

CONFLICT TRENDS (NO. 41)

REAL-TIME ANALYSIS OF AFRICAN POLITICAL VIOLENCE, SEPTEMBER 2015

Welcome to the September issue of the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project's (ACLED) *Conflict Trends* report. Each month, ACLED researchers gather, analyse and publish data on political violence in Africa in realtime. Weekly updates to realtime conflict event data are published on the [ACLED website](#), and are also available through our research partners at [Climate Change and African Political Stability \(CCAPS\)](#).

This month's issue focuses on allegations against peacekeeping forces in **Central African Republic**, the continuation of a regime of intimidation in **Egypt**, the potential for **Islamic State expansion** across Africa, decreased levels of violence following peace talks in **South Sudan** and a reduction in violence against civilians in **Sudan**, economically-driven protests in **Tunisia** and patterns of violence surrounding the **Zimbabwe** by-elections. Two Special Focus Topics explore **the containment and diffusion of violence during peacekeeping deployment** and **inequality and conflict across Africa using the Gini Index**.

Elsewhere on the continent, violence increased in **Somalia** while **DR-Congo, Kenya** and **Nigeria** were subject to a drop-off in conflict events.

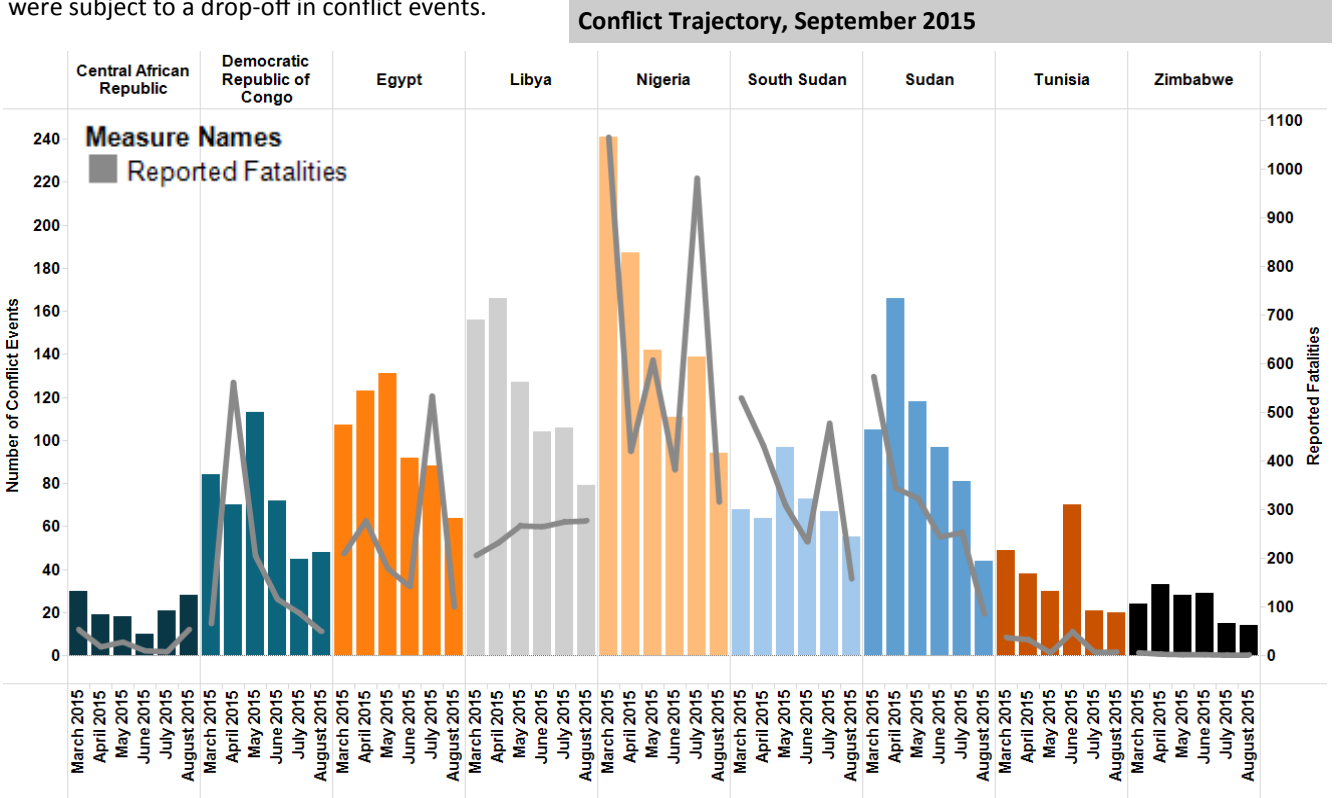
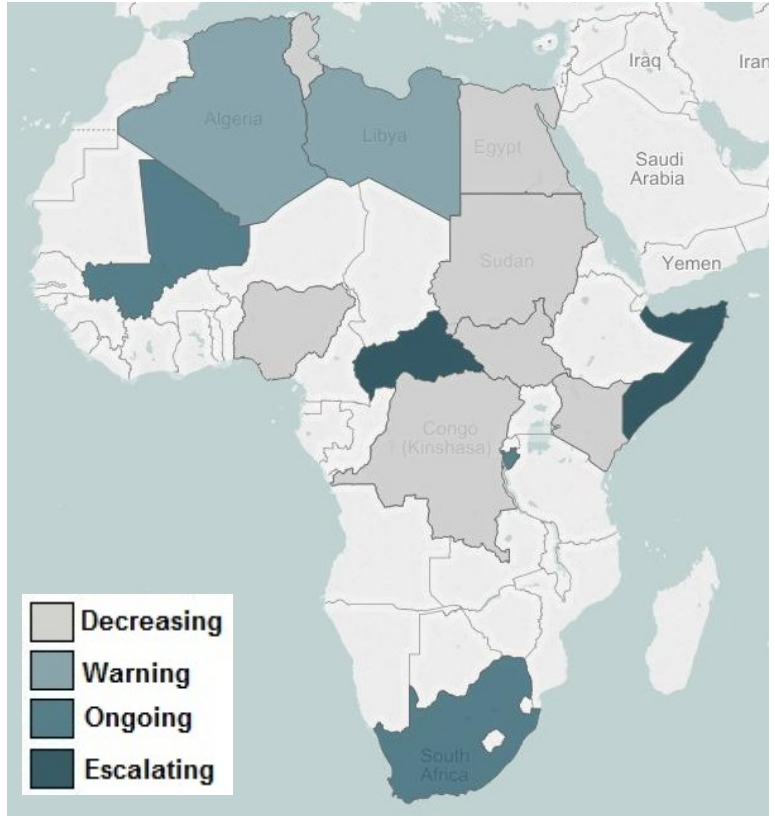


Figure 1: Conflict Events and Reported Fatalities by Country, March - August 2015.

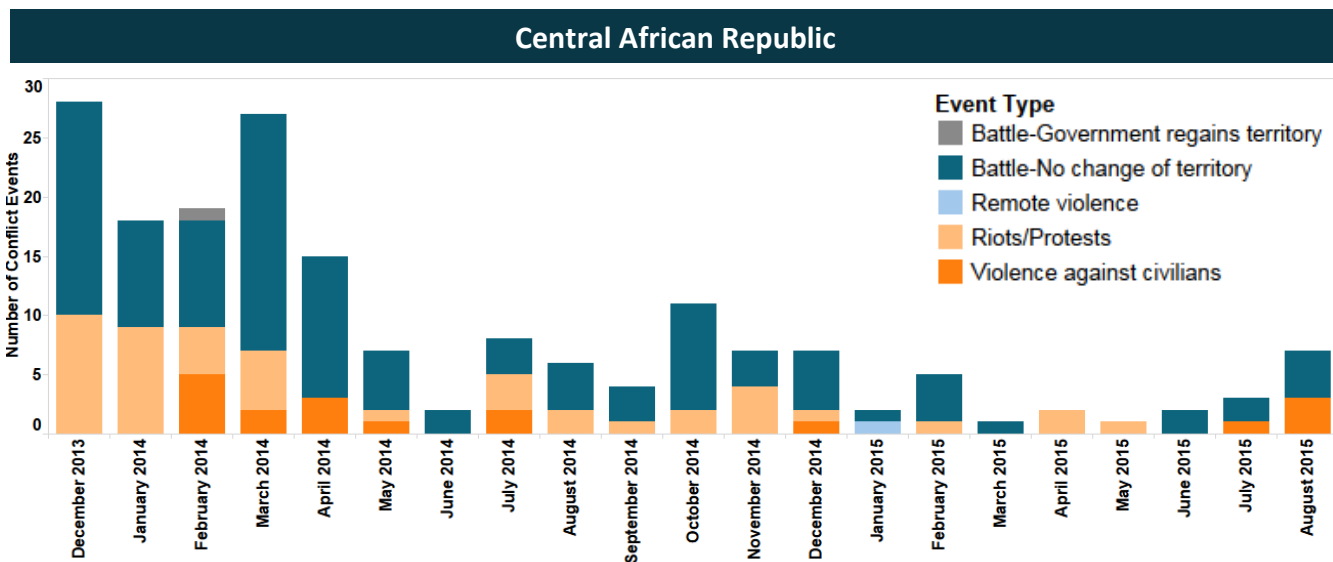


Figure 2: Conflict Events Involving International Forces in Central African Republic, from December 2013 - August 2015.

In April, allegations of child sexual abuse by French soldiers and other nationalities deployed as part of international peacekeeping efforts in Central African Republic surfaced. Since then, troubles have continued to mount for these forces. Despite the largely successful draw-down in violence across much of the country, claims of abuses by peacekeepers, now primarily regarding the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (known by its French acronym MINUSCA), continue to mount against international forces stationed in the country as they continue to engage in sporadic policing operations (see **Figure 2**).

Assessing the effectiveness of the peacekeeping operations, violence involving peacekeeping forces (including French soldiers) has fallen consistently since their deployment. Conflict levels dropped from a high of 28 in December 2013 when they first arrived to a low of only a couple of recorded events per month between March to June 2015. Whilst MISCA and Sangaris forces primarily engaged in battles and a number of riots and protests - often reacting to Anti-Balaka activity - erupted between February and July of 2014, a significant number of events were reported that involved indiscriminate firing on civilians by peacekeeping forces. In February 2014, over 26% of peacekeeping activity involved violence against civilians. **Figure 2** illustrates that this trend may be set to rise again, where July and August 2015 witnessed an upswing in violence against civilians. Despite the effectiveness of the peacekeeping mission, these instances of violence and abuse of civilians have become a major issue.

