Welcome to the December issue of the Armed Conflict Location & Event Dataset (ACLED) *Conflict Trends*. Each month, ACLED researchers gather, analyse and publish data on political violence in Africa in realtime. Realtime conflict event data is published through our research partners at **Climate Change and African Political Stability (CCAPS)** where it is updated monthly.

In addition, historical data from Volume III of the dataset, covering conflict in Africa from January 1997 to December 2012, is available online at **acleddata.com**, along with previous *Conflict Trends* reports and other resources.

This month, the *Trends* report focuses on **Central African Republic**, **DR-Congo**, **Kenya** and **Libya** (*see* Figure 1).

Elsewhere on the continent, conflict levels increased in **Mali**, **Mauritania** and **South Sudan**. Conflict levels fell in **Sudan**, although fatalities increased sharply there at the same time, reflecting an intensification of ongoing conflict.

Also this month, ACLED researchers have produced two new country profiles on Kenya and DR-Congo, extracts of which are featured here. The full reports are available online at **acleddata.com**.
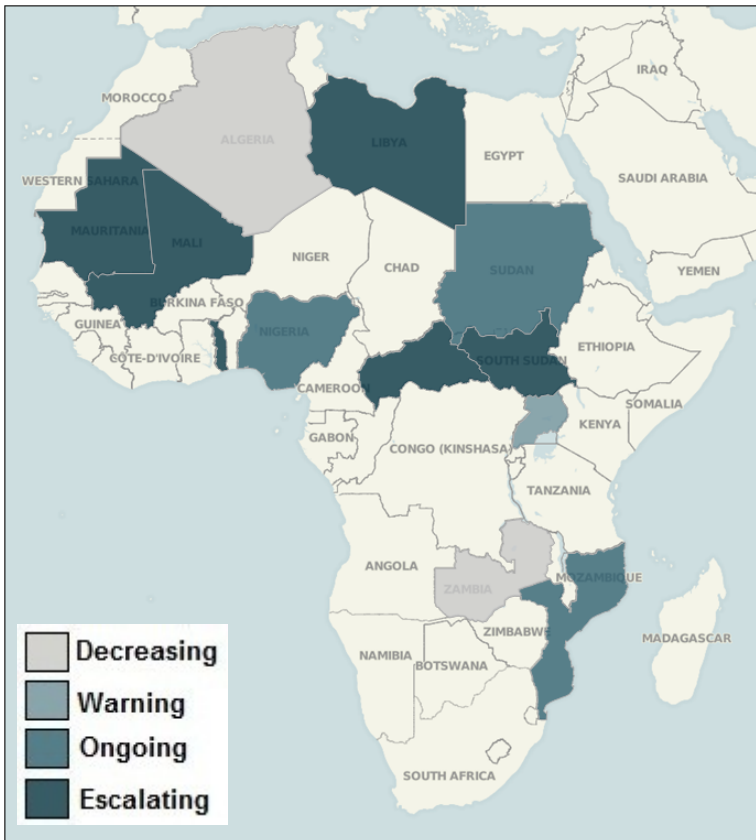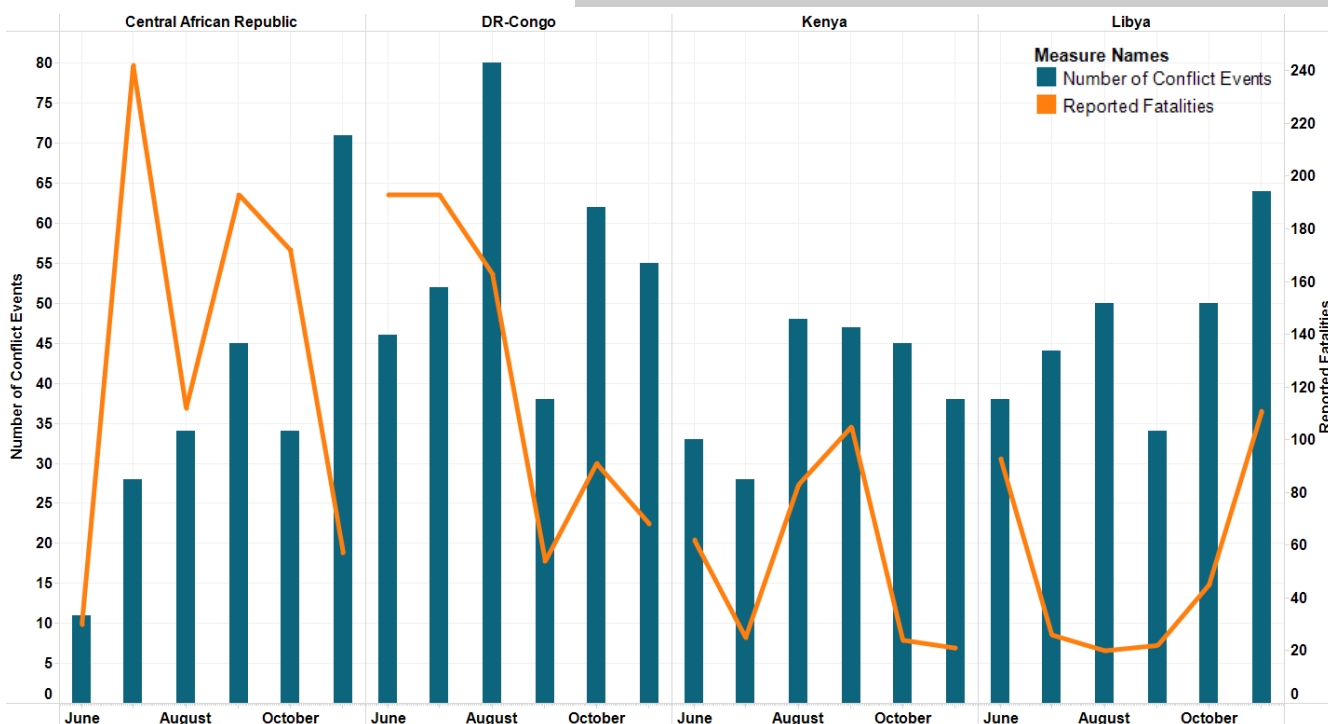

