Welcome to the May 2013 issue of ACLED *Conflict Trends*, providing analysis of both realtime monthly and historical conflict data in Africa for the development, policy and research communities.

Each month, ACLED researchers compile and publish realtime disaggregated event data on political violence in Africa, made available through our research partners at the **Climate Change and African Political Stability (CCAPS)**. Historical data is available at **acleddata.com** along with trends analysis, maps, previous issues of *Conflict Trends*, and descriptions of coding procedures, definitions and sources.

This month's issue looks at escalating conflict in **Ivory Coast, Libya** and **Nigeria** which have each seen high-profile violence this month. In addition, we present an overview of conflict in the **Darfur Region** of **Sudan**, a decade after war broke out there, with considerable human suffering continuing to affect populations and communities throughout the territory. Finally, we turn to the ongoing conflict in **Somalia**: in the wake of the London conference on Somalia, we interrogate the dominant media and political narrative that Somalia is on the road to recovery and reconstruction, shedding light on continuing patterns of violence and vulnerability in the Horn of Africa.
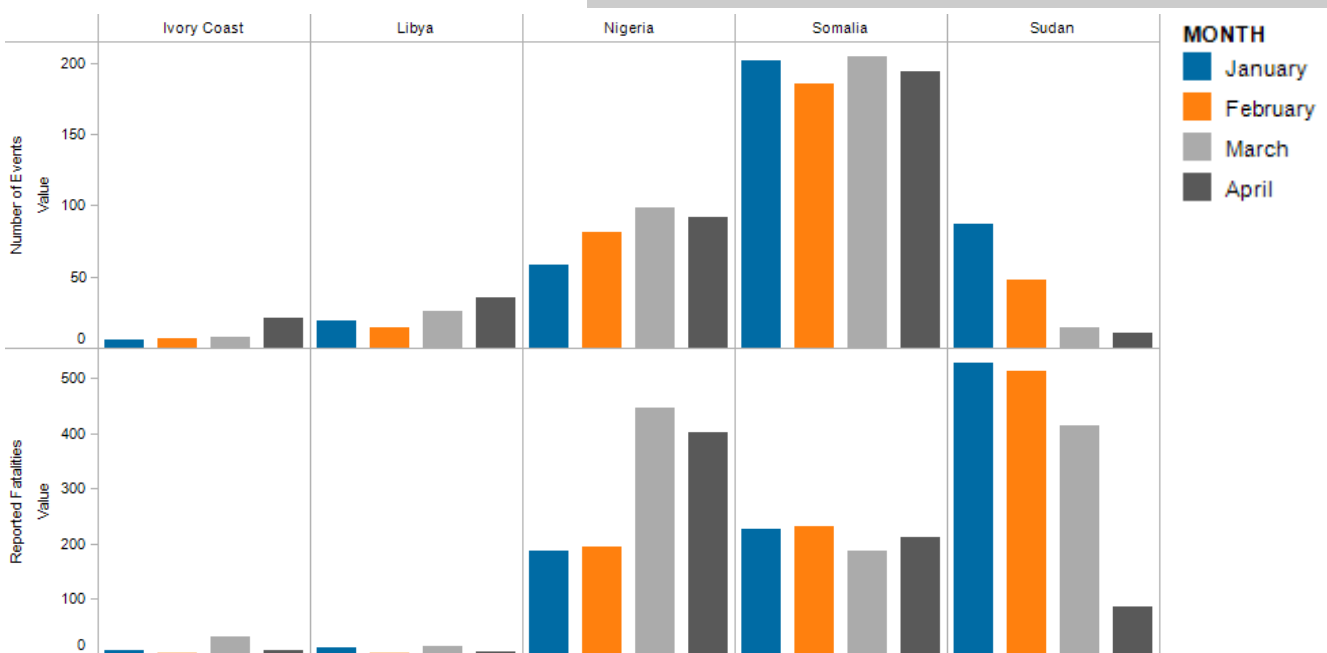

Decreasing   Ongoing
Warning   Escalating
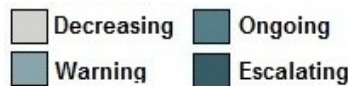
Conflict trajectory, April 2013

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

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Armed Conflict Location & Event Dataset

Ivory Coast

After a series of attacks in March, the western region of Ivory Coast is still witnessing pronounced volatility: more than a dozen of people have been killed and between 7000 and 8000 people have been displaced following the attacks in the department of Blolequin (OCHA, 2013), in addition to an estimated 45,000 people still displaced after the violence following the presidential election in 2010 (UNHCR, 2012).

The western region shares a border with Liberia and numerous pro-Gbagbo militias and Liberian mercenaries took part in the recent clashes in the region which are fuelled by ethnic rivalries, and disputes over land between the local population and Burkinabè refugees (*Africa Confidential*, 2013).

The western region is home to a third of the country's population, and several armed groups operating from here with forest and cross border bases. In response, the authorities have announced new security measures, including increasing military troops in the region, better equipment and the building of an additional police station.

