’ actors within ACLED are ‘politically’ salient and/or victims of violence. To that end, each conflict event contains named actors (e.g. Boko Haram, Military Forces of Nigeria, etc.); those actors are classified as government, rebels, political militias (i.e. private armies), communal groups, rioters, protestors, civilians and external governments. The criteria for inclusion into these classifications are as follows:

1. *Governments* are defined as internationally recognized

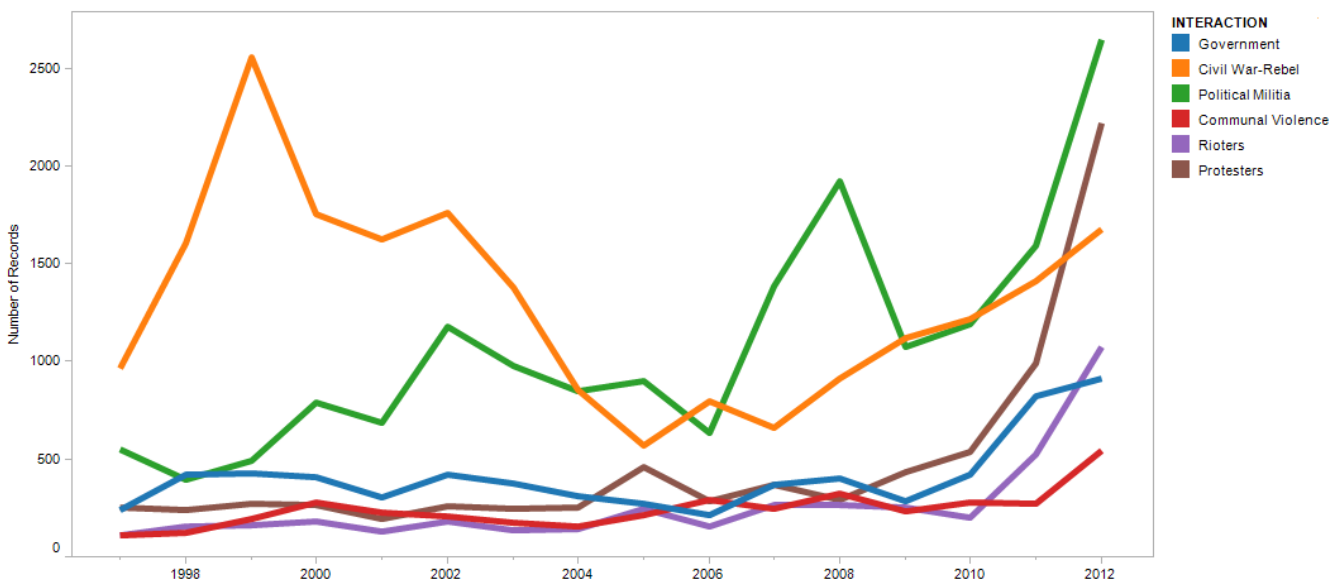


Figure 9: Conflict Event by Type, all countries, 1997 - March 2013.

1. These include actions that do not include any of the above actors but mainly represent governments (11.5% of government actions with themselves, other external parties, civilians or non-violent activity towards citizens). This figure is skewed as the role of militaries in rebel, militia etc. activity is not aggregated into this.

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regimes in assumed control of a state, and militaries as forces of governments. The strength, capacity and policies of governments can vary widely from one regime to the next; ACLED designates governments by their leading regimes.

2. *Rebel groups* are political organizations whose goal is to counter and replace an established national governing regime by violent acts. These acts are direct challenges to national governments. Rebel groups have a stated political agenda for national power, are acknowledged beyond the ranks of immediate members, and use violence as their primary means to pursue political goals.

3. *Political Militias* are, effectively, private armies organized for a political purpose. Their goals are to change, manipulate, gain or prevent access to regional and national power, in terms of territorial dominance, elite position and dominance. Their activities therefore include contests between elite armies, attacks on supportive communities of opposition members, creation of localized instability to reaffirm dominance etc. The distinction between these groups and rebels is in their role towards national governments: militia activity is orientated towards altering political power to the benefit of their patrons within the confines of current regimes, whereas the goal of a rebel group is the replacement of a regime.