Conflict Trajectory, November 2013

Figure 1: Conflict Levels and Reported Fatalities in CAR, DR-Congo, Kenya, Libya, June - November 2013.
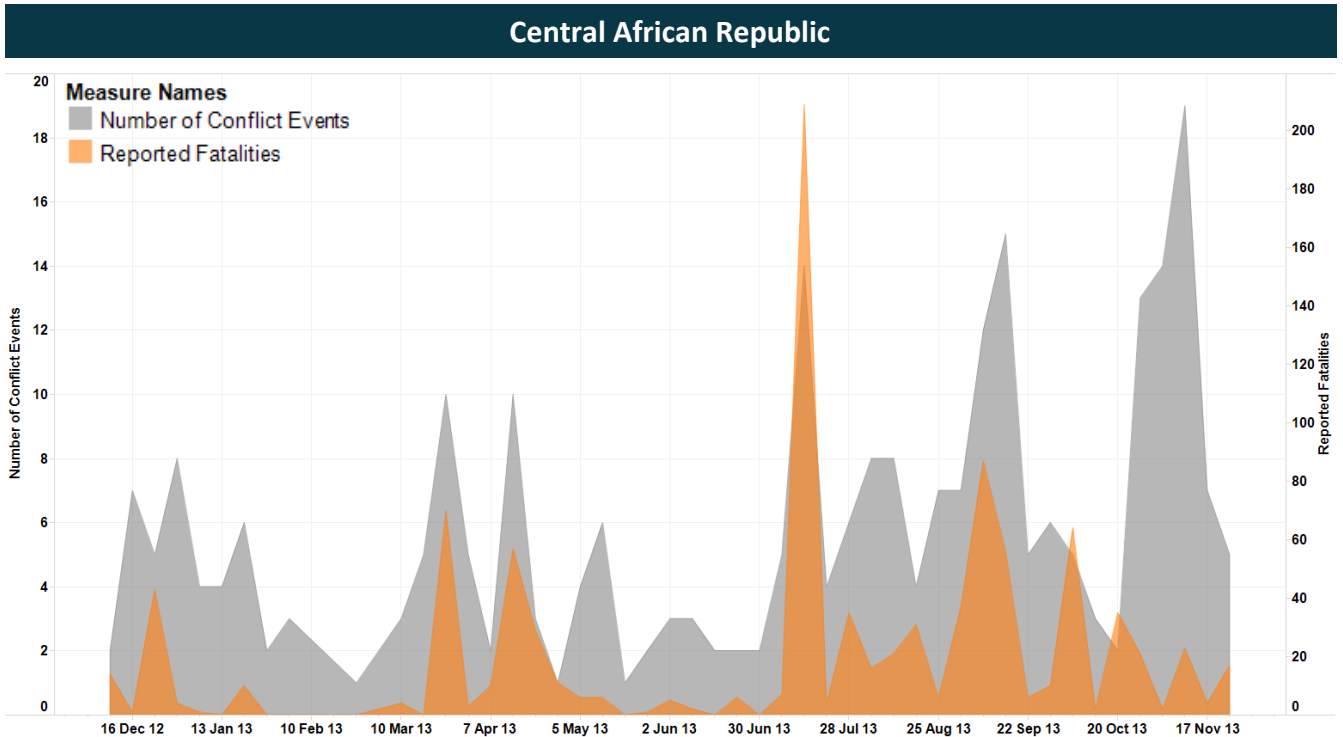
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Central African Republic

Figure 2: Conflict Events and Reported Fatalities attributed to Seleka, Central African Republic, Dec 2012 - Nov 2013.

The latest offering from the Central African Republic is indeed brutal: Seleka are accused of attacking a refugee camp and Bangui is reported to be 'littered' with hundreds of bodies after a firefight on the 5th of December. Undoubtedly, Seleka represent the major threat to instability in CAR (*see* Figure 2) committing over ten times the violence attributed to any other group. However, the instability wrought from the March overthrow of Bozize by then-Seleka leader, now-president, Michel Djotodia has opened the space for a range of groups to contest the former and present governments, Seleka alliance, and local power holders.

In particular, the past months have seen the rise of two related groups: the 'Anti-Balaka' militias and the Christian/Former military (Bozize) supporters. Due to Seleka being regarded (somewhat erroneously) as a 'Muslim' group, the conflict has taken on a religious dimension. This may be more due to external reporting than realties on the ground: anti-Balaka mainly hail from Bozize's northwest home region, while Seleka (and former Seleka) from a Muslim dominated region. Hence, a 'religious' dimension is substituting for the obvious regional power plays between an ousted and present government. Indeed, the northwest is now where the most fervent fighting between the two groups is taking place (including in Bossangoa, Bouca and Bouar, *see* Figure 3).

Tendai Marima (*Think Africa Press*) discussed anti-Balaka in a recent article as 'a motley crew of local self-defense militias and anti-Seleka armed groups' waging an armed resistance in the north. They have been active as long as security has been supplied by local/ethnic organizations: during the Bush War of 2004-7, these local groups defended against the APRD (Armée Populaire pour la Restauration de la Démocratie (APRD).

At this point, the militias that would serve as the basis of Seleka emerged in the north, under the direction of current president Michel Djotodia. Just as Seleka is a combination of former rebels, opportunists, and regional militias in a power grab, the modern anti-Balaka groups include 'the Association of Central African Farmers (ACP), an anti-Seleka peasant movement, as well as the Front for the Return to the Constitutional Order in Central Africa (FROCCA).' This militia is comprised of ex-army Bozize officers and was formed in August by the former president.

The anti-Balaka and Bozize government supporters are believed to have engaged with the present military (former Seleka fighters) in the 5th December Bangui 'massacre.' This indicates that a civil war is taking shape, while Seleka remains beholden to no one. This independence may explain the perceived 'randomness' of Seleka

Central African Republic

violence, and its lack of a clear agenda or path out of conflict. Indeed, the government has no hold over their former armed wing, after they ignored an order to dismantle in September. But the government also seems without a plan to integrate and/or disarm Seleka (now estimated at over 20,000), Bozize supporters and anti-Balaka groups.