The concern raised by many observers is that a military response is not enough, mainly because one branch of the

> **April saw a sharp increase in conflict activity in Ivory Coast, as rioting and clashes with police accompanied local elections. The level of violence is the highest witnessed in the country in the past year (*see* Figure 3).**
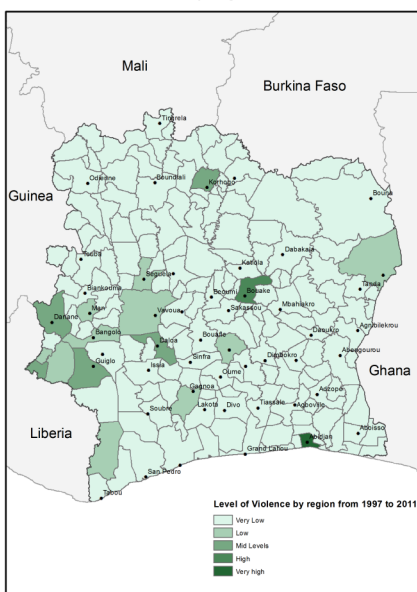
Front Populaire Ivoirien (FPI) of ex-president Gbagbo still directs its actions toward a violent overthrow of Ouattara. Yet, most of the western militias fought for current President Ouattara during the violent dispute following the 2010 elections (IRIN, 2013); while a few – including The Ivorian Movement for the Return of the We to the West (MIWRO) – are competing for local dominance, and have claimed responsibility the attacks of both Tuobly and Petit Guiglo villages. Geographic patterns of historical and contemporary violent conflict are displayed in Figure 2.

These militias are politically active and effective: after the Jeunesse du FPI set up youth delegations to travel around the country to encourage people not to participate in the local elections, turnout was only 36% for local and municipal elections on April 21th.
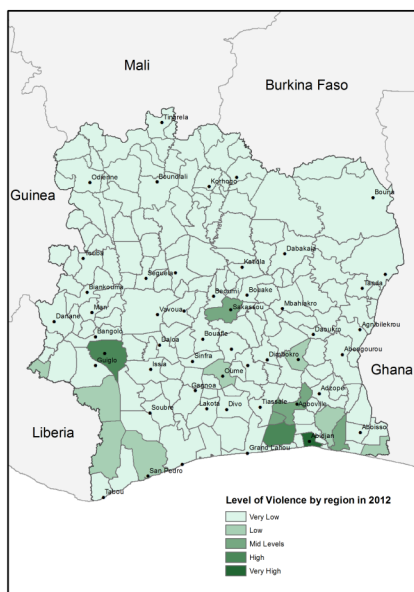
In these elections, half of all candidates ran as "independents" and won over 34% of the local council seats. These candidates mainly support the FPI. Hence, despite low turnout, the elections raised tensions between the ruling coalitions of the Ivory Coast Democratic Party (PDCI) and the Rally of Republicans (RDR), who pre-
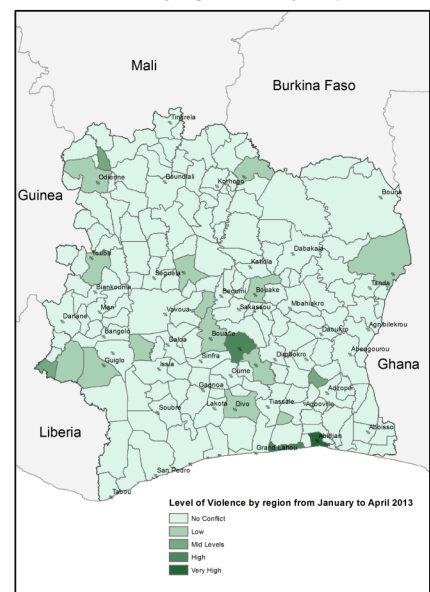

Figure 2: Violent events by region, Ivory Coast, 1997, 2012, and Jan - Apr 2013.

Ivory Coast

sented one candidate each in most of the localities. Violence erupted (mainly riots and protests around Abidjan Town Hall and the area of Koumassi) on April 22nd, as the first ballots were counted. In Yamoussoukro, some violence occurred on the 23rd. The RDR won in 65 municipalities, and the PDCI in 42. 72 independent candidates have also been elected. Yet they are not as independent as their name suggests, and can be considered as representing the RDR and the PDCI (RFI, 2013).

The current level of political violence is low compared to unrest witnessed in Ivory Coast in recent years, although represents a considerable spike since August last year (*see* Figures 3 and 4). Nevertheless, this is not the largest concern of the international community in Ivory Coast: the circulation of weapons and smuggling have resulted in an embargo (extended until April 2014) to prevent the supply, sale or transfer of arms to Côte d'Ivoire.

Smuggling activities of the "Com-Zone" involving the New Forces of Ivory Coast (FNCI- a rebel group that joined Ouattara in 2010) have resulted in the set up of a parallel taxation system, led by those military officers. According to the experts, it has cost almost 400 millions US$ for single cocoa trade. But this is not their only area of intervention, as they are suspected to interfere in the trade of gold, diamonds and cotton.
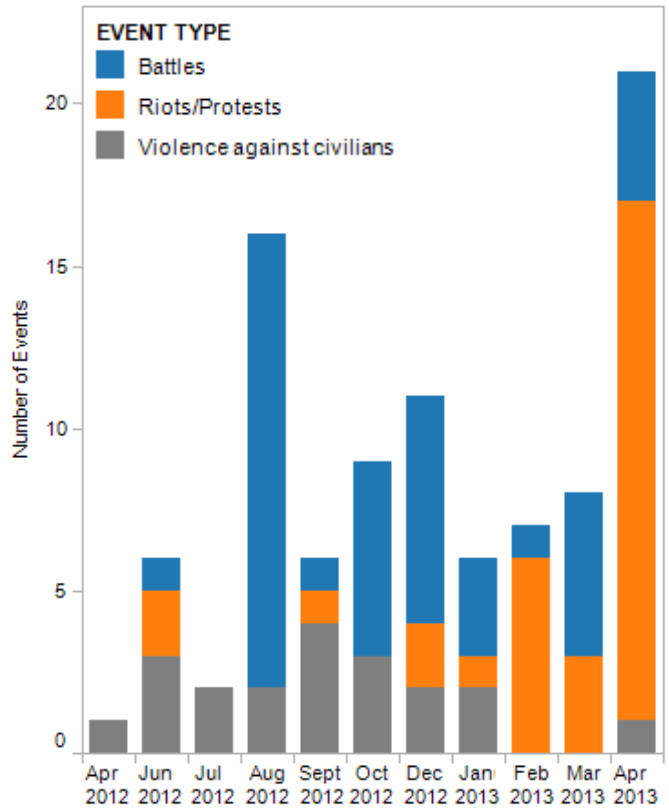