These groups are typically supported, armed by, and/or allied with a political elite and act towards a goal defined by these elites or larger political movements. ACLED's definition of organized political and private armies include those operating in conjunction or in alliance with a recognized government, political elite, and rebel organization or opposition group. Often governments will use militias to supplement to government power (e.g. Sudanese Janjaweed; Ivory Coast's 'Young Patriots'), as do rebel groups for the same reason (e.g. DR-Congo's supplementary militias commit high rates of violence against civilians), yet political parties often have a militia arm (e.g. Kenya's Banana Coalition) as do political elites generally (e.g. Nigerian governors support of Bakassi Boys).

Despite being linked to different supportive elites, these groups can also be categorized by identity mantles broadly: members are often recruited and working towards the goals of ethnically, regionally or religiously defined elite and group (e.g. Kikuyu based private armies, Muslim private armies etc.), as this reflects the broader African political context. Political militia groups are typically composed by members of large, politically salient ethno-regional communities.²

2. In some cases, an 'unidentified armed group' perpetrates political violence; the default assumption in ACLED is that such groups can be considered militias and their activity coded under 'unidentified armed group' (UAG). This is for two reasons: in comparing UAG groups to all others, the breakdown of activity, spatial patterns, inter-group relationships and targets, events perpetrated by UAGs are closely aligned with local and national political militias; the second is that it is often beneficial to political elites and their patrons to remain 'unidentified' in sensitive situations.

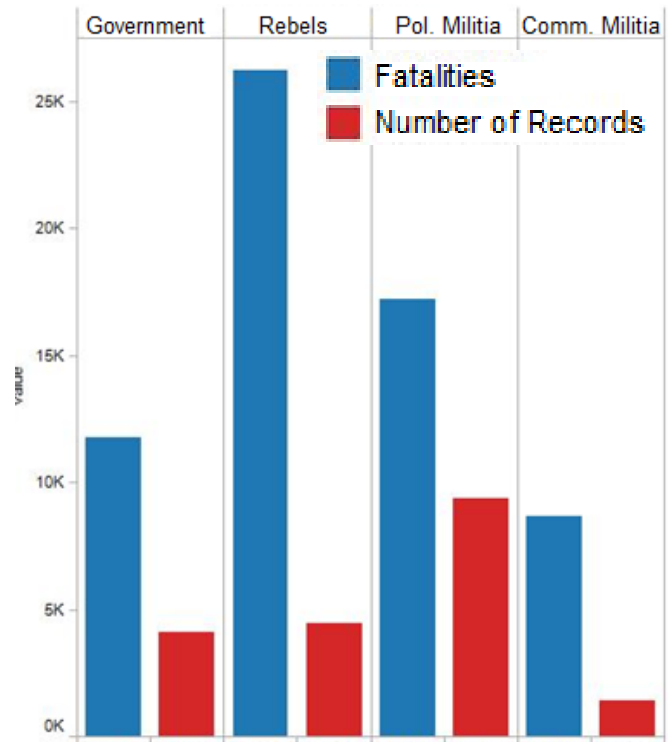


Figure 10: Violence against Civilians (Records and Fatalities) by Actor Type.

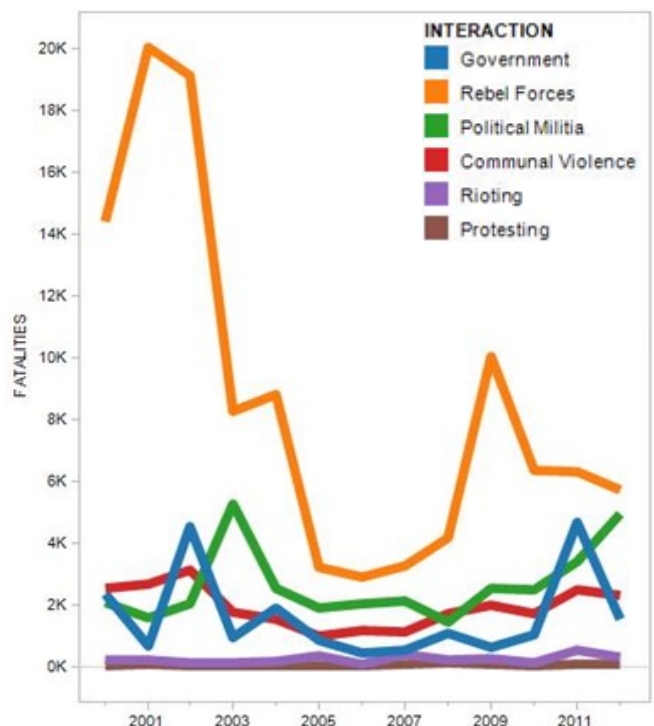


Figure 10: Fatalities by Actor Type, 1997 - 2012.