1,200 French troops have arrived in Central African Republic (CAR) and more are scheduled. They have an unenviable job: bolster the government, destroy Seleka and somehow stop the seemingly inevitable slide into civil war.
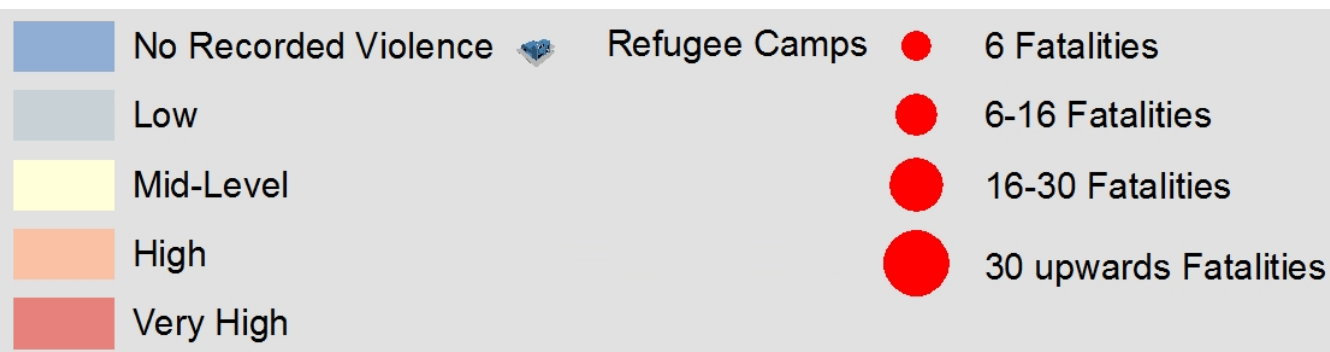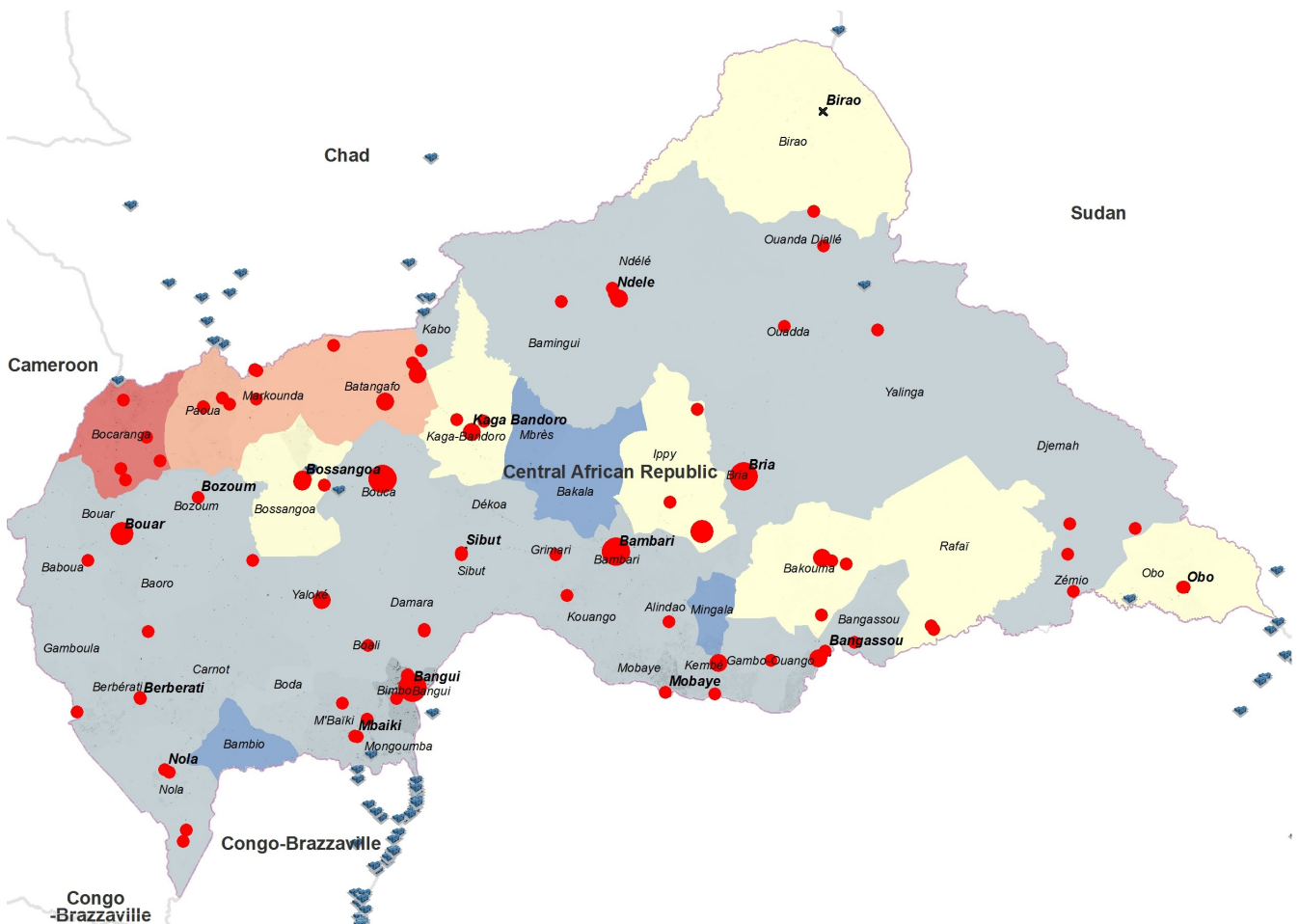
Figure 3: Conflict Events by Administrative Unit, Central African Republic, January 1997 - October 2013.

DR-Congo

This month, ACLED publishes two new country conflict profiles, one on DR-Congo, extracts from which are presented here, analysing DR-Congo violence in historical and comparative perspective.

DR-Congo is the second most violent country in the ACLED dataset when measured by the number of conflict events; and the third most fatal over the course of the dataset's coverage (1997 - September 2013). Since 2011, violence levels have increased significantly in this beleaguered country, primarily due to a sharp rise in conflict in the Kivu regions (*see* Figure 4) Conflict levels during 2013 to date have reduced, but this year's event levels remain significantly above average for the DR-Congo.