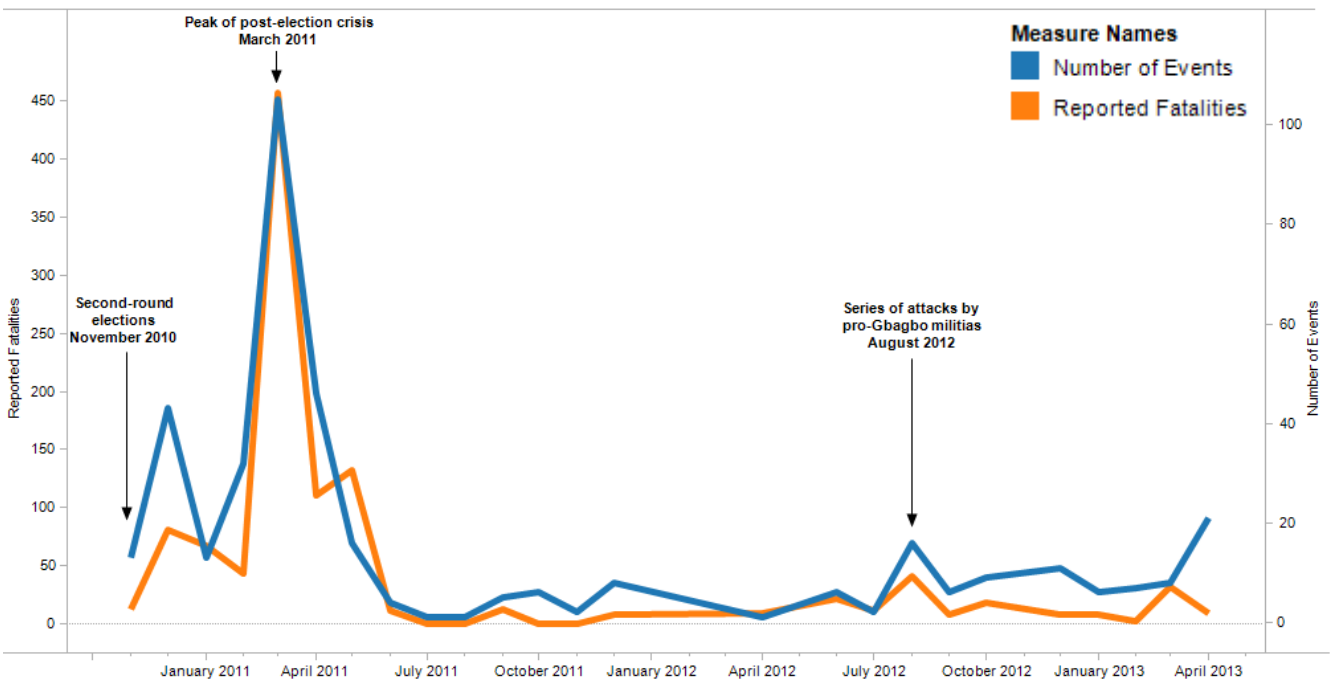Figure 3: Event by Type, Ivory Coast, Apr 2012 - Apr 2013

Figure 4: Conflict Events and Reported Fatalities, Ivory Coast, November 2010 - April 2013.

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Libya

Although the number of events decreased in April over March 2013, the instability in Libya is merely clustering to a greater degree in key cities, including Tripoli, Benghazi, Darna and Sabha (*see* Figure 5).

However, the dynamics of the April conflict spoke volumes about the strength of the (somewhat) amorphous armed groups, the weakness of the central government and the potential for long-term instability within the state. Tensions rose after a recent campaign by the Libyan military to unseat political militias from the capital.

By early May, the Defense Minister had resigned, claiming that the political militia(s) occupying government ministers were an insult to democratic progress and the 'New Libya'.

The occupation that began a week earlier had continued despite the government giving into the militia's main demand: no senior government official should be from the previous Gadhafi regime. This is likely to cause consider-

> **Violent events decreased in April over March 2013 in Libya. However, the dynamics of conflict in April spoke volumes about the strength of the (somewhat) amorphous armed groups still active in the country, weakness of the central government, and the potential for long-term instability.**

able administrative instability in the young government, but the lack of choice also reflects a failure of mainstream Islamic groups to gain more traction in Libya.

The main political militias- which account for most violence against civilians, and about 60% of armed battles (both with the government and each other)- are well equipped to continue battling the Libyan military forces (rumored to be split between the Defense ministry and the Army).

However, there are few people claiming responsibility for these militias: one of the potential leaders is bin Qumu, who was arrested in April.