The disclosure of an internal UN report to French prosecu-

tors by a senior UN aid worker revealed that sexual exploitation of children as young as nine by French soldiers had been documented going back to 2013. The report, purportedly released due to unwillingness within the UN to follow up on its findings, alleged that between December 2013 and June 2014 around 10 children had been abused at the M'Poko airport area, where refugees were under the protection of international forces ([Reuters, April 29, 2015](#)). Following the release of this report, 14 French soldiers have come under investigation, although few have been identified ([The Guardian, May 7, 2015](#)). MISCA and MINUSCA soldiers were also implicated in the abuse ([OHCHR, May 30, 2015](#)).

In addition to these specific allegations, MINUSCA peacekeepers have come under increasing fire for their alleged abuses against civilian populations. Before the transformation of MISCA into MINUSCA, their soldiers had engaged in at least a dozen instances of violence against civilians in 2014, primarily involving indiscriminate attacks on civilians alongside instances of excessive force used against protesters. Many of the civilian deaths caused by these incidents were attributed to Chadian soldiers in the MISCA contingent. Since MISCA transformed into MINUSCA, the proportion of these incidents has fallen, although recent allegations have been made that MINUSCA soldiers sexually abused at least one child and three other women and allegedly caused the deaths of two civilians after a Cameroonian peacekeeper was killed in the area ([Business Insider, August 19, 2015](#)). Although these may be isolated incidents, a rise in violence seen over the past two months could signal trouble ahead.

Egypt

August witnessed a continuation in the decrease of violent conflict events in Egypt, a trend that began in January 2015. Fatalities similarly dropped after military campaigns against the State of Sinai militant group in North Sinai produced a dramatic spike in July (see **Figure 3**). At first, the high casualty rate reported by the Egyptian state media throughout July suggests that military operations have made a significant dent in the operational capacity of the State of Sinai group. However, tightening restrictions over media reports and a sustained attack on the freedom of

press within Egypt warrants careful interpretation of this apparent show of strength by the armed forces. President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi approved a string of new anti-terrorism laws this month provoking widespread criticism from national and international NGOs, rights groups and activists ([BBC News, 17 August 2015](#)).

Under Article 35 of the law, media reports will be required to confirm the Ministry of Defence’s official stance on acts of ‘terrorism’ and anti-terrorism. Reports on militant attacks that contradict official source will be vulnerable to

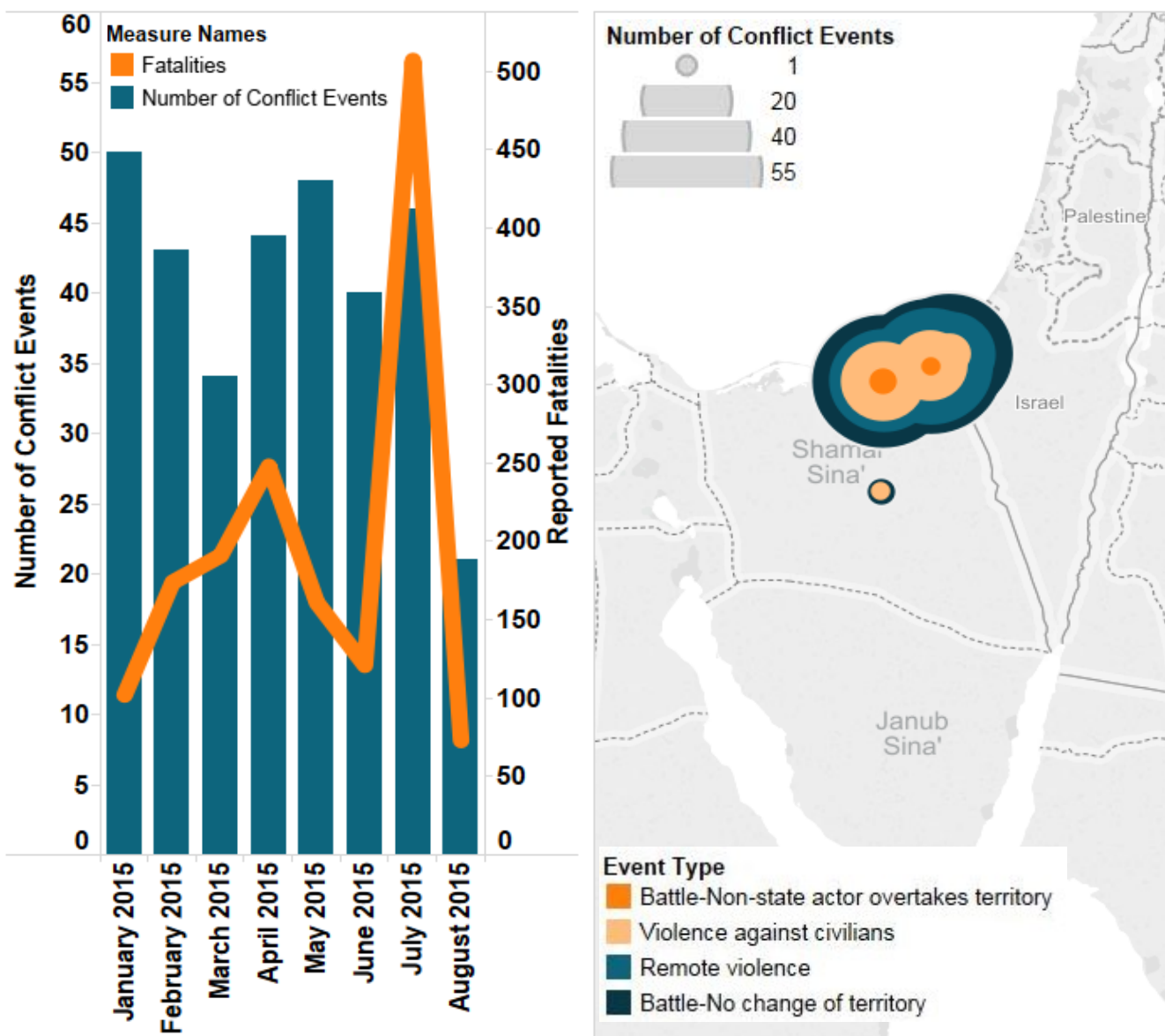


Figure 3: Number of Conflict Events and Reported Fatalities in Sinai and Event Type by Location, in the Sinai Peninsula, Egypt, from January 2015 - August 2015.

Egypt

severe fines between 200,000 and 500,000 Egyptian pounds ([BBC News, 17 August 2015](#)). Consequently, official accounts of militant strikes are likely influenced by a propaganda war in an attempt to erode the attractiveness of joining State of Sinai ranks, undermining recruitment. Current estimates suggest there are between 1,000 and 1,500 active members of the State of Sinai group ([BBC News, 10 August 2015](#)). State media reported at least 205 militant deaths in North Sinai in a three-day period at the beginning of July, indicating a severe blow to the group. Yet this has not deterred the militant insurgency that continues to carry out checkpoint attacks against security personnel.

Journalists have increasingly fallen victim to selective targeting and detention by the state with a growing number of ‘forced disappearances’ of journalists, students, lawyers and Muslim Brotherhood sympathisers. The clear issue underscoring the new anti-terror provision is the deliberately murky definition of ‘terrorism’, which appears to have been designed to justify the security services ruthless elimination of any substantial political disquiet.

In just one example in August, two newspapers had their articles censored, all focusing on high-ranking state officials ([Daily News Egypt, 24 August 2015](#)). The stranglehold over Egyptian political life has extended beyond

purely non-violent activity and Egypt’s Interior Ministry is taking every opportunity to erode the political base of the Muslim Brotherhood through direct violence or through a non-violent regime of intimidation. The state body went as far as dismissing a protest by non-commissioned police officers in the province of Sharqiyah over unpaid salaries, claiming it was incited by Muslim Brotherhood elements ([Daily News Egypt, 23 August 2015](#)). Participating police personnel in fact expressed a number of occupational demands such as the payment of promised bonuses, amendments to pensions and protection of security facilities that appear to reflect historical tensions within the security structure in Egypt, rather than an act of civil disobedience instigated or hijacked by the Muslim Brotherhood.

Furthermore, although overall violence decreased in August, civilian-targeted violence witnessed a resurgence as remote violence continues to dominate the conflict landscape (see **Figure 4**). This comes as a growing number of reports surface over details of ‘extra-judicial’ killings by police forces south of the capital, ranging from torture in prisons and discriminatory shooting of unarmed individuals. The current regime of violence appears set to continue, as the Egyptian leadership remains impervious to the boundaries of constitutional limits.

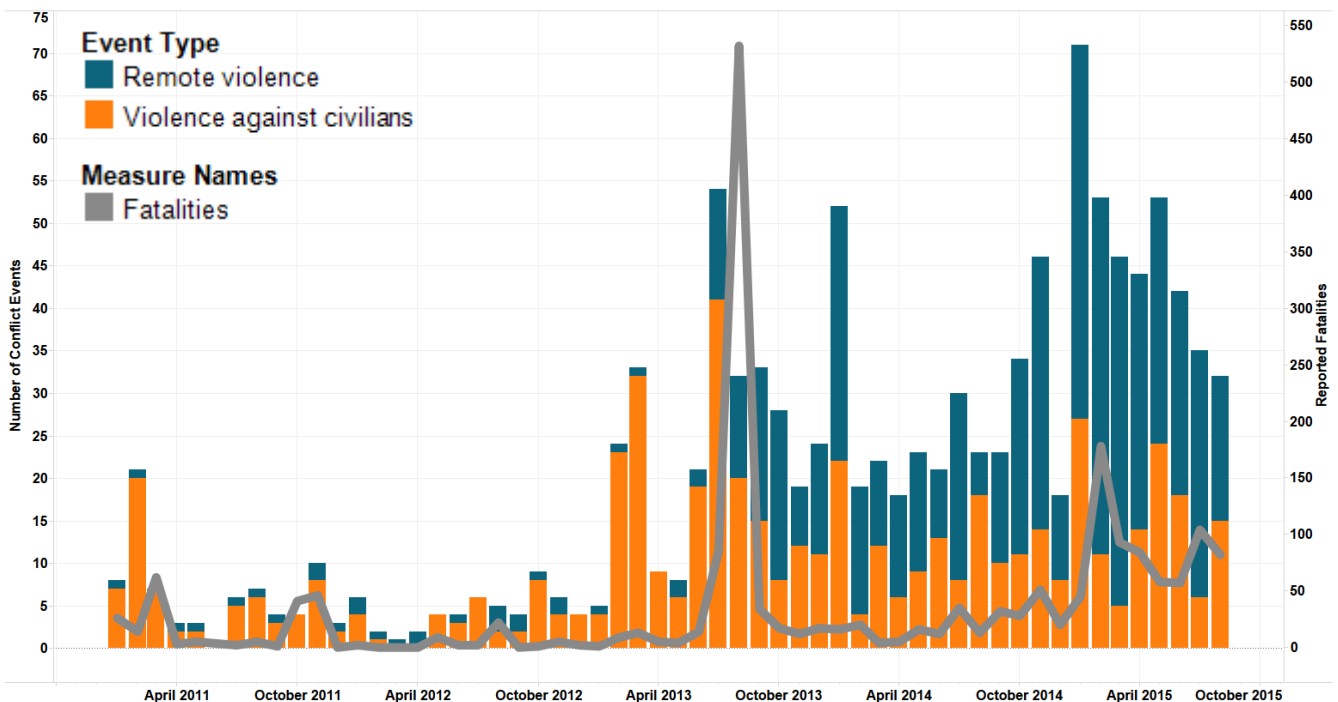


Figure 4: Number of Remote Violence and Violence against Civilians Events in Egypt, from 2011 - August 2015.