While the Kivu province is clearly the most conflict-affected region in the DR-Congo, other provinces are also grappling with consistently high levels of violence. Likewise, in terms of conflict actors, recent international commentary has focussed very heavily on the M23 rebel group and their interactions with Congolese military forces and UN peacekeepers. However, while ACLED data illustrates that M23 has constituted the most violent non-state actor in the country since its emergence in April 2012, other groups including Mayi Mayi militias, FDLR

rebels and unidentified armed groups also represent significant threats to security and stability.

M23 have been highly active in North and South Kivu since establishment in April 2012, reaching a peak in November 2012 when the rebels held the strategic city of Goma for ten days (*see* Figure 5) The capture of Goma proved a pivotal moment in the M23's campaign, demonstrating the group's ability to control a major city militarily and politically. Currently, the future of M23 seems far less certain. Following a series of key territorial gains in September 2013 on the part of the Congolese army, supported by UN troops, M23 was forced to resume peace talks with Kinshasha, held in Uganda for the first time since May of the same year. To date the Congolese army has recovered all M23's strongholds in North Kivu (Radio Okapi 2013) and the rebel group has surrendered arms in eastern DR-Congo. However at the time of writing, a definitive agreement has yet to be reached.

Over the course of the group's transformation from CNDP to M23, certain commentators have highlighted the relative homogeneity of the two organisations (Stearns 2012a: 52). The data, however, reveals that the two groups have distinct conflict profiles reflecting tactical
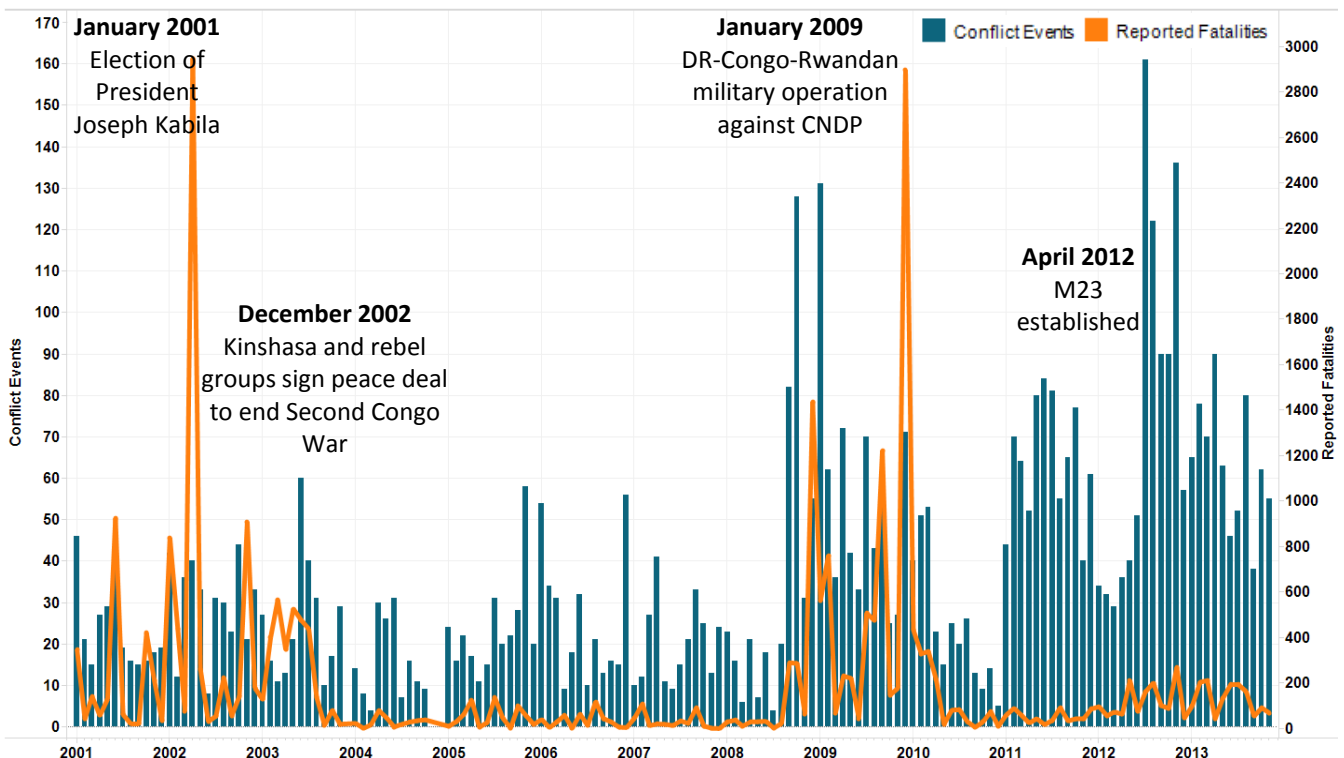