Members of his group - Ansar al-Shariah (Partisans of Islamic Law) are believed to have been behind the attack on the US embassy in September 2012. However widespread this group, they are not publicly claiming responsibility for the many militia actions occurring throughout Libya.
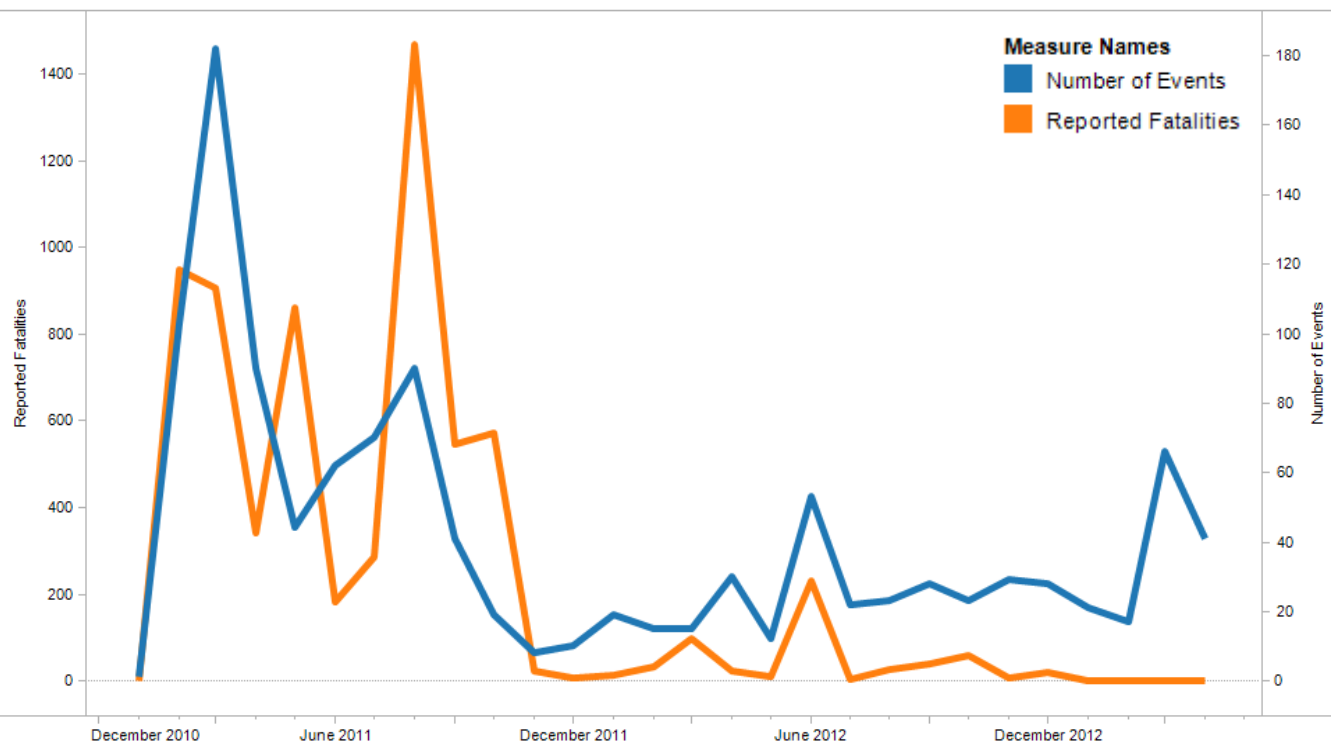

Figure 5: Number of Conflict Events and Reported Fatalities, Libya, December 2012 - April 2013.

Libya

In addition to the real threat posed by militias who may be associated with the North African branch al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, there are still ongoing local tensions and public protests.

Violent disputes over local power issues account for 40% of Libyan violence, and protest continue in both the East and Coastal regions. This indicates that there are several scales of political problems in Libya, and a number of civilians who believe that the government does not have the capacity or stomach to combat the persistent instability from more militant Islamist organizations.

Considering Libya in a comparative perspective illuminates key trends in violence in the North African region: following on from 20122, Egypt continues to experience the highest levels of violence in the region, while Algeria, Libya and Tunisia have witnessed comparable levels of political violence since January of this year (*see* Figure 5). However, the rate of violence against civilians in Libya far surpasses that witnessed in any other North African country, illustrating the pronounced, sustained levels of heightened civilian vulnerability (*see* Figure 6).
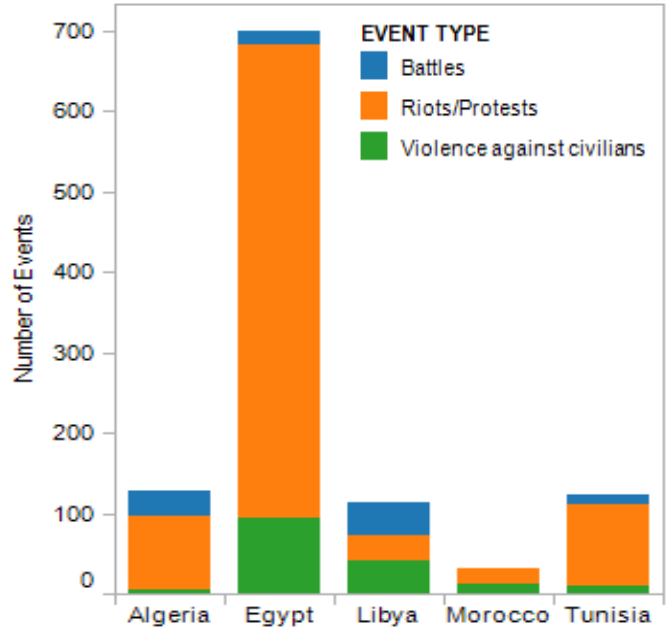