Libya: The Prospects of Islamic State Expansion into Africa

In November 2014, The Islamic State’s recruitment and propaganda publication ‘Dabiq’ announced a strategy to ‘remain’ and ‘expand’ ([The Clarion Project, 21 November 2014](#)) in order to consolidate its existing territorial presence whilst spreading the caliphate regionally, and eventually globally to promote disorder and disruption. To date, this stated objective has held true; the group has primarily focused on the “Interior Ring” of Iraq and Syria, whilst extending its reach to the “Near Abroad Ring” ([Middle East Security Report, 28 July 2015](#)) establishing Wilayats (translated as power and authority but often used to refer to provinces) and affiliate networks in Algeria, Egypt, Libya and Pakistan amongst other countries (see [Figure 5](#)).

With international attention pivoting towards the Islamic State’s operational presence in Libya, there have been several attempts to pre-empt their advance both within and outside of Libya. Libya is seen as the Islamic State’s ‘African hub’ ([WSJ, 18 May 2015](#)), offering fertile ground

for expansion into North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa as well as Europe ([The Telegraph, 17 February 2015](#)). The Islamic State’s intentions in Libya have led to brutal displays of force against civilian populations largely concentrated along coastal areas. This has produced and exacerbated the already dramatic humanitarian crisis from a civil war that has displaced thousands of citizens. Libya’s coastal proximity to mainland Europe has made it a key destination for Sub-Saharan migrants to attempt the treacherous sea-crossing resulting in over 200 bodies washing ashore in Zuwara this week ([The Guardian, 28 August 2015](#)). The informal economic activity of the Islamic State, which has significant influence over smuggling networks through coercion of local groups and control over ports, has refocused attention on the potential for Islamic State militants to infiltrate Europe from the Mediterranean Sea.

Thus, the key question for many has been ‘where next’? Will the Islamic State spread south to Sub Saharan Africa and build upon its ties already fostered by Boko Haram in

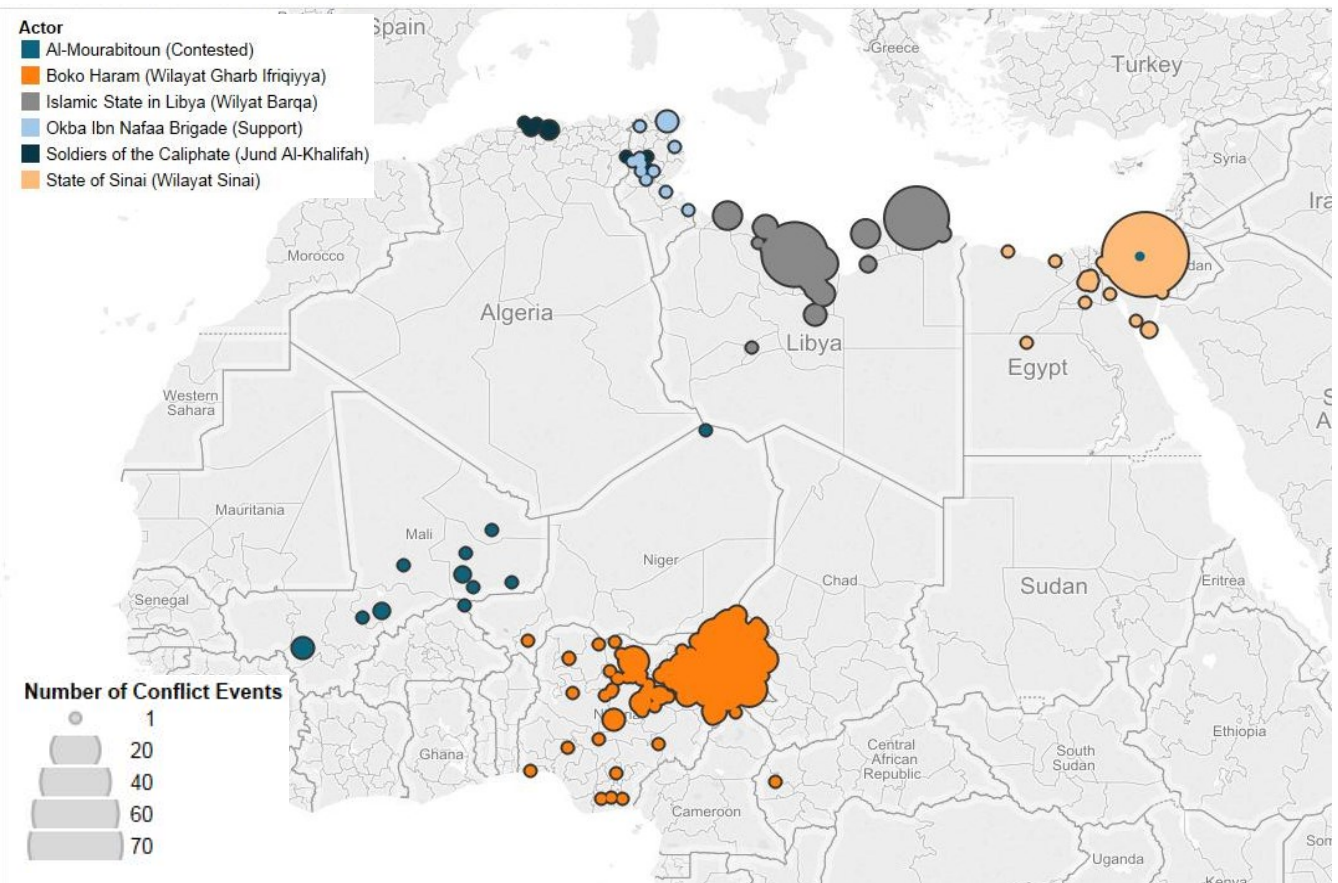


Figure 5: Activity of Groups Pledging Allegiance to, Support for, or with Suspected Links to Islamic State in Africa, from 2014 - August 2015.

Libya: The Prospects of Islamic State Expansion into Africa

Nigeria, or does expansion into Europe loom close? One way to comprehend this is by looking at the nature of the Islamic State franchise beyond its immediate territorial control. U.S. officials and Middle East analysts have commented that although a number of disparate regional groups have pledged allegiance or support to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, “those vows haven't translated into significant efforts by Islamic State to establish ties or expand its outreach” (WSJ, 18 May 2015).

North and West Africa

Across North Africa, areas with strong links to AQIM networks have proven vulnerable to Islamic State expansion. However, despite large numbers of foot soldiers from pro-Al Qaeda groups switching allegiance to the Islamic State, it does not automatically follow that control will extend to these regions. Whilst many groups will have a higher proclivity towards Islamic State absorption, their expansion has exposed rifts between AQIM and Islamic State across the Middle East in Iraq and Syria and North Africa in Libya.

A new development last week may have signalled an obstacle for the Islamic State’s network across the Maghreb after their supporters designated Mokhtar Belmokhtar an enemy (International Business Times, 28 August 2015); accusing him of aiding the fightback by local Al Qaeda-affiliated groups in Derna, Libya. Mokhtar’s linkages and influence across Islamist groups in North Africa suggest that he could be a key broker in the initial success of the Islamic State to expand regionally into West Africa. Should

MUJAO and Al-Mourabitoun link up operationally with Boko Haram or state their intentions to coordinate with the Islamic State clearly, they could form a nucleic command structure to operate and conduct attacks across Mali, Mauritania, Ivory Coast and other West African countries (Zenn, 4 August 2015). Recruitment drives have reached into Ghana after a number of university students travelled to Syria (BBC News, 28 August 2015). Whilst this recruitment is for the outward movement of fighters to Syria, there is potential for these networks to flourish once fighters return home presenting a number of challenges for these countries.

Yet Belmokhtar’s apparent refusal to acknowledge allegiance to the Caliphate and the possibility of burgeoning divisions in Al-Mourabitoun over their allegiance to Islamic State (The North Africa Post, 18 May 2015) illustrates the complex politico-religious choices of these disparate groups and further highlights difficulties of assessing how the Islamic State can make inroads into Africa by penetrating existing AQIM networks. It does however highlight the potential vulnerability of West African regions such as Mali through the interconnected Islamist networks that can be coerced, exploited or co-opted by the Islamic State.