Figure 4: Conflict Events and Reported Fatalities, DR-Congo, January 2001 - November 2013.
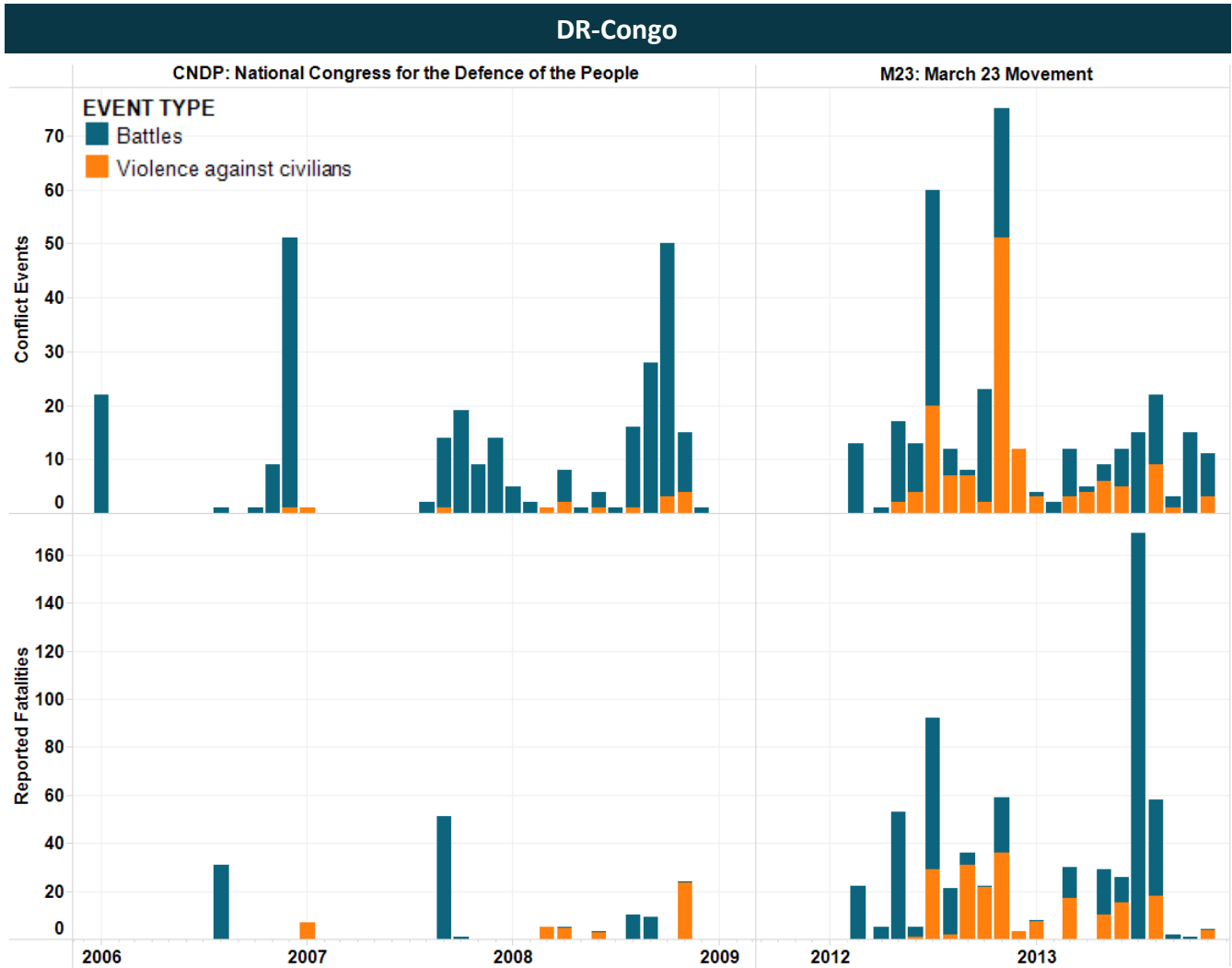
DR-Congo

Figure 5: Conflict Events and Reported Fatalities, CNDP and M23, DR-Congo, January 2006 - November 2013.

changes adopted as the group evolves. Overall, M23 are significantly more violent and more consistently active than their CNDP predecessors, which could indicate that M23 has a higher operational capacity in terms of funding and logistics, or that it has higher rates of popular support. The increased intensity of engagement by the Congolese and international military actors is also a factor in this higher rate of battles, but higher rates of civilian targeting and fatalities cannot be attributed to this.

The average rate of conflict events for CNDP during the period 2006 to 2008 was 8 per month while M23 engaged in an average of 17.2 conflict events per month during the period April 2012 to September 2013. Likewise, fatality figures also reflect a sharp increase in violence levels as the group transformed. CNDP's average monthly fatality levels during the same 2006 to 2008 period were approximately 4 casualties per month, rising to an average of 33

fatalities per month attributed to M23 during the period April 2012 to September 2013.

ACLED data can also reveal patterns of engagement between conflict actors showing that while both CNDP and M23 engage primarily with the Congolese army, they also interact with a range of other actors including UN forces and Mayi Mayi militias. In early 2008, CNDP engaged in frequent clashes with Mayi Mayi militants from the PARECO faction, and throughout its existence the group engaged sporadically with UN forces. M23, however, engaged in more frequent interactions with UN troops, as well as intermittent clashes with a variety of Mayi Mayi factions. Furthermore, in early 2013 a splinter group of M23 emerged and clashed a number of times with its parent rebel group around Rutshuru in North Kivu, highlighting once again the complex multiplicity of violent actors engaged in conflict across the DR-Congo.

Kenya

This month, ACLED publishes two new country conflict profiles, one on Kenya, extracts from which are presented here, analysing Kenya violence in historical and comparative perspective.

Kenya is the seventh most violent country in the ACLED dataset with just over 3,500 recorded politically violent events between 1997 and September 2013. Kenya has the 12th highest rate of reported fatalities associated with political violence, at over 7,200. Levels of violent events peaked at 341 in the three-month period of January to March 2008, the quarter which also experienced the highest level of reported conflict fatalities (*see* Figure 6)

In absolute terms, levels of conflict in Kenya since 1997 are comparable to those in Uganda (over 3,800 events) and South Africa (over 3,250 events), although the composition of this violence by type is markedly different. Unlike Uganda, Kenya has not experienced an outright civil war during this period, but data analysis reveals that the use of categories such as 'low grade violence,' 'communal conflict' or 'electoral violence' can ob-