Figure 6: Conflict Events by Type, Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia, Jan - Apr 2013.
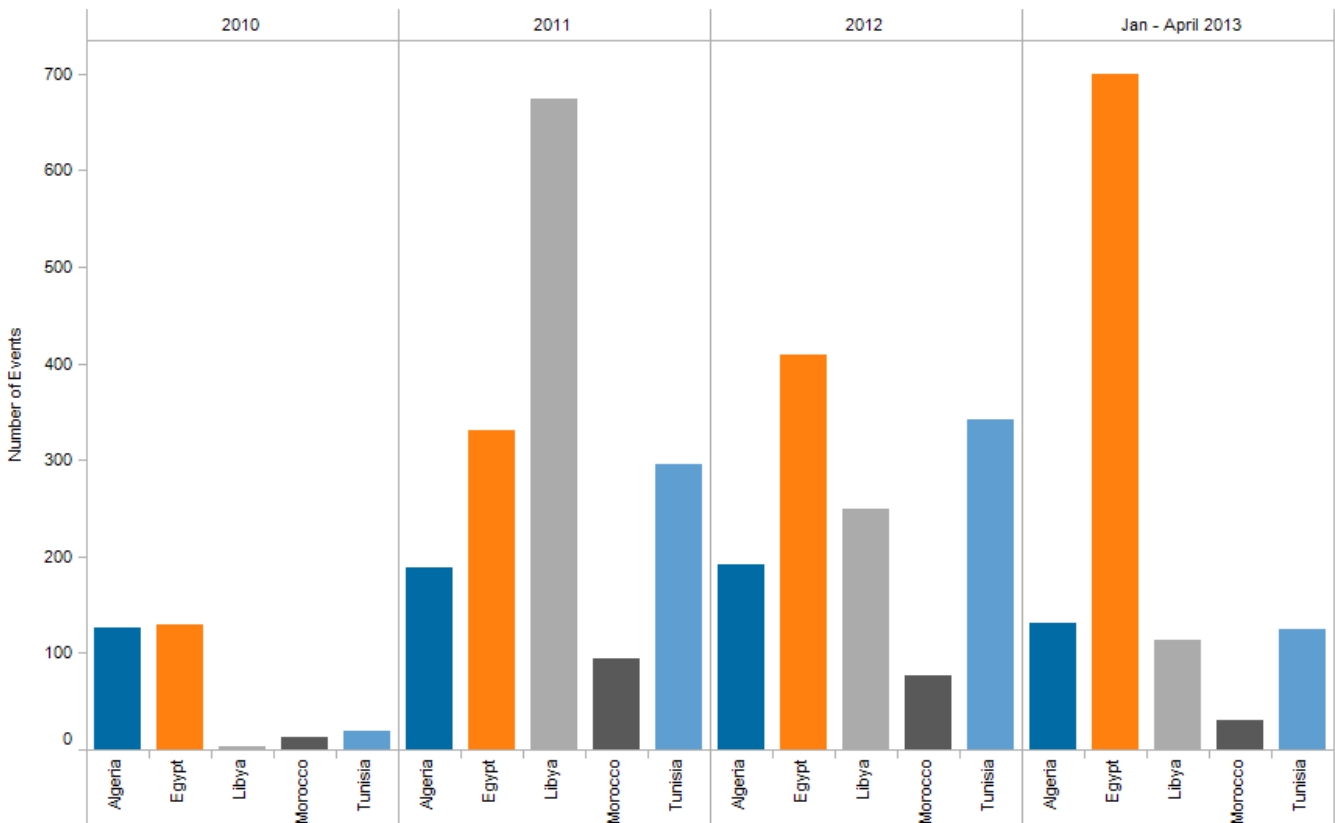

Figure 7: Violent Conflict Events, Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia, 2010 - April 2013.

Nigeria

April witnessed dramatic fighting between Nigerian security forces and Boko Haram militants in Baga, located in the far North-Eastern state of Borno. Shockingly, the month actually saw a very slight decrease in both recorded conflict events and reported fatality figures in spite of the dramatic events in Borno, reflecting the persistently high levels of violence which affect the country, even in less high-profile months. The clashes themselves highlighted the logistical, military and political challenges of attempting to combat a highly dynamic and mobile insurgency, which chooses to merge with civilian populations as a means of protection against attack.

The ensuing violence led to devastating levels of casualties, with local officials reporting over 180 people were killed, although army estimates are much lower. Human Rights Watch released satellite imagery which revealed the scale of damage in the town, charging that 'The Nigeria military has a duty to protect itself and the population from Boko Haram attacks, but the evidence indicates that it engaged more in destruction than in protection,' (HRW, 1 May 2013).