Nigeria

In March 2015, the leader of Boko Haram pledged allegiance to the Islamic State. Since the transition, uncertainty has surrounded the level of operational communication

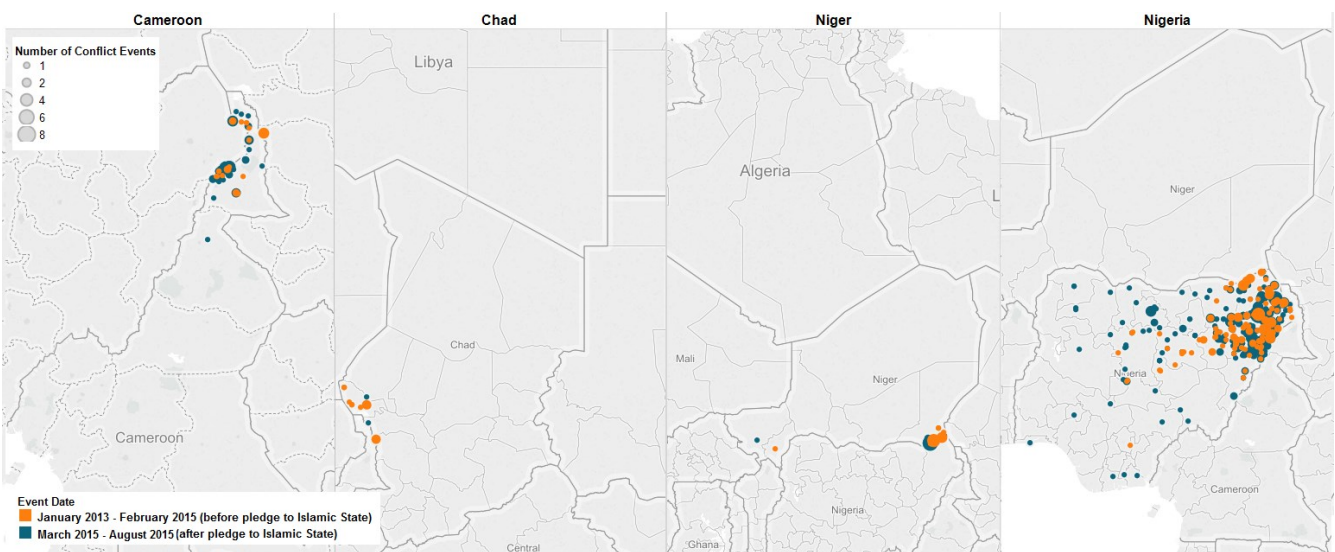


Figure 6: Number of Conflict Events by Boko Haram Before and After Pledging Allegiance to Islamic State, from January 2013 - August 2015.

Libya: The Prospects of Islamic State Expansion into Africa

and influence this has had on the activity of Boko Haram, now referred to as Wilayat Gharb Ifriqiyya (West African Province of Islamic State). It remains contested whether joining a larger umbrella movement holds insight into group strength and dynamics. Although some commentators suggest the pledge indicates a pre-emptive move by a threatened Boko Haram to balance against the military offensive in Borno State before the Nigeria elections, Jacob Zenn points to exchanges between Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and Boko Haram that had already been taking place months previously ([Jihadology, 4 August 2015](#)).

Since Abubakar Shekau’s pledge was accepted around March 7th ([WSJ, 13 March 2015](#)), Boko Haram attacks have diffused with more prominent cross-border activity (see **Figure 6**). This is attributed to revenge attacks on Cameroon, Niger and Chad for supporting the military offensive potentially influenced by growing Islamic State integration. This may demonstrate a geographical shift in agenda, where it is no longer necessary for attacks to cluster in a Nigerian-centred insurgency ([Jihadology, 4 August 2015](#)). Whilst it is difficult to ascertain with certainty whether this indicates an early stage IS expansion, it again demonstrates the potential for the Islamic State to piggyback on existing radical groups and the changing nature of conflict and distribution of violence since Islamic State became a regional player.

Europe

In terms of an Islamic State threat to Europe, the White House spokesperson Josh Earnest provides a useful caveat for interpreting the current threat level.

“I think it’s important for us to differentiate between the spread of Isil and individuals who are trying to attract attention for themselves by claiming an association with Isil...” ([The Guardian, 21 February 2015](#)).

Whilst the potential for expansion in North and West Africa appears to rest upon existing group coordination with a degree of centralised command, lone wolf attacks appear to be the future trajectory in Europe. Presently, ([Hegghammer & Nesser, 2015](#)) identify that isolated attacks conducted by individuals sympathetic to the Islamic State rather than a concerted group effort to organise major attacks characterised the main security threat to Europe. Although Hegghammer identifies that between the period of 2011-mid 2015, 30 out of 69 ‘Jihadi’ plots in the West showed a connection to the Islamic State, he is tentative as to whether these are ‘organised’ or ‘inspired’ by the Islamic State ([Jihadology, 10 August 2015](#)).

Different perspectives on expansion

The assumption that the Islamic State has a clear mandate to expand may not be the most effective way to predict their future expansion. Many analyses that start from this assumption assess the geographical and micro-political factors that increase the propensity of an area to be targeted by Islamic State militants. For example, locations with a history of harbouring radical groups, returnee fighters from the conflict in Syria and Iraq, porous desert borders and the absence of functioning state institutions. Rather than taking this as the foundation to understand where (and whether) the Islamic State movement will expand next, it is more fruitful to explore the processes

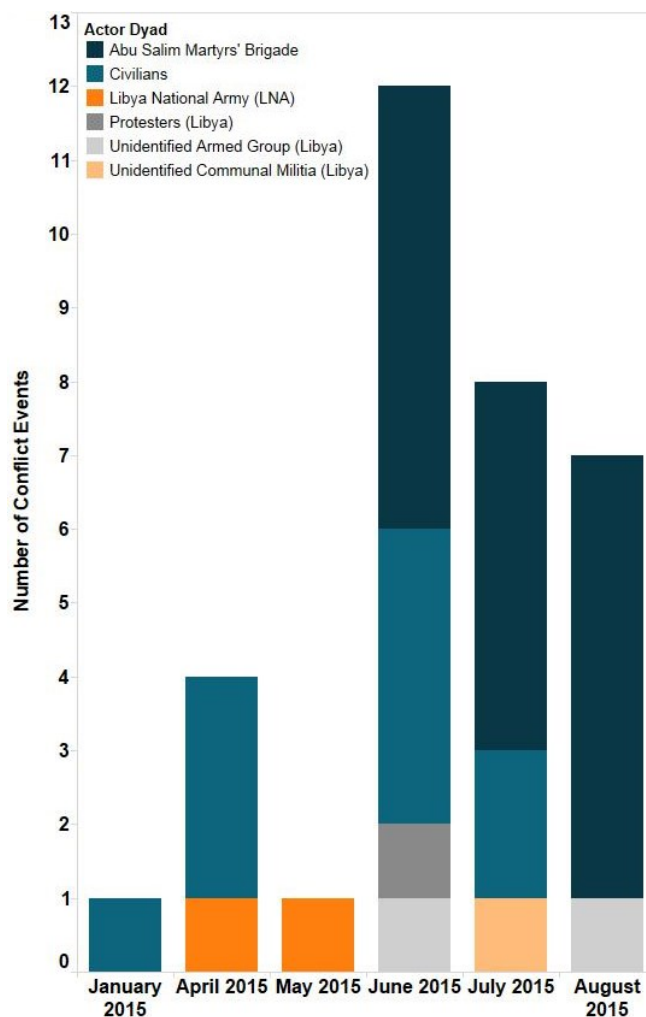


Figure 7: Number of Conflict Events involving Islamic State by Interaction in Derna, Libya, from January - August 2015.

Libya: The Prospects of Islamic State Expansion into Africa

driving this expansion. The fact that the Islamic State has ramped up its activity and presence in Libya demonstrates that the diffusion of their activity is not necessarily indicative of group strength. Conflict has flared around Derna in recent weeks (see Figure 7), with a local Abu Salim Martyrs' Brigade regaining control of the city and pushing Islamic State militants to farm areas to the east.

"ISIL is very much like a balloon," said one senior defense official. "When you squeeze it, it moves elsewhere. They've shown that in Iraq, to some degree, where they live to fight another day" (WSJ, 18 May 2015).

Thus from this standpoint, whilst it is critical to identify where Islamic State are likely to expand globally, in order to sufficiently address this, analyses need to overcome the overly narrow focus on Islamic State as the unit of analysis to examine the strategies of state and non-state actors tackling Islamic State. The map below illustrates the diverse nature of the fight against the Islamic State by highlighting the multitude of actors engaging with and shaping the strategic calculus of the Islamic State in Libya (see Figure 8). As a result, we may develop a more accurate indication of whether their diffusion is an indication of

growing strength, or whether their territorial diffusion is an adaptive strategy as a result of being pushed out of areas by counterinsurgency or local uprisings. Building on the work of [Schutte and Weidmann \(2011\)](#), further research is needed to distinguish between the relocation of violence and spatial expansion of violence to understand the ability of Islamic State groups to grow their power base. The activity of groups affiliated to the Islamic State in Libya and Nigeria show the potential for patterns of contagion, but relatively little is understood about the mechanisms driving this. It is uncertain whether the movement of violence over borders in Nigeria and increasing territorial activity outside of Derna and Sirte in Libya are a result of growing group strength or successful incursions by state forces.

Understanding whether the movement of conflict out of one area into another indicates an adaptive strategy by weakened militants and whether spatial expansion of the scope of conflict signals growing strength and escalatory patterns will enable an alternative assessment of the prospect of Islamic State expansion further into Africa in the near future.

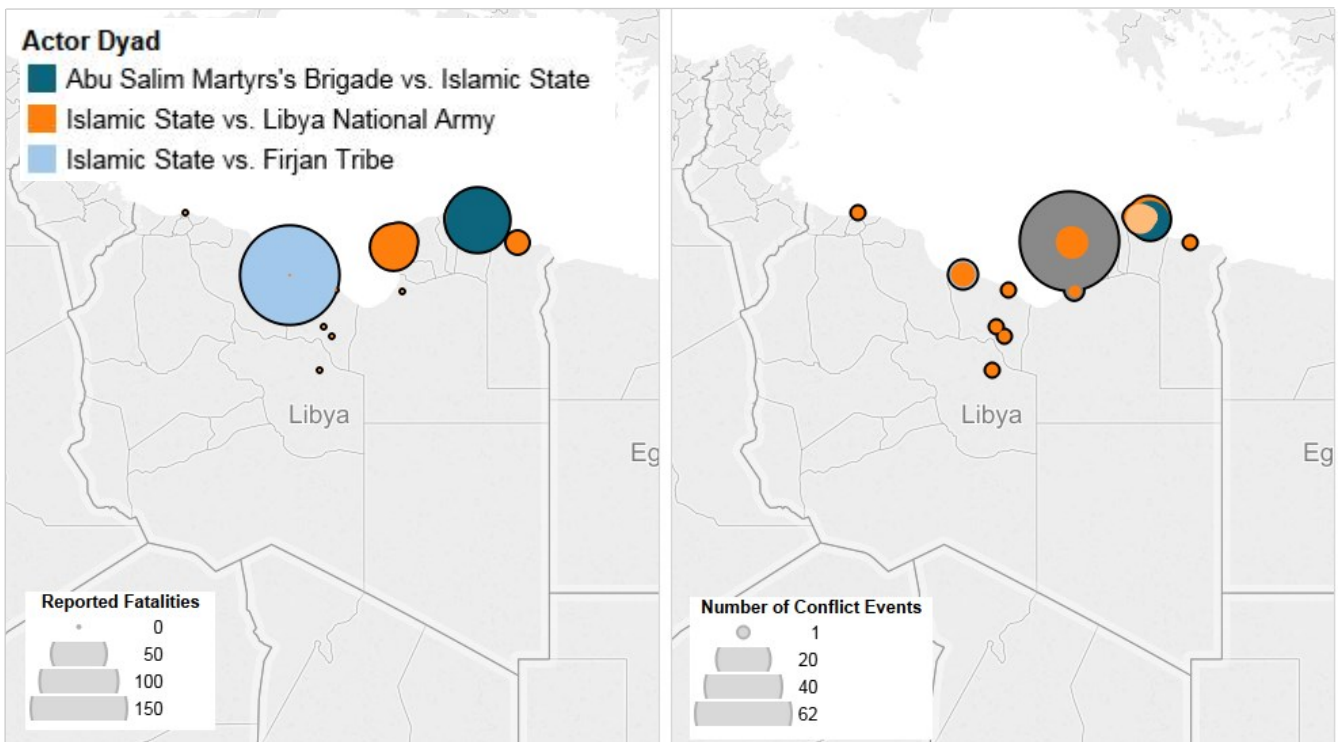


Figure 8: Number of Reported Fatalities by Dyadic Interaction and Location (left) and Number of Conflict Events by Dyadic Interaction and Location (right) in Libya, from 2014 - 15 August 2015.