> **Levels of conflict in Kenya over the course of the dataset are comparable to those in Uganda for the same period, although Kenya has not experienced an outright civil war during this time, highlighting the relatively high intensity of low-intensity' conflict.**
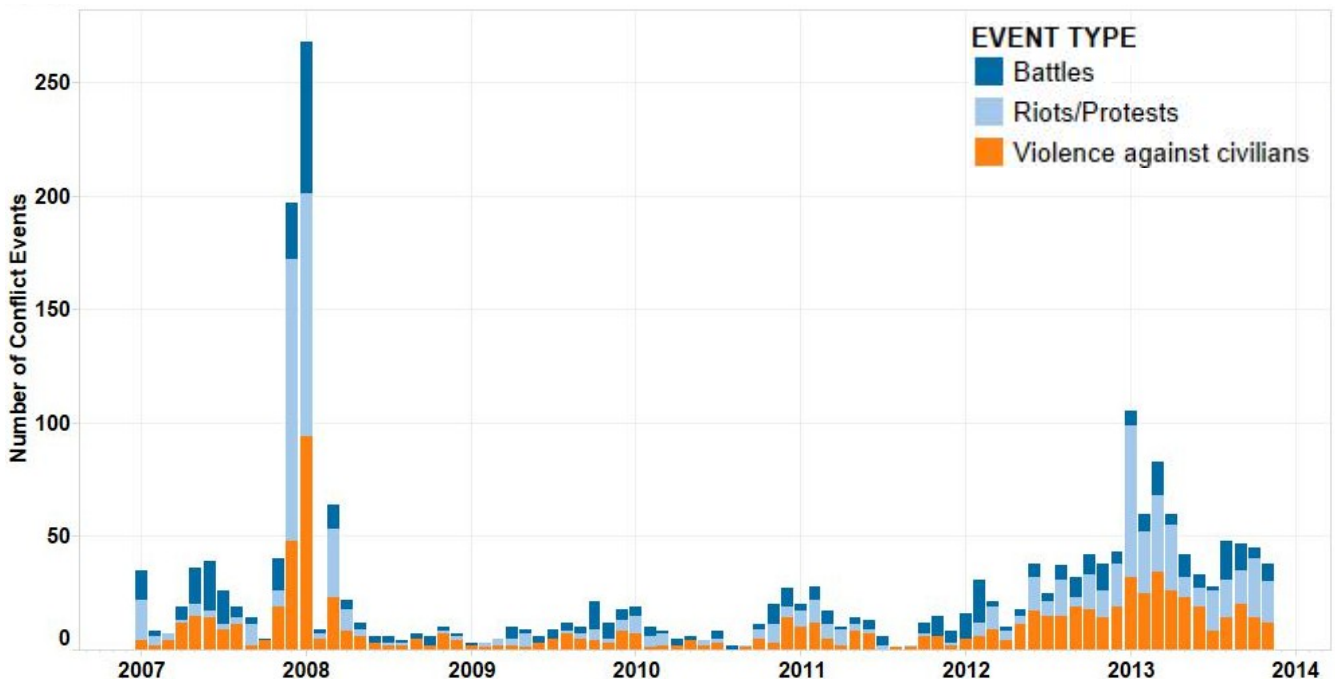
scure the absolute levels of conflict experienced by communities across the country.

Kenya's conflict profile is relatively evenly split between types of violence including battles, violence against civilians, and rioting or protesting. National-level trends mask dramatic regional variations in the types, tactics and perpetrators of political violence within Kenya. Nairobi experiences the second highest absolute levels of violence in Kenya, after the Rift Valley, and the highest levels of riots and protests. Nairobi is also the region in which violent events involving state forces are highest, with almost one-third of all violent events involving state forces taking place in the capital.

Militia activity is extremely common in Kenya, with militia violence against civilians the most common interaction in the country, at over 600 recorded events (*see* Figure 7 for activity levels per month with reference lines). As a proportion of violent actors, political militias were recorded as being involved in over one-quarter of politically violent events in Kenya, with levels of violence attributed

Figure 6: Conflict Events by Type, Kenya, January 2007 - November 2013.

Kenya

to this category of actor the sixth highest in the dataset (following the extremely high violence countries Somalia, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, DR-Congo and Sudan, almost all of which have had a civil war over the course of the recorded data.)

Political militias have the highest absolute and proportional rates of violence against civilians (with civilian targeting constituting over half of all militia events), followed by communal militias and rebel groups at a distance. The prevalence of these groups is reflected in the dynamics of state responses to non-state actors. Violent events involving state forces are twice as likely to involve political militias (at over 300 recorded events involving both actor types) than communal militias (at around 150 recorded events), and almost four times as likely as those involving state forces and the main rebel group active in the country, Al Shabaab (at over 80 recorded events involving both actor types).

Militia activity peaked in absolute terms in 2007 and 2008, driven by the widespread electoral violence witnessed in the country at that time. The year 1997 actually witnessed the highest proportional levels of militia violence recorded in Kenya (at almost half of all recorded violent activity that

year) although actual levels of violence in that year were considerably lower.

This pattern reflects the temporal dynamics underpinning and driving militia violence: militias are typically short-lived militant units, constituted for the purpose of pursuing elite interests for a short period of time. Elite groups which cannot be seen to be affiliated with political violence (or certain types thereof) may sub-contract out certain acts of violence to informal or *ad hoc* militias to carry out on their behalf. This relationship explains why militia violence is so often associated with the targeting of civilians across the continent: it is not that political militias are inherently more violent or prone to targeting non-combatants than other types of groups. It is rather the nature of their role as primarily *ad hoc*, informal agents of elite forces that explains why they serve as a more convenient conduit for civilian intimidation and harassment than other actor types.