Borno has witnessed pronounced volatility since 2009, when the Boko Haram insurgency began (*see* Figure 9). While the group's area of activity has expanded since that time, Borno remains the most active state (*see* Figure 8).
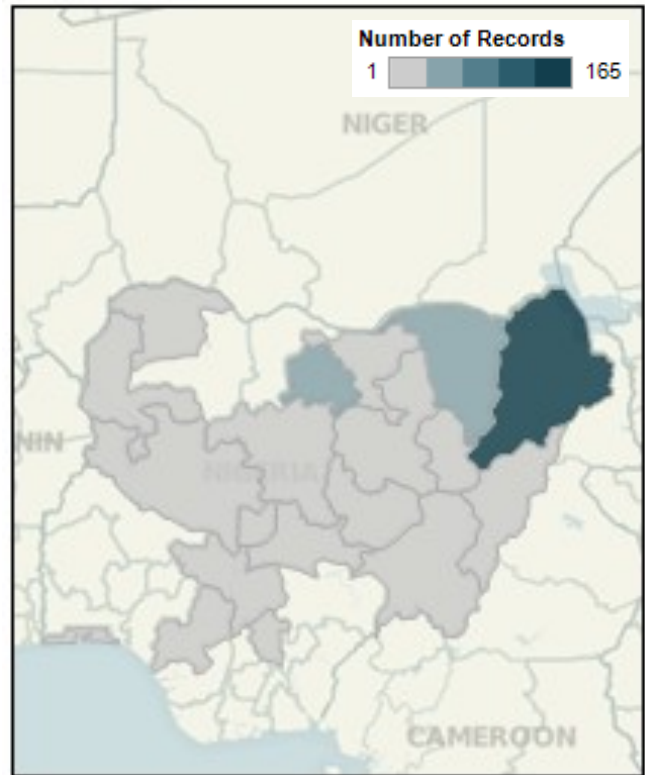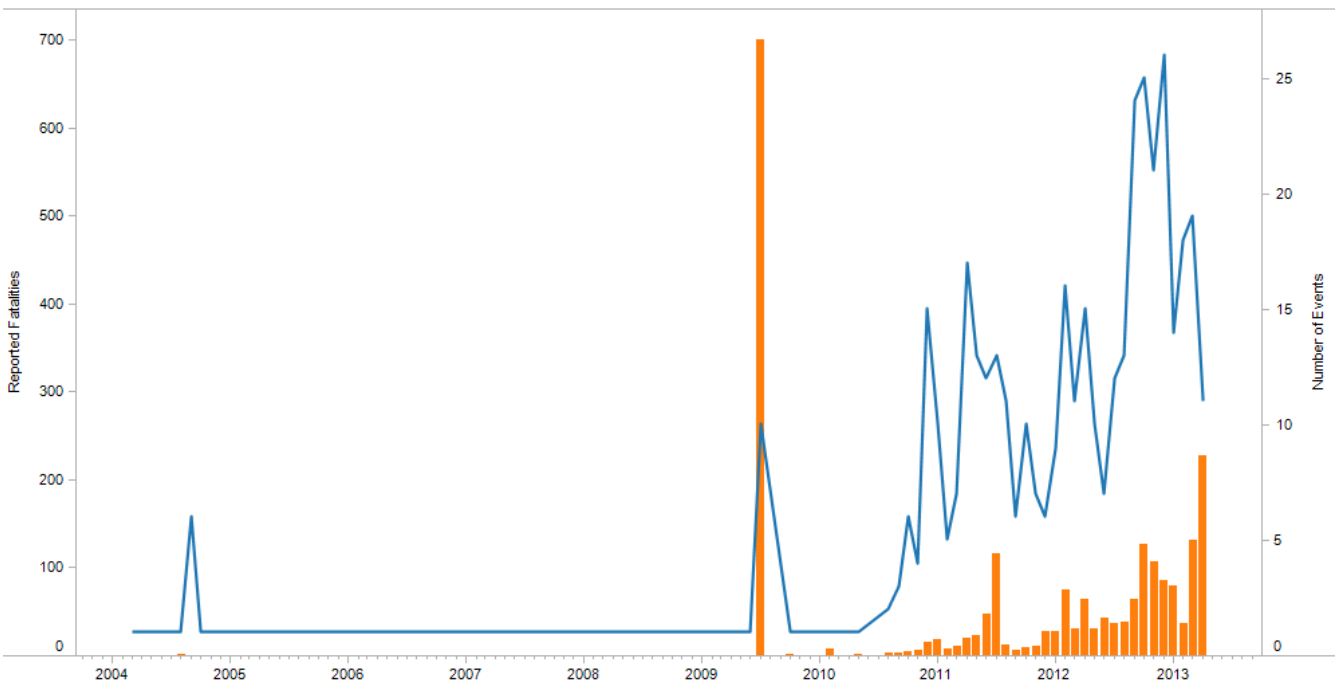

Figure 8: Boko Haram Activity by State, Nigeria, 2012.

Figure 9: Violent Conflict Events and Reported Fatalities, Borno State, Nigeria, January 2004 - April 2013.

Somalia

British PM David Cameron and Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud in May hosted a conference in London on the future of Somalia: President Mohamud hailed the start of a 'new era' in Somalia (BBC News, 7 May 2013). While Cameron was more cautious, acknowledging the limitations of the federal government's control and the challenges the country still faces, Mohamud is certainly not alone in his optimism: last year, *Foreign Policy* declared that 'Africa's greatest success in 2012 was in Somalia,' (20 Dec 2012); in January, Dlamini Zuma announced that Somalia had 'entered a post-conflict reconstruction and development phase,' (SANews, 3 Jan 2013); meanwhile, discussions both in social media and in academic work on 'Somalia rising' abound (*see* Hammond, 2013).[1]