South Sudan

Levels of political violence in South Sudan decreased in August with reported fatalities falling by over 60% (see **Figure 9**). This relative lull in violence follows a particularly unstable July in which government forces — supported by Bul Nuer and Warrap Dinka fighters — killed 200 civilians in Mayendit and Leer ([Sudan Tribune, 12 August 2015](#)). This assault on the home area of rebel commander Riek Machar occurred within the context of repeated territorial losses by the government. There have been no reports of the government recovering territory since June. In contrast, the rebel Sudan People’s Liberation Army — In Opposition (SPLA-IO) has made territorial gains every month since May. Governments often use violence against civilians as a means to signal to rebel groups that if they continue their campaign, the cost to their constituency will be high ([Stanton, 2009](#)). In the face of repeated battlefield defeats, such tactics may be attractive to the South Sudanese administration.

The decrease in violence in August is likely due to the latest round of peace talks between the government and SPLA-IO. Conflict actors use the lull in fighting during peace negotiations to court both domestic and international support and consolidate their war gains ([Stevenson, 17 February 2014](#)). However, these negotiations are unlikely to lead to an enduring peace. There have so far been over seven attempts at forming a political consensus between the warring parties and so far all have failed. This repeated failure is partly due to partisanship within the

Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) which is overseeing the peace process.

Uganda, a key IGAD member, remains both unwaveringly supportive of the Kiir regime and unwilling to remove its troops from South Sudan, a key demand by the opposition in previous negotiations ([Bereketeab, 2015](#)). Uganda also considers the SPLA-IO a proxy of Khartoum and worries that a South Sudan in which Machar has political power would be less amenable to Uganda’s interests.

Uganda’s influence in the latest round of talks has made the peace deal markedly less attractive to the opposition. The original draft gave considerable power to the opposition, but after IGAD met in Kampala on 10 August, the opposition’s share of government in Upper Nile, Unity and Jonglei states was cut from 53% to 40% ([Africa Confidential, 27 August 2015](#)). Furthermore, while the early draft called for 'complete withdrawal of all foreign forces/militia allied to either party' within 45 days, the redrafted deal redefines the parties to withdraw as 'state security actors' ([Africa Confidential, 27 August 2015](#)). This change in language may allow Uganda to keep its troops within South Sudan without violating the agreement.

Uganda and Sudan are not the only partisan actors in IGAD stymying the peace process, both Kenya and Ethiopia have considerable economic and political interests in South Sudan ([Bereketeab, 2015](#)). It is unlikely that a durable peace deal will be negotiated while the actors overseeing the peace process remain so divided.

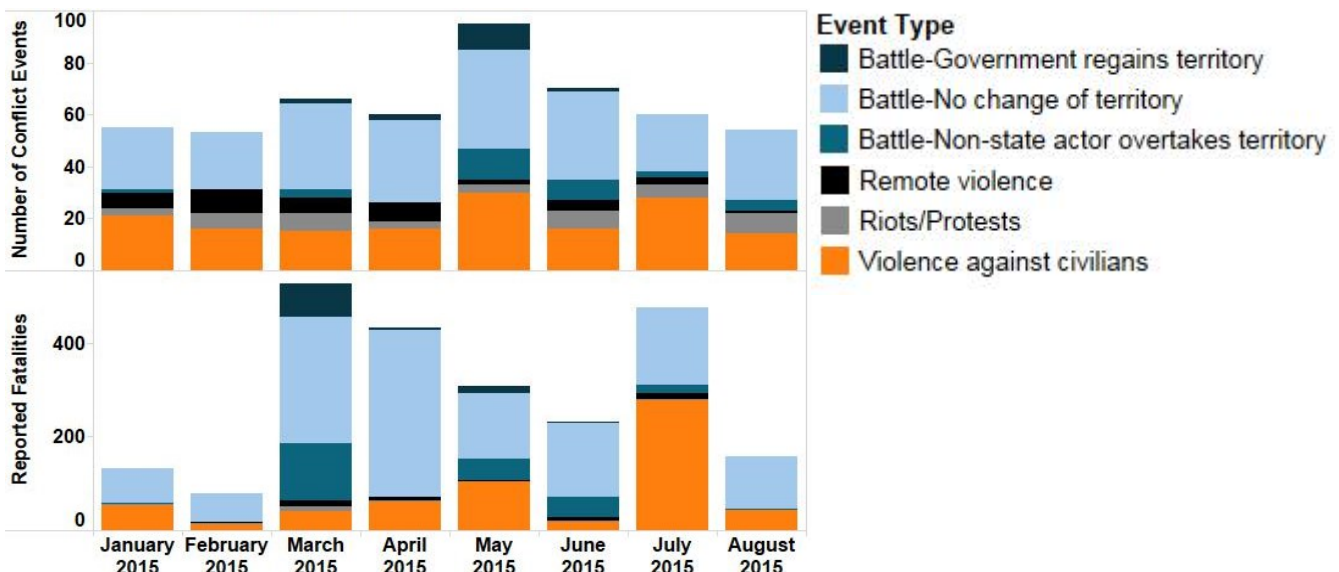


Figure 9: Number of Conflict Events and Reported Fatalities by Event Type in South Sudan, from January - August 2015.

CONFLICT TRENDS (NO. 41)

REAL-TIME ANALYSIS OF AFRICAN POLITICAL VIOLENCE, SEPTEMBER 2015

Sudan

August witnessed the lowest levels of political violence in Sudan, both in terms of activity and reported fatalities since the start of 2015. This decrease in violence has been driven by a reduction in violence against civilians, especially by political militias as incidences of civilian targeting by political militias decreased from 41 in July to 21 in August (see **Figure 10**). There were no reported attacks from government-aligned militias such as the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) or the Popular Defence Forces (PDF) and most incidences of violence against civilians were perpetrated by unidentified militias. This indicates that while government sponsored militias are not currently engaging in an active campaign, civilians remain at risk due to a culture of impunity that has taken hold in the region.

It is also uncertain whether this break in government-sponsored militia activity will last as the government in late August sent a new force of recently graduated RSF militiamen to Darfur on a counter-insurgency mission ([Radio Dabanga, 23 August 2015](#)).

Similarly, rebel activity has dramatically decreased in the last two months. This lull in activity may be due to President Bashir’s announcement the National Dialogue peace process will restart in early October ([Taylor, 13 August 2015](#)). The National Dialogue talks have been previously stalled due to the opposition accusing the government of failing to provide a suitable environment for negotiation.

Common accusations include incessant repression of the press and obstructive crackdowns by the police. During the past month, rebel groups including as the various factions of the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement (SPLM), and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) have been engaged in meetings setting out their demands for a conducive environment for negotiation ([Radio Dabanga, 17 August 2015](#)). Bashir later offered a two-month ceasefire and amnesty to allow the negotiations to take place, which was accepted by the Sudanese Revolutionary Forces (SRF) rebel coalition ([Amin, 25 August 2015](#)).

In March, the government refused to take part in a two-day pre-dialogue meeting to discuss and agree on procedural matters relating to the dialogue process ([Sudan Tribune, 19 August 2015](#)). Yet this refusal to engage with the opposition seems to have dissipated in the aftermath of Bashir’s electoral victory. It is likely that Bashir’s previous intransigence was a tactic to appease his constituents while provoking the political opposition to boycott the elections. With Bashir guaranteed another term in office, it is possible that he may be more amenable to negotiation. However, ceasefires between the government and the rebel Sudanese People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) were repeatedly violated during the Second Sudanese Civil War. With such a precedent, it is uncertain whether this cessation of hostilities will last through the National Dialogue ([International Crisis Group, 2002](#)).

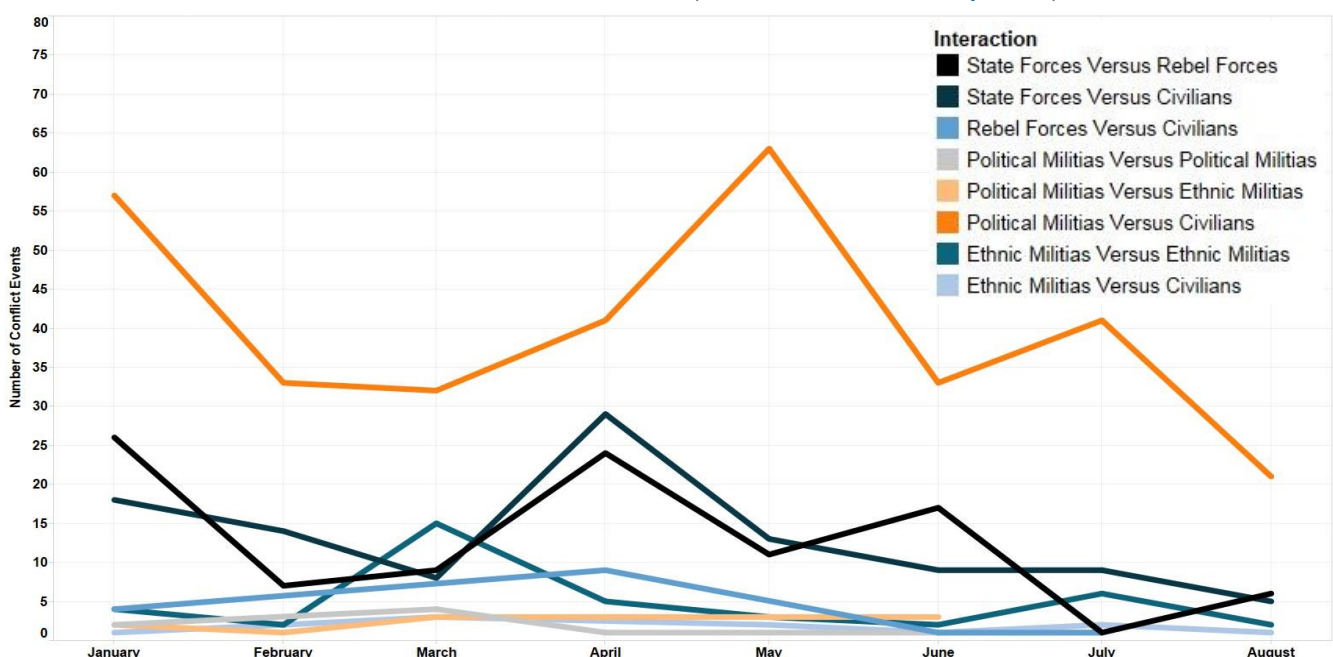


Figure 10: Political Violence by Interaction in Sudan, from January 2015 - August 2015.