This dynamic is clearly reflected in the levels and dispersal of violence against civilians during the 2007/2008 electoral period: while official forces could not be associated with the targeting and intimidation of civilians during this time, militia units can take on this role in widespread attacks on non-combatants with relative impunity.
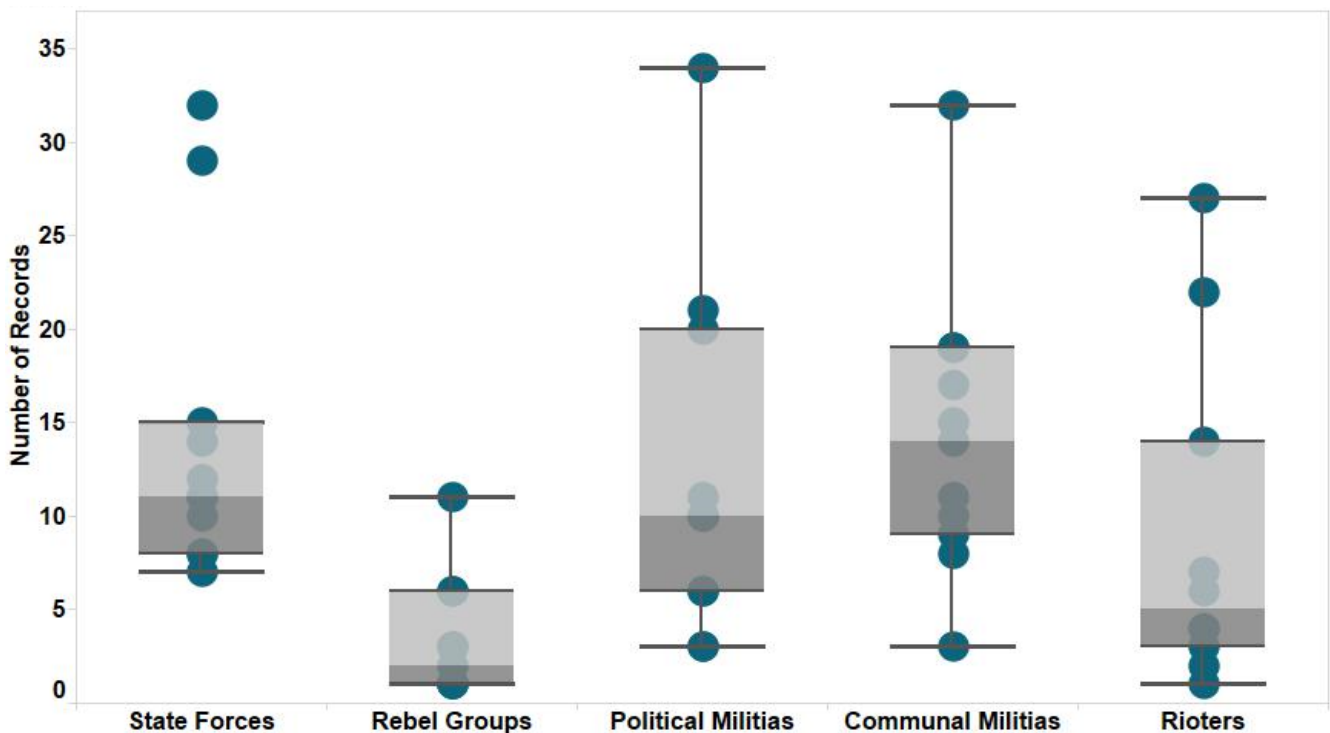

Figure 7: Conflict Activity by Actor Type, Kenya, January - November 2013, with reference lines.

Libya

Conflict activity and associated reported fatalities increased in November in Libya to their highest rate yet in 2013 (*see* Figure 8). The Libyan government's inability to establish stability and control through security sector reform was instrumental in the conflict landscape of this month. The 15th November witnessed the bloodiest day since June 2012 after a peaceful demonstration was attacked by a militia group from Misratah killing 43, and the persistent targeting of military officers as well as sustained oil pipeline shutdowns have contributed to increasingly regional volatility.

Conflict intensity, and reported fatalities in particular, remain well below the crisis levels of early 2011, but event counts are nevertheless gradually increasing, reflecting the on-going instability and potentially explosive dynamics underpinning violence in the volatile region (*see* Figure 8).

Following the October abduction of Prime Minister Ali Zeidan, violent activity by Libya's seemingly uncontrollable militias - created in the political fallout from the end of the Gaddafi regime - continued to undermine the General National Congress' legitimacy, undermining hope of future progress. At the same time, while all violent event types increased to some degree this month, battles between armed groups increased by the greatest magnitude, from 21 recorded battle events in October, to 29 in November.

In terms of reported fatalities, the greatest increase was evident in violence against civilians, indicating that the intensity of conflict continues to have an impact on non-combatant populations across the restive country. This point is underscored by the fact that civilian targeting in political violence in Libya accounts for almost one-third (32%) of all reported conflict-related fatalities.

The emergence of various armed groups in Libya's post-Gaddafi era has created a paradox between those loosely affiliated to the old military regime with a stake in upholding the country's security ,and those with their own political ideologies who have engaged in higher levels of violence against civilians in a bid to unseat the incumbent

> **Conflict activity and associated fatalities increased in Libya in November, to their highest rate yet in 2013. Violence levels and fatalities remain well below the crisis levels of 2011, but continue to gradually increase, reflecting on-going instability in the country.**
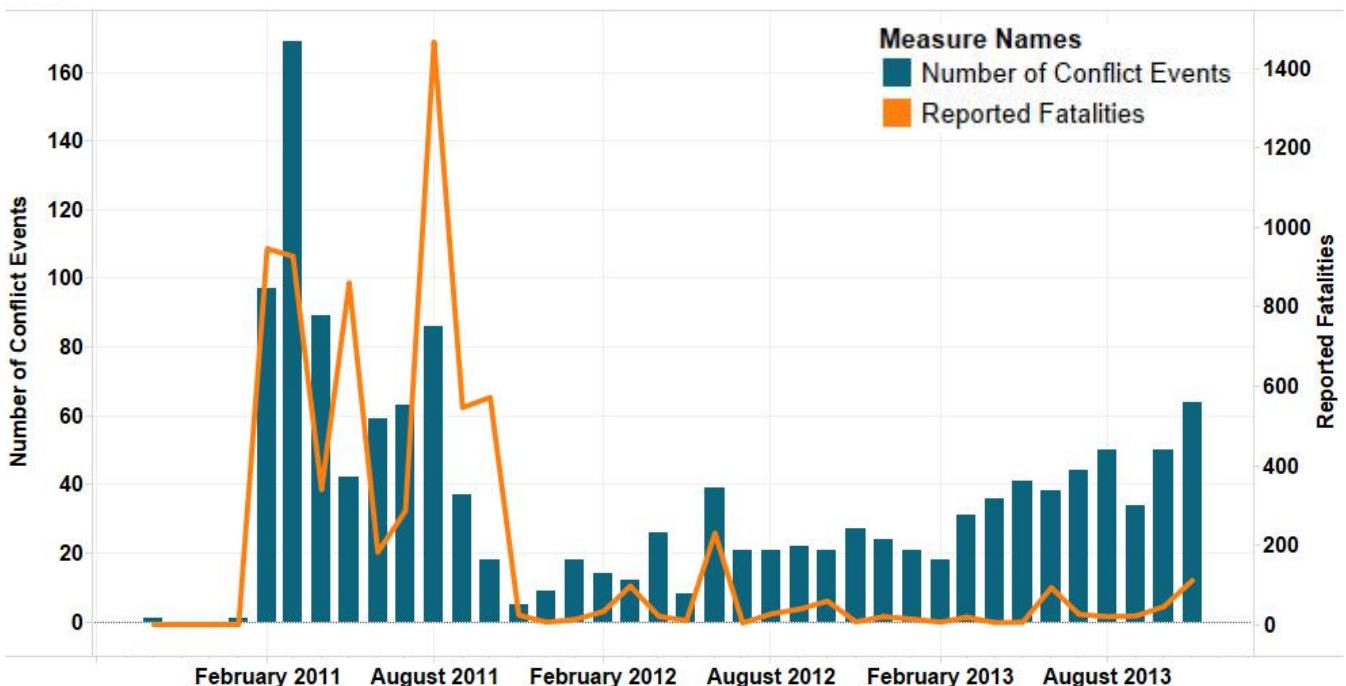