Recent political developments certainly give cause for optimism, but a closer look at the conflict dynamics suggest multiple, overlapping and cross-cutting challenges remain: conflict levels across the country remain elevated over the past six months, in spite of persistent claims that Al Shabaab is on the verge of collapse (*see* Figure 10), while an analysis of Al Shabaab activity in Banaadir region (where the capital is situated), indicates that while the group is less active than in previous years, it still maintains a significant presence and destabilising potential (*see* Figure 11)
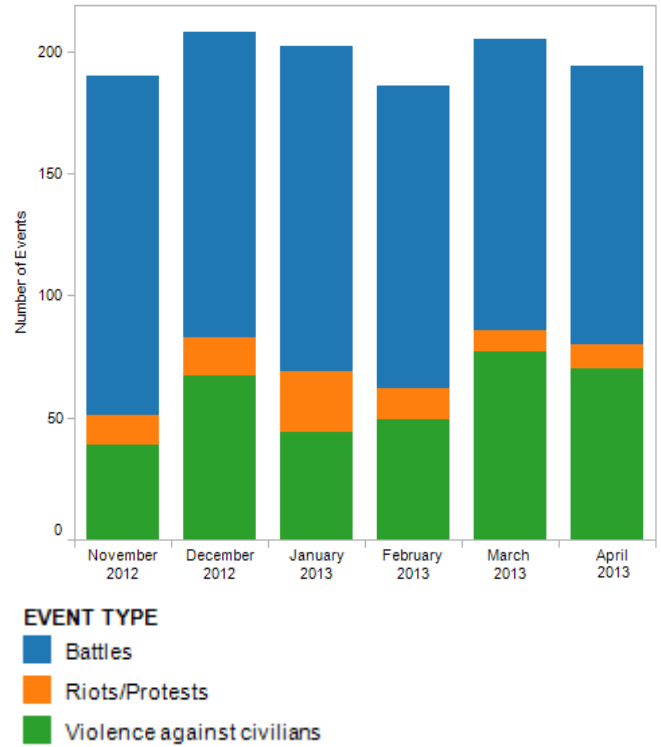

Figure 10: Conflict Events by Type, Somalia, November 2012 - April 2013.
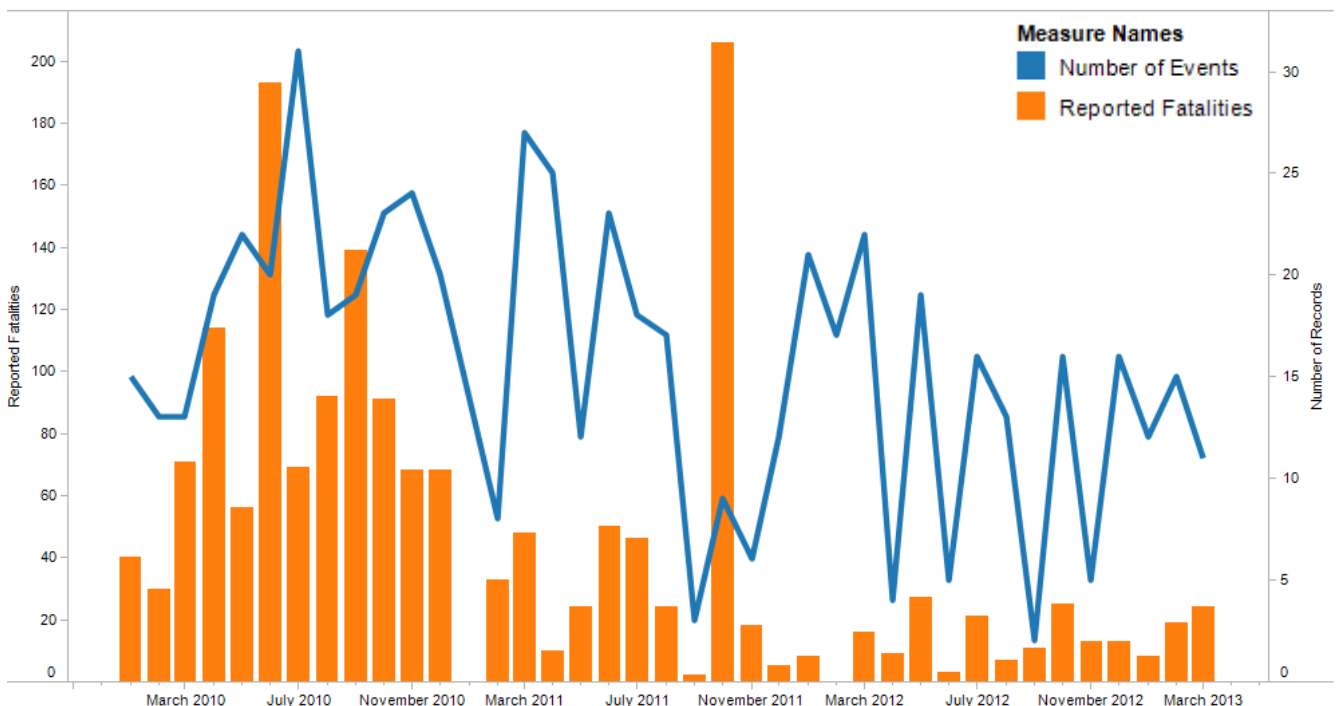

Figure 11: Al Shabaab Events and Reported Fatalities, Banaadir Region, Somalia, 2010 - March 2013.

1. Laura Hammond. 2013. 'Somalia Rising: Things are Starting to Change for the World's Longest Failed State,' *Journal of East African Studies*, 7(1): 183 - 193.

Sudan

Over a decade after the outbreak of war in the Darfur region of Sudan, and levels of violence are once more on the increase in the volatile region. As with all recent ACLED data, some increase in event coding reflects methodological improvements in data collection and realtime publishing. However, it is also the case that 2013 has witnessed a large number of conflict events, with multiple, complex drivers (*see* Figure 13).

January and March both witnessed heavy bombing campaigns by the Sudanese air forces in the region, targeting Sudan Liberation Army factions under the control of Abdul Wahid and Minni Minawi (Radio Dabanga; Sudan Tribune 8 Jan 2013; ReliefWeb, 11 Mar 2013). January and February also saw huge displacement, as an estimated 100,000 people fled fighting over control over gold deposits in the north of the region. Meanwhile, levels of violence by progovernment militias which have often targeted civilians have been high and sustained throughout this time.