Tunisia

For the second consecutive month, the number of conflict events in Tunisia continued to decrease and overall conflict remained below average levels. In August, ACLED recorded 18 discrete conflict events, the lowest level since November 2014 when, however, the number of fatalities was higher (11, against the 6 recorded in the past month). This decline follows a spike in political violence in the first months of 2015, similar to that Tunisia which witnessed during the 2011 revolts.

This overall decrease in conflict activity reveals significant differences in the nature and the geography of political violence (see **Figure 11**). The number of riots and protests has dropped drastically since June, while other forms of violent conflict — such as battles between armed groups and violence against civilians — show a less dramatic variation in the same period. The decrease in the number of conflict events has been most acute in Tunis and in the provinces of Kebili and Gabes. In the capital city, the state of emergency declared on July 4th and the subsequent deployment of security forces around the main national institutions has limited the space for both peaceful and violent contestation ([ACLED Trends Report, August 2015](#)).

Outside Tunis, the temporary ending of prolonged industrial crises in the oil plants near Kebili and Gabes was instrumental in moderating protest activity at the regional level. By contrast, the central provinces of Sfax and Sidi Bouzid witnessed a slight increase in conflict levels due to

the occurrence of service delivery protests and teachers' sit-ins, which often encountered harsh police repression ([Shems FM, 21 August 2015](#)). In an attempt to disperse the demonstrations, police forces fired teargas on protesters in Sidi Bouzid, Gabes and Sfax, drawing widespread criticism for a disproportionate use of force. These episodes reflect the chronic inability of Tunisian police to deal with protesters, which has eroded trust in the police and alienated younger generations ([Strickland, 24 October 2014](#)). In order to remedy these shortcomings, the Interior Minister Najem Gharsalli pledged to introduce new deterrence strategies aimed at safeguarding human rights and the citizens' physical integrity ([Tunis Afrique Presse, 28 August 2015](#)).

Underlying all this is an increasingly daunting economic situation. According to a report released by the Tunisian Central Bank, Tunisia's gross domestic product decreased by 0,7% compared with the previous quarter ([Té-Léssia, 27 August 2015](#)). The report also confirmed that the attacks on foreign nationals in March and June have negatively affected the tourist economy, with tourist numbers registering a dramatic fall in July. The unemployment rate also rose at its highest since March 2014, showing no sign of decrease especially in the peripheral regions of Southern and Western Tunisia ([National Institute of Statistics, 19 August 2015](#)). It is thus unclear whether the lull in political violence between July and August will hold, particularly if the current socioeconomic condition is doomed to persist.

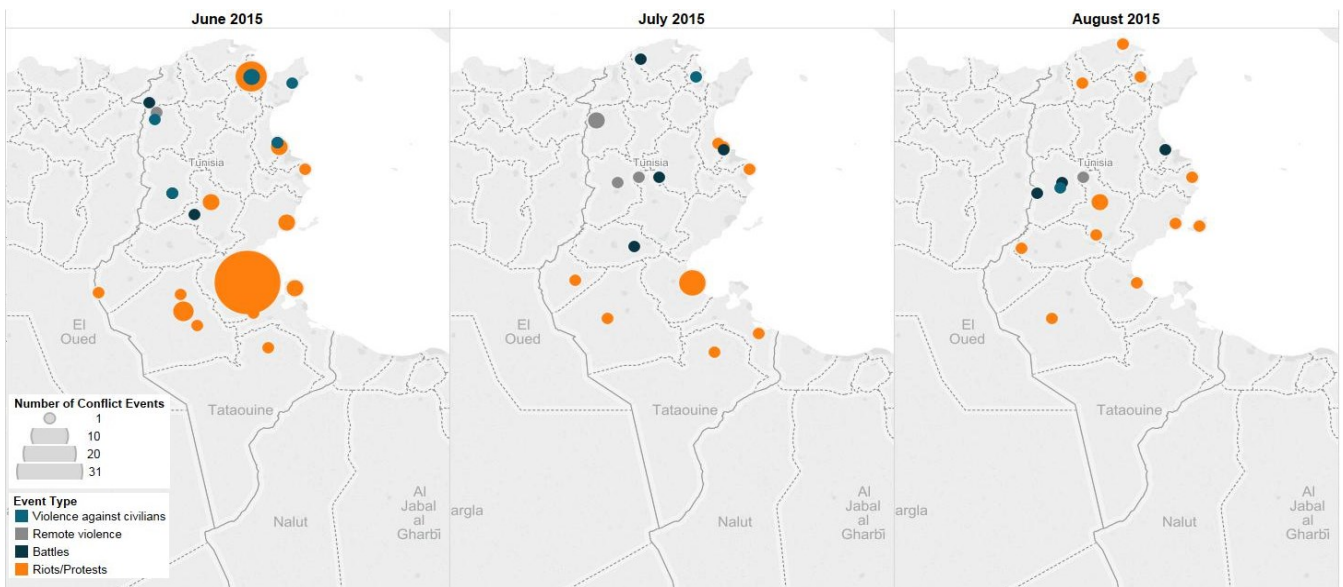


Figure 11: Number of Conflict Events by Province in Tunisia, from June 2015 - August 2015.

Zimbabwe

In August, conflict activity in Zimbabwe reached the lowest levels since December 2014, with 12 recorded conflict events and no reported fatalities. Conflict levels have been decreasing since April, when competition for the June by-elections contributed to escalating violence ([ACLED Trends Report, June 2015](#)). As the different factions of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) opted to boycott the by-elections, the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) secured all 16 seats and reinforced its parliamentary majority ([Mananavire, 12 June 2015](#)). The splits within ZANU-PF triggered a new round of by-elections that are due to take place on 19th September. Three members of parliament who belong to Joice Mujuru’s Zimbabwe African National Union-People First (ZANU-People First) were expelled from the assembly, leaving their seats in Marondera, Mberera and Mwenezi vacant ([Africa Confidential, 22 July 2015](#)).

However, the electoral competition for the upcoming by-elections did not translate into full-scale violence as in April. In July and August, the incidence of violence against civilians and between rival political factions did not increase significantly in the contested constituencies, with occasional violent events involving ZANU-PF or MDC members taking place in Mwenezi and Goromonzi (see **Figure 12**). This change could be due to the fact that the September polls have become increasingly marginal, especially after the sweeping victory ensured by ZANU-PF in June. Additionally, MDC candidates may not even stand in the upcoming by-elections, turning the electoral contest

into an intra-party competition.

By contrast, instability remained at high levels in the capital. Protests broke out in Harare after a recent Supreme Court’s ruling that allow employers to dismiss workers giving three months’ notice and no compensation. Several members of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) and journalists who were covering the events were arrested prior to the demonstrations, which were met by a massive deployment of riot police ([Agence France Presse, 8 August 2015](#)). Minor clashes also involved vendors and police who tried to seize their goods and relocate them into designated areas following attempts to regulate informal street trade ([Africa Confidential, 20 August 2015](#)). While unemployment drives many young people to street vending, authorities fear that party-aligned kingmakers may be tempted to capitalise on informal street trade to create patronage networks for the youth wings.

Rumours that Grace Mugabe could run for presidency in 2018 are likely to foster factionalism in ZANU-PF, especially if Vice-President Emmerson Mnangagwa will not give up on succeeding the 91-year-old Mugabe ([Africa Confidential, 20 August 2015](#)). The question is whether the ageing leader will be able to tighten his grip on the party and prevent intra-party competition from escalating into violence. However, the opposition MDC will need to resolve its own problems with factionalism if it wants to capitalise on ZANU-PF’s internal splits.

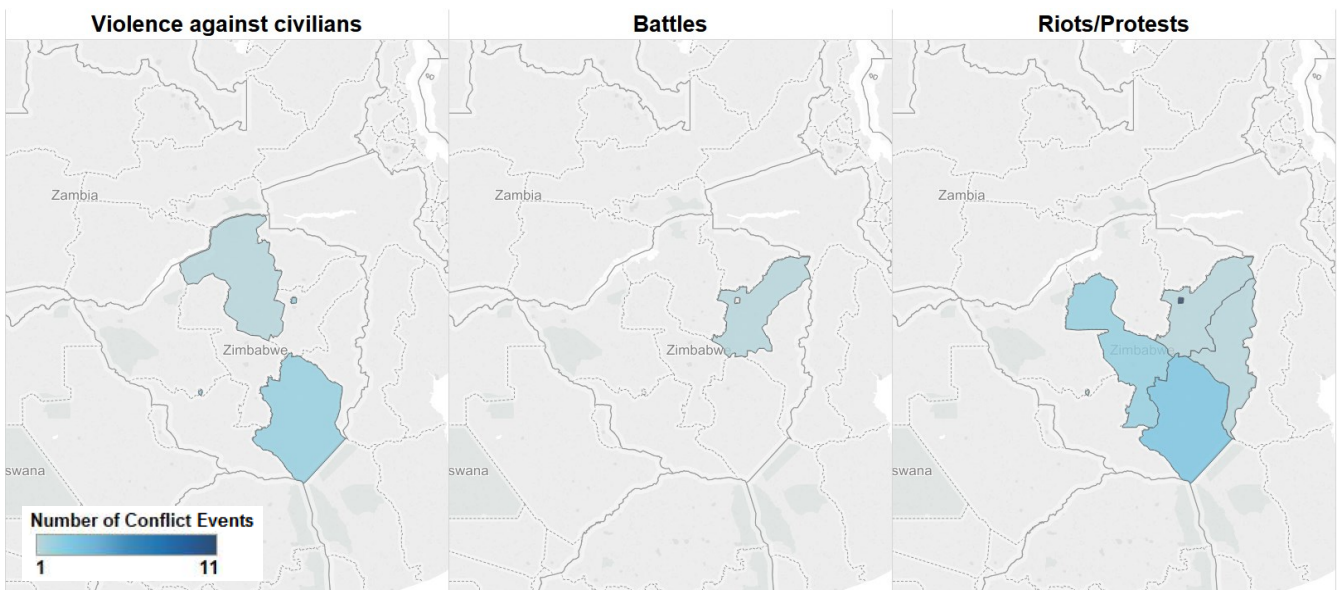


Figure 12: Number of Conflict Events by Type and Province in Zimbabwe, from July - August 2015.