Figure 8: Conflict Events and Reported Fatalities, Libya, October 2010 - November 2013.
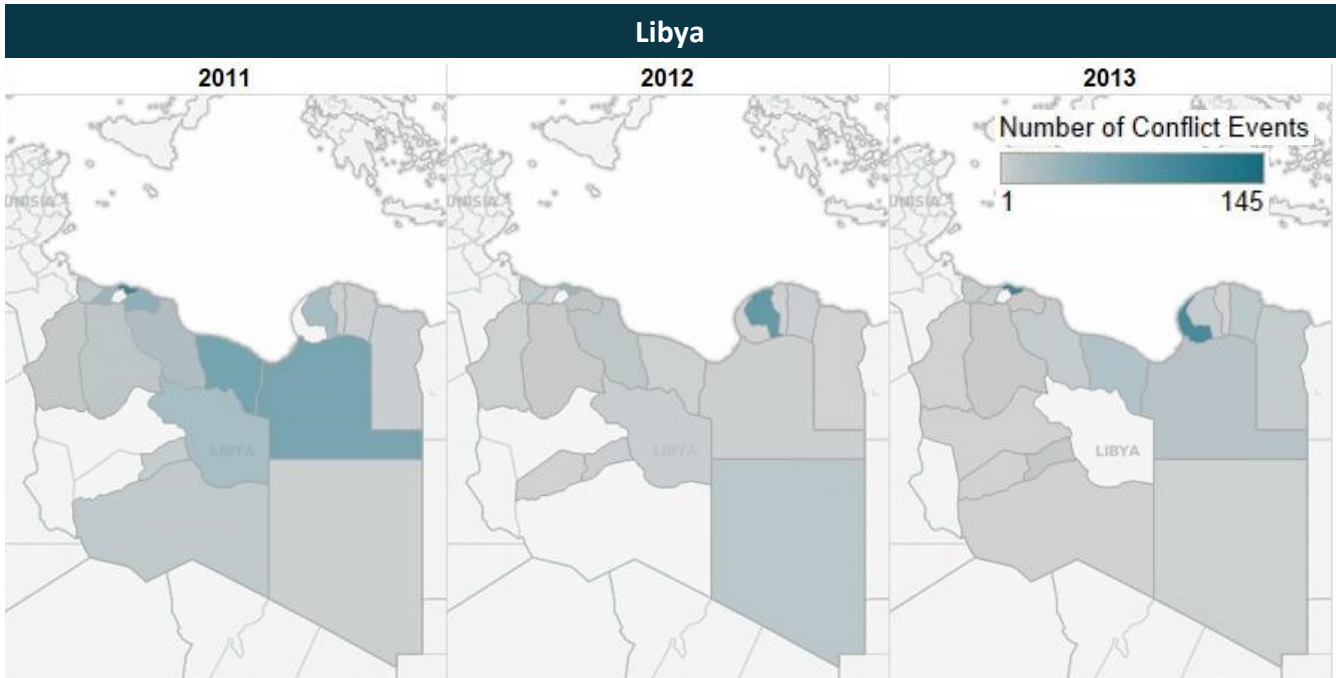
Libya

Figure 9: Conflict Events by Administrative Zone, Libya, January 2011 - November 2013.

power (Project on the Middle East (POMED), 4th December, 2013).

The relative dependency of the government on these groups to maintain security has weakened its ability to dismantle, disarm or integrate them into a formal military units. Furthremore, the apparent impunity with which communal militias operate has triggered growing discontent among the Libyan public, resulting in an increase in riots and protests for the third month in a row.

In the wake of continued riots and protests from a multitude of actors including the minority Berber Amazigh population seeking more autonomy, political rights and higher wages, it was announced that the Libyan economy has lost over $7 billion in revenue from oil outputs (Reuters, 7th December, 2013).

Oil terminal blockades in Ras Lanuf and Zawarah, coupled with a federalist move to establish a separate governing body for Cyrenaica, highlight mounting impatience at the failings of the GNC to deliver on its mandate and has turned the oil industry into a powerful bargaining tool.

Yet, a fall in oil production and revenues may only serve to erode its ability to seize back control into institutions, further fuelling fragmentation and popular uprising in the interim.

The weakness of the national army and near daily targeting of senior military officials by militias and armed groups continues to plague stability. Whilst battles and public demonstrations have tended to be centred in Libya's capital Tripoli and second city Benghazi (*see* Figure 9), 2013 has seen a slight surge in activity in the eastern city of Darnah, remarked as being a hotbed of extremism and the "heartland of Libya's first armed uprising against Gaddafi in the 1980s and '90s" (Time, March 30th, 2012).

After a US Special Forces raid took place in Tripoli in October to capture an Al Qaeda operative, negotiations are underway to implement a joint training programme for Libya's military forces. The success with which rival militia allegiances can be broken down to overcome the security vacuum that currently dominates will be critical in overcoming deepening political divisions and violent clashes.

Support

This material is based upon work supported by, or in part by, the U.S. Army Research Office grant number W911NF-09-1-0077 under the Minerva Initiative of the U.S. Department of Defense.

Sources

Conflict Trends reports are compiled from ACLED data and draw on news sources, civil society reports, and academic and policy analyses. Full details of sources and coding processes are available online at acleddata.com.

9