The intensity of conflict has certainly reduced, since a peak in conflict-related fatalities occurred in the first quarter of 2004 (*see* Figure 12). But high levels of conflict involving a wide range of diverse actors persist, and continue to shape civilian populations' experiences of violence, security and development in the region.
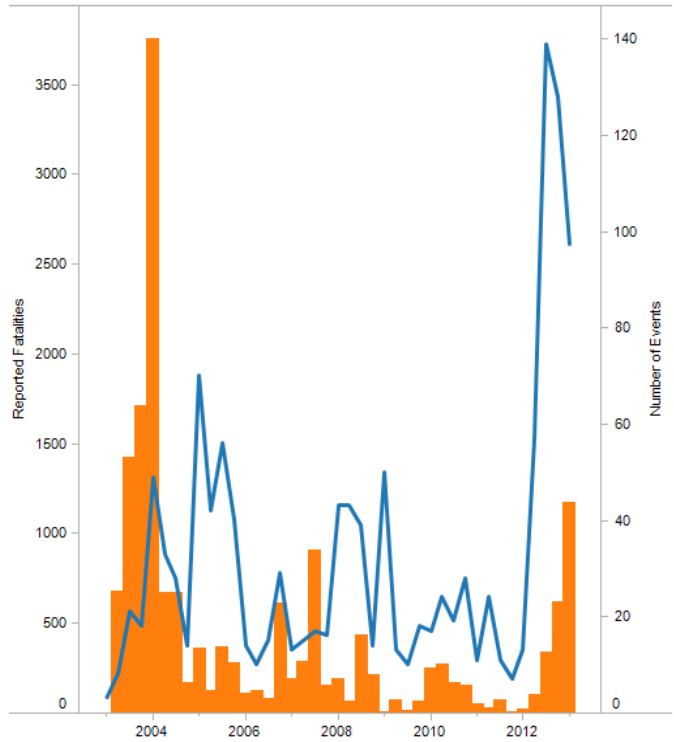

Figure 12: Conflict Events and Reported Fatalities, Darfur Region, Sudan, January 2003 - March 2013.
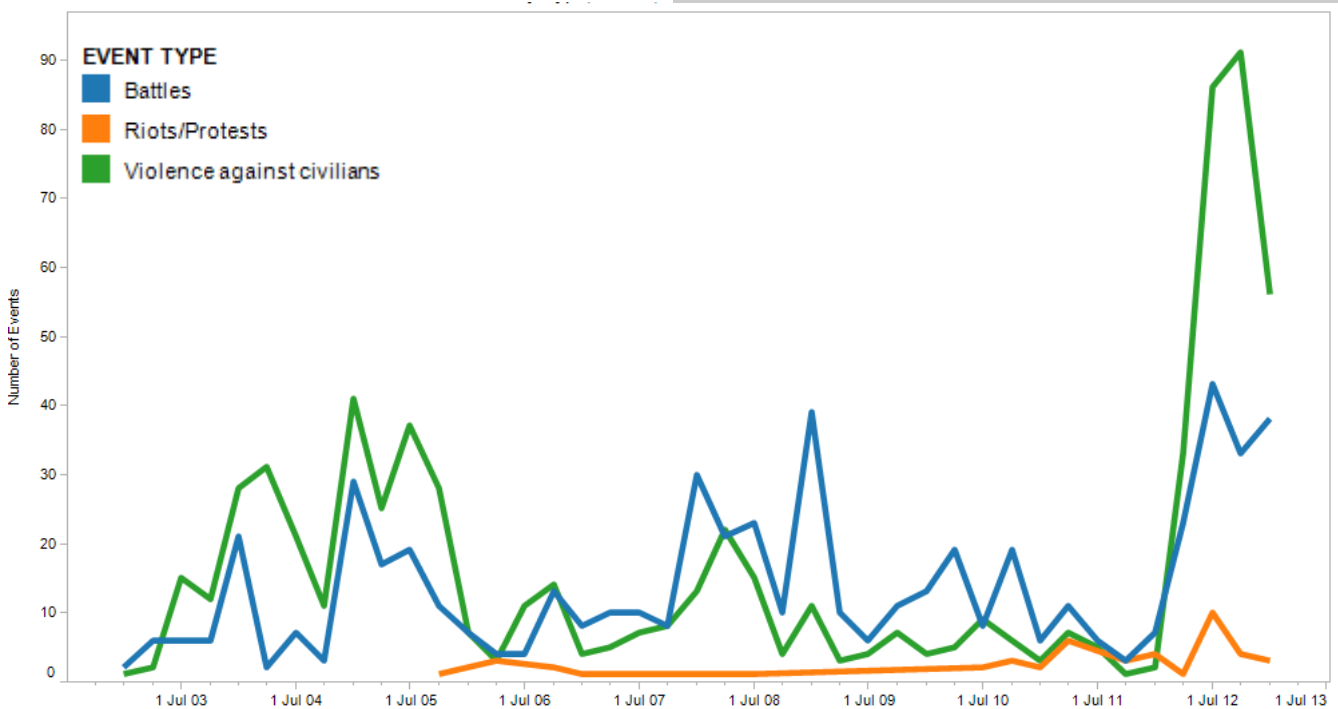

Figure 13: Conflict Events by Type, Darfur Region, Sudan, January 2003 - March 2013.

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