Special Focus Topic: The Geographic Profile of Violence against Civilians during Peacekeeping Deployment—Containment and Diffusion

Investigating the ability of peacekeeping (PK) missions to reduce levels of violence against civilians (VAC) requires an assessment of whether these deployments control the spread of anti-civilian actions. Previous studies contend that PK operations prevent contagion and reduce the scope of rebel violence by reducing their external shelters and restricting their ability to move (Beardsley, 2010; Beardsley and Gleditsch, 2015). However, other research has drawn on case studies to demonstrate that PK missions might contribute to the relocation VAC into areas that peacekeepers cannot reach. Examples of this include the eastern part of the DR-Congo during the Ituri and Bukavu crisis in 2003-2004, and the trans-border area between Darfur (Sudan) and Chad (Clarik, 2008; Seybolt, 2012).

Drawing on these analyses, it is possible that deploying a PK mission will foster the relocation of anti-civilian activity, and that higher levels of VAC will subsequently be found outside of the mission’s scope. Analysing the locations of VAC, two opposing patterns are evident: in some

cases, VAC spreads (as was the case in the Ituri crisis, and the Kivus, both in DR-Congo), while in others, VAC is relatively contained (Darfur, Sudan; Mali). Both these patterns are also conditioned by an overall increase (Darfur, Sudan; Ituri crisis, DR-Congo) or decrease (Mali; Kivus, DR-Congo) in VAC event levels. As such, even in cases of the geographic containment of VAC, this does not necessarily correspond to an overall reduction of levels of anti-civilian violence, nor does a spread imply an absolute increase in civilian targeting.

Containment

In the case of Darfur, there has been strong criticism of the role of the UNMIS (2005-2011), and the UNAMID (2007 – present) missions, and their lack of success in containing anti-civilian violence. Report from Human Rights Watch highlighted the inability of these missions to prevent cross-border violence, notably towards refugees in several Chadian camps (HWR, 2006). More recent analyses have contended that in Darfur, despite the deployment of UNAMID, VAC remains a persistent feature of conflict. Clarik (2008) has shown that violence progressively shifted towards the Chadian border from 2004 to 2008. Similarly, he demonstrated that levels of anti-civilian violence increased on the Chadian side of the border, particularly in 2008.

An analysis of ACLED data from this region confirms this pattern during UNMIS deployment and the first years of UNAMID (2007-2009), when there were significant levels of VAC near the border in Chad (see Figure 13). However, over time, there has been an evolution of the violence pattern away from the initial spill-over to Chad to subsequent geographic containment in Darfur. Whereas levels of VAC have increased overall in Darfur, this has coincided with a decrease in its geographic spread, and a concentration within Sudan. Since the end of 2010 and the withdrawal of MINUCAT – tasked with protecting refugees alongside Eufor Chad/CAR – not a single anti-civilian violence event has been recorded in the eastern parts of Chad. New events that occurred in 2013 onwards in CAR were not directly related to the Darfur crisis. This indicates a reignition of the Darfur Crisis in a different form than that which was experienced in earlier years.

Despite UNAMID’s inability to ensure the effective protection of civilians, anti-civilian violence has in recent years

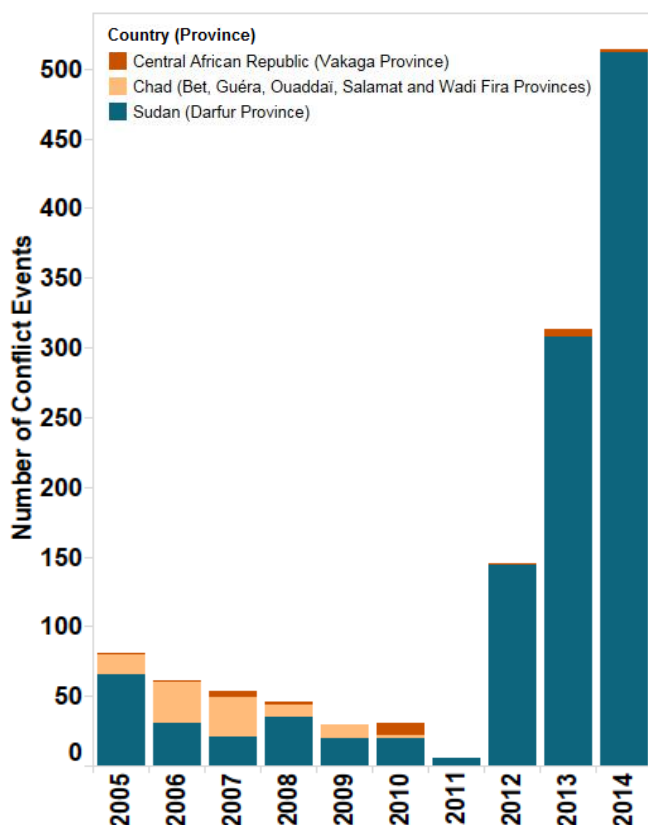


Figure 13: Violence against Civilians in Darfur, Eastern Chad and Eastern Central African Republic, from 2005 - 2014.

Special Focus Topic: The Geographic Profile of Violence against Civilians during Peacekeeping Deployment—Containment and Diffusion

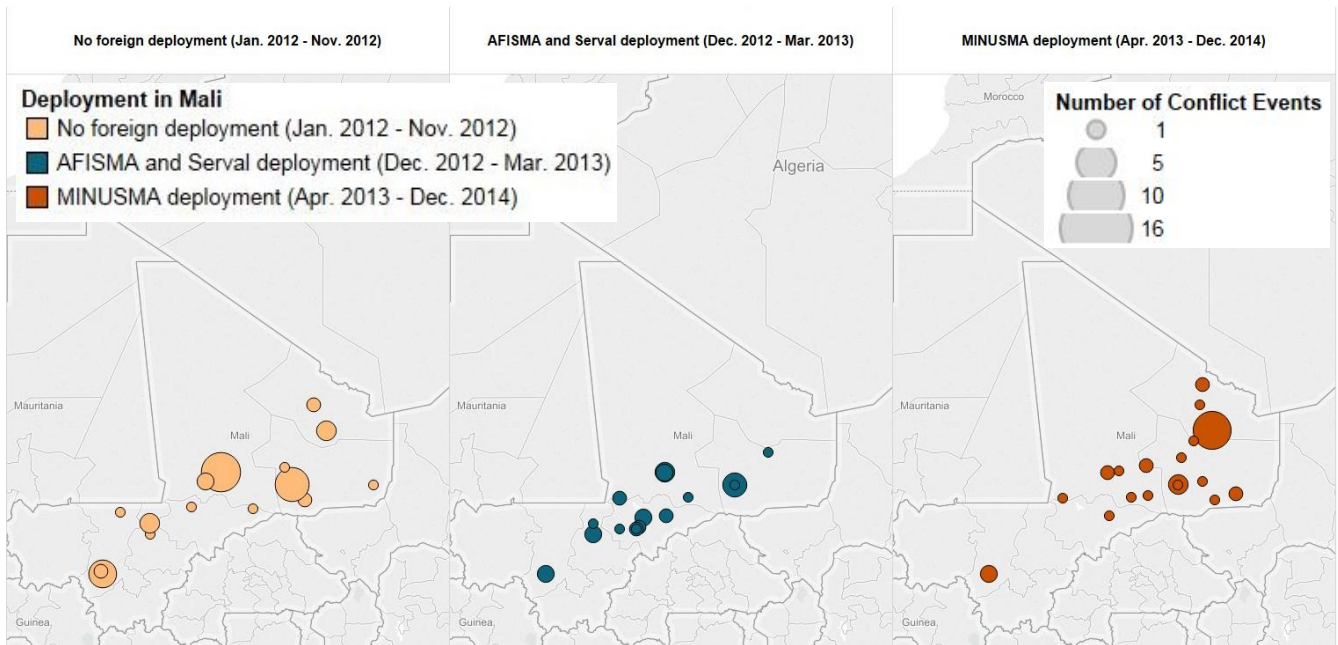


Figure 14: Violence against Civilians in Mali, by Enforcement and Peacekeeping Deployments and Location, from 2012 - 2014.

been geographically contained within Sudan. The extent to which this can be directly attributed to success on UNAMID’s part is unclear; it appears instead that the most important factor in shaping this geographic profile was the changing diplomatic relationship between Chad and Sudan. Attempts to normalize relations between Chad and Sudan in January 2010, contributed to the return of rebel groups in either country ([Sudan Tribune, 2010](#)). This agreement also allowed the deployment of 1,500 soldiers on a Joint Sudan-Chad border force to prevent rebels’ cross-border movements ([International Crisis Group, 2010](#)). While ending this proxy war by suppressing support to rebel groups, this agreement may have contributed to the concentration of anti-civilian actions within Darfur, where the violence was still on-going.

A similar pattern is evident in Mali, where the dynamics of violence support previous findings that VAC can be geographically contained following intervention. Although Tuareg rebels and Islamist groups were primarily responsible for anti-civilian violence in the northern regions of Gao, Kidal and Timbuktu, more limited civilian targeting occurred further south. Several anti-civilian attacks were also committed by government forces in Bamako, during the period immediately surrounding the March 2012 coup. However, by early 2013, enforcement deployments

(French *Operation Serval* alongside AFISMA) contributed to a progressive containment of anti-civilian violence in northern regions. Challenges faced by the Tuareg and Islamist groups forced them to retreat further in the north.

As **Figure 14** shows, three distinct stages of VAC can be identified in Mali. First, from January 2012 to November 2012, high VAC was recorded throughout the whole country. Second, the intervention (December 2012 – March 2013) of French *Operation Serval* forces (alongside AFISMA operation) contributed to the concentration of VAC in the north-central part of Mali, especially in Mopti and Segou regions, during a period when non-state armed groups still controlled several cities further north. Finally, when MINUSMA was deployed in April 2013, levels of VAC became concentrated in the extreme north in Gao, Kidal and Timbuktu.