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4. *Communal Militias* are locally bound groups that are defined either solely by ethnicity, religion, or community. They are realized as long-term policing units, such as those common among Somali clans; raiding clans, such as those common across pastoral communities; or ‘Muslim’, ‘Christian’ groups that perform acts of violence against each other. The goal of these groups is often for the defense of localized territories, livelihoods, community wealth, etc. and these groups are often dominated by small, peripheral communities across Africa.

5. *Rioters* are violent, spontaneous groups of civilians. Their activities are coded as riots if the spontaneous civilian actors become violent against people or property.

6. *Protesters* are non-violent spontaneous groups of demonstrators. However, should violence be used against protesters, this is considered violence against civilians. These groups are either the direct victims of armed violence or are recognized groups protesting peacefully.

7. *Civilians* are unarmed, unaffiliated, non-political actors who are, in terms of ACLED events, exclusively victims of political violence.

8. *‘Other’* actors include hired mercenaries, security firms and their employees, UN or external forces. They are noted by their name and actions.

In conclusion, all actors who use violence or protest for political means have an official name, a stated political purpose and often an articulated agenda. Organizations are cohesive and are not assembled for single events, with the exception of riots and protests. Further, the events in which they are involved must be connected to each other as a means to achieve a larger political purpose.

Step 2: Interactions

Interactions denote how the ‘types’ of actors listed above interact with one another. As almost all conflict events (excluding some instances of one-sided protesting and rioting) involve two or more actors engaging with one

another, the classifications above can be further broken down to reflect the dyadic nature of violence. For example, within the classification of rebel violence, the targets of rebel activity can be further distinguished between government forces, militias or civilians, each sub-category of which gives further insight into the nature, patterns and dynamics of violence.

Categories of violence - which have hitherto been under-acknowledged in academic and policy research - are integral to developing an understanding of violence in Africa. By concentrating policy and academic attention on only one type of conflict (civil wars), other dynamics have been neglected.

Differences in Activity

The breakdown of activity by actor type is possible in multiple ways. For the purposes of displaying the variation in activity and interactions, two dimensions are highlighted here. The first is by event type activity:

Governments mainly engage in actions against rebels (41%), political militias (20%), communal militias (2%), rioters and protestors (12%) and civilians (16%), battles with other military forces (3%) or internally (3%). These figures can change radically if we look across all skewed as the focus here is on non-state political group activity; therefore the actions of governments with rebels, militias etc. is

aggregated into those other categories, and not into the ‘government’ one.

The proportion of events involving governments and other inter or intra government actors account for 24% of all events (specifically internal ‘mutinous’ forces is 10%). As mentioned above, approximately 60% are directed towards civilians.

Rebels engage in battles as 66% of their total activity (57% without territorial transfers to or from governments, almost 10% results in exchanges of territory); 24% of rebel activity is directed towards civilians, 10% is non-violent (e.g. headquarter establishment etc.).

52% of all rebel activity is violent engagement with government forces; 8% is violence against other non-state actors (2% other rebels, 6% militias); and 9% is in engagement with ‘other’ actors (e.g. peacekeepers, governments of other states etc.).

Proportionally, 38% of all political militias activity are battles; and 53% is directed against civilians. 8% of their ac-

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tivity is non-violent. Almost one-third of their total activity is with governments, 10% of activity is against other non-state actors, and the vast majority (54%) is against civilians.

Communal groups engage mainly in battles (57%) and violence against civilians (40%). However, a small proportion of activity is against government forces (16%), while 41% is with other communal groups, and 40% is against civilians of opposition ethnic communities.

Finally, rioters and protesters exclusively engage in riots and protests, respectively; 48% of all riots include government forces in some capacity while 17% of all riots involve state forces.

Hence, these types of conflict have different profiles with underscore the variation in group goals and overall impacts to national stability and civilian safety (see Table 1).

Step 3: Conflict Types

The final step is to designate how different interaction types—from militaries vs. rebels, to political militias vs. civilians—can be aggregated into different conflict types. To that end, a simple strategy is followed:

Civil War: all activities that involve ‘rebels’ are aggregated into a ‘broad’ Civil War category. Those activities that are rebels vs. govt and rebels vs. civilians represent the vast majority of that activity, and alone are a ‘narrow’ definition. However, rebels do engage with a range of other

actors, include other rebel groups, militia groups and intermittently with communal groups, rioters and protesters.