In addition, neighbouring countries have not observed any significant spill-over of VAC due to displacement of regional armed groups such as AQIM. Mali therefore illustrates how the scope of VAC can be reduced and contained. Once more, the extent to which PK forces are responsible for this reduction in overall levels of VAC is debatable: the role of French and AFISMA troops appears to have been more important in reducing and containing the spread of violence, as well as the normalization of the political situa-

Special Focus Topic: The Geographic Profile of Violence against Civilians during Peacekeeping Deployment—Containment and Diffusion

tion. MINUSMA’s primary contribution appears to have been sustaining that containment and preventing a re-diffusion.

Diffusion

In contrast to this first pattern, some countries have observed a diffusion of VAC during PK deployment. Research from Liberia show that VAC occurred in areas where peacekeepers were not present in the first stage of UNMIL deployment (Sept.-Oct. 2003), mainly in the eastern part of the country. Later, the absence of police forces can account for the recurrence of VAC in Grand Bassa and Montserrado, notably in May 2005 ([Amnesty International, 2005](#)). A study of DR-Congo further illustrates this dynamic of spreading violence. Following the April 2003 withdrawal of Ugandan MONUC peacekeepers from Ituri (Orientale Province, DR-Congo), the French-led Artemis mission was deployed in June 2003 in Bunia, to stabilize the situation. More than 500 civilians had been killed in early May 2003, and MONUC’s remaining forces were unable to prevent any of those massacres, revealing a vacuum of power ([Holt et al., 2009](#)). Following Artemis deployment in June, the situation in Bunia and the main towns in Ituri became more stable, but remained violent. MONUC forces redeployed from September 2003: out of 10,800 MONUC peacekeepers, 4,700 were deployed near Ituri and 4,000 in Maniema province. The remaining 2,100 were allocated to protect other areas in the Kivu ([IRIN,](#)

[2004](#)).

As **Figure 15** shows, from January 2003 until August 2003, anti-civilian violence was mainly concentrated in Ituri (Orientale province) and in South Kivu. Progressive redeployment from September 2003 subsequently contributed to a relocation of VAC to the Kivus. Although fatality levels were 8 times lower (on average, 16 per week from January 2003 until August 2003, then 2 per week until June 2004), the geographic spread of VAC was wider. From September 2003 until June 2004, 75% of anti-civilian violence occurred in the Kivus, compared to 54% from January 2003 until August 2003. One possible explanation for this is that the redeployment of troops into Maniema and Oriental provinces instead of the Kivus, contributed to a shift in the security context in favour of rebel groups in the east. In the absence of the strong PK presence in the Kivus, non-state armed groups were more likely to engage in anti-civilian violence. MONUC’s ability to protect civilians in different areas appears to have been limited. At the end of May 2004, MONUC troops in Bukavu (North Kivu) struggled to limit the advance of local rebels groups, before scaling down their operations out of fear of jeopardizing the on-going peace transitional process ([International Crisis Group, 2005](#)). Several hundred civilians were forced to flee when rebel forces looted and burnt a market near Bukavu. Shifting the balance of power by concentrating PK forces within cities and specific areas appears to have facilitated a new civilian crisis.

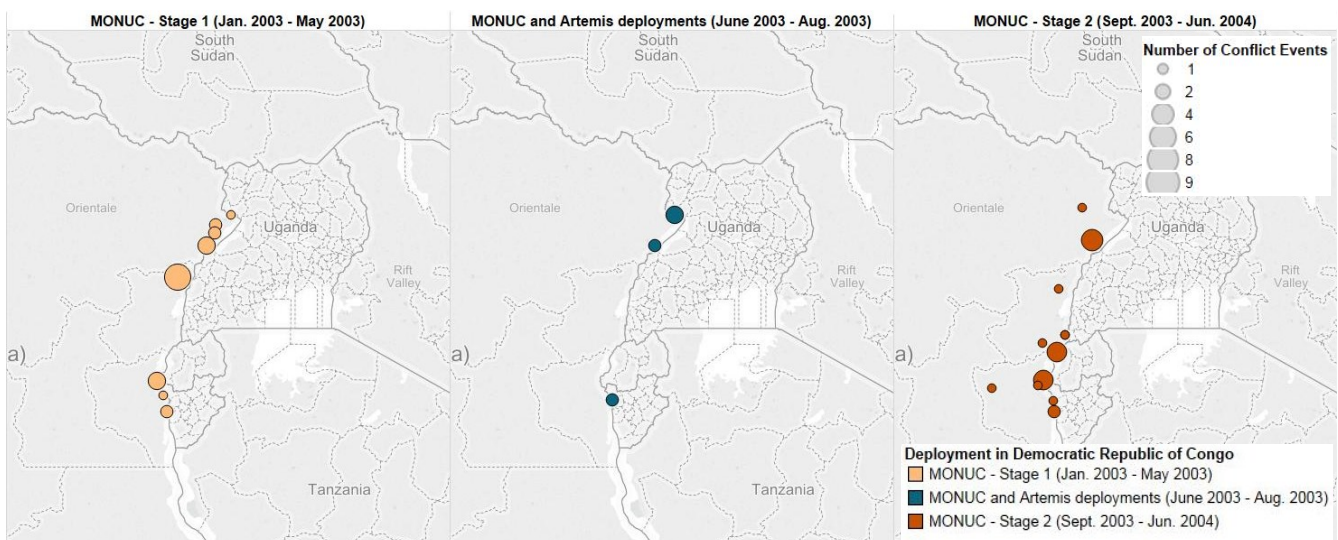


Figure 15: Violence against Civilians in Eastern DR-Congo, by Peacekeeping Deployments and Location, from January 2003 - June 2004.

Special Focus Topic: The Geographic Profile of Violence against Civilians during Peacekeeping Deployment—Containment and Diffusion

A similar situation was observed in DR-Congo starting from March 2013 when the United Nations expanded MONUSCO’s mandate by deploying the Force Intervention Brigade to target specific armed groups (M23 and LRA among others). The anti-civilian actions committed by those armed groups spread within DR-Congo. With the exception of the LRA’s incursions and settlement in CAR, there were very few subsequent trans-border instances of VAC, which instead diffused primarily within DR-Congo itself. Levels remained extremely high in the Kivus, but anti-civilian violence progressively increased in neighbouring Oriental and Katanga provinces.

As **Figure 16** shows, during MONUSCO’s robust mandate period (July 2010 until January 2013), North Kivu and South Kivu witnessed nearly 75% of the VAC carried out by these select active groups. By contrast, over the expanded mandate period (March 2013 – present), the Kivus witnessed only 41% of the anti-civilian violence. At the same time, levels were increasing in neighbouring provinces: Orientale witnessed 25.3% of these groups’ VAC in the expanded mandate period, compared to 19.5% in the robust phase. Similarly, Katanga witnessed 29.3% of these groups’ VAC during the expanded mandate period, compared to 5.6% during the robust phase (although levels in Katanga had already increased prior the expanded mandate). This may be explained by the strategic deployment of the PK forces, where peacekeepers were less numerous in Katanga - with 450 out of 22,000 peacekeepers in early 2014 ([Reuters, 2014](#)). Redeployment started mid-2014 ([IRIN, 2014](#)) leading to a net reduction in Katanga’s share of violence.

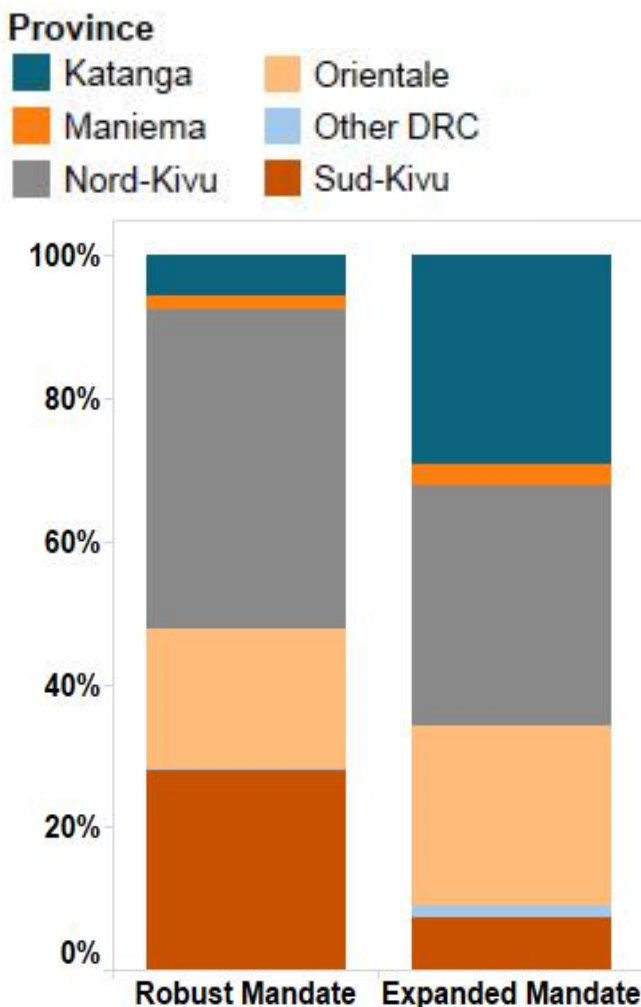


Figure 16: Violence against Civilians by LRA, FDLR, ADF-NALU, M23, APCLS and Mayi Mayi Militias in DR-Congo during MONUSCO Deployment by Mandate and Area, from July 2010 - December 2014.

In closing, analysis of ACLED highlights two distinct patterns in the geographic location of anti-civilian violence during PK missions. In some cases, anti-civilian violence is primarily contained in its original territory. In Mali and Sudan, VAC became progressively concentrated in the northern territory and Darfur respectively, with limited evidence of widespread national or cross-border diffusion, although political and other factors coincided with PK deployment to contribute to these dynamics. A second pattern is observed in DR-Congo. The diffusion of VAC appears to take place when the balance of power between armed actors shifts and where areas have low levels of PK troops. This may contribute to targeted rebel groups facing opposition in strongholds (as during MONUSCO deployment) being incentivised to split into small units and spread into other areas fostering a VAC diffusion.

One reason for these dynamics includes a lack of troops (both soldiers and police officers) and their strategic concentration in specific areas, contributing to a vacuum of power elsewhere. Deploying troops and fighting volatile armed groups in places such as DR-Congo might therefore foster the diffusion of VAC. By contrast, in Mali, enforcement deployments led to the quick defeat of armed groups and, to a lesser extent, the stabilization of the political situation in large