Political Militia Activity: all activities that involve ‘political militias/private armies’ are aggregated into this category for a ‘broad’ definition. This activity has a maximum of xx and minimum of xx throughout the conflict periods.

Communal Activity: all activities that involve local, community based ‘communal’ actors.

Rioting: All activity that involves rioters is aggregated for this category.

Protesting: All activity that involves protest groups is aggregated for this category.

Are these breakdowns useful?

Many researchers explore how conflicts differ. Previous attempts to disaggregate and distinguish different types has largely broken down civil wars by goals (‘revolutionary’ or ‘separatist’) (e.g. Buhaug, 2006); communal or ‘livelihood’ violence by potential environmental triggers (Straus, 2011; Raleigh, 2010; Raleigh & Kniveton, 2012); and ‘warlord’ violence by its high rate of criminal activity and violence against civilians by groups contesting state power (see Reno, 1998; Bates 2008).

Violence can also be distinguished by its motive: the greed versus grievance literature proposes that ‘sons of the soil’

Type	Interaction Proportion with Governments	Interaction Proportion with Civilians	Interaction Proportion with other Non-state groups	Total Proportion of Activity from 1997-2012
Government	6%	17%	65%	11.5%*
Rebel	52%	24%	8%	35%
Political Militia	30%	54%	10%	30%
Communal Militia	16%	40%	41%	6.5%
Rioters	48%	n/a	n/a	6%
Protesters	17%	n/a	n/a	10%

This figure is considering all government activity outside of that with all other non-state actors

Table 1: Breakdown of Activity Group

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contests (Fearon, 2006) differ from those whose aim is to control the state and access rents and resources (Collier & Hoeffler, 2002; 2004).

Finally, recent research suggests that a key source of heterogeneity in civil wars is the technology of rebellion, which itself is a function of the relative balance of power between opponents (Kalyvas & Balcells, 2010). Yet, violence types may be reflective of support and retribution (Raleigh, 2012), funding by resources or public support (Weinstein, 2007); distinguished by the use of child soldiers or sexual violence (see Dixon, 2009 for a review).

These studies further our understanding about how specific forms of violence are produced, but no explanation yet can offer distinctions between the forms of violence, how those forms are deliberately shaped by groups, and strategically scaled on the local, regional and national levels.

Further, in conflict analysis, there is an almost exclusive focus on civil war. The categorization presented here broadens the base of inquiry into political conflict through distinguishing forms of violence by main actors. While the function of political violence is to secure resources, territory, access to power etc., there are clear differences in rates of activity, constitutive actions, and spatial patterns between rebel based civil wars, political militia campaigns and communal contests. Each conflict agent’s goals are situated within a spatial scale, which in turn shapes the strategy and form of violence that emerges within a space. These categories – which have been hitherto under-acknowledged in academic and policy research – are integral to developing an understanding of violence in Africa. They are a function of the distinct and discrete drivers of alternative forms of conflicts within and across states: by concentrating policy and academic attention on only one type of conflict (civil wars), other dynamics have been neglected. This has a direct impact on the quality, relevance and efficacy of policies for conflict mitigation and reduction.

The function of political violence is to secure resources, territory and access to power, but there are clear differences in activity, constitutive actions and spatial patterns.

ACLED has been producing monthly *Conflict Trends* reports since April 2013. Each report has summarised and analysed real-time and historical conflict data for the African continent, focusing on countries, regions and thematic focus topics. Below is a list of the previous special topics ACLED has produced, which are available for at acleddata.com along with dynamic maps of African conflict, analysis on trends, links to published research, and published data itself.

Special Focus	Date
Unidentified Armed Groups	August 2012
Sources of Data and Reporting	September 2012
Islamist Militias and Rebel Groups across Africa	October 2012
Boko Haram	November 2012
Al Shabaab	December 2012
2012 in Review	January 2013
Electoral Violence	February 2013
Urbanization of Violence	March 2013

About the Armed Conflict Location & Event Dataset

ACLED collects real-time data on a monthly basis for select high-risk states in Africa. Citations refer to International Crisis Group (ICG) African Confidential (*AfCon*); Agence France Presse (*AFP*); Reuters News Service; BBC News; *African Arguments*; and various national news media outlets. Further information on sources of data, coding practices and archived data from ACLED Versions 2 (1997 - 2011) and 1 (1997 - 2009/2010) can be found online at www.acleddata.com/data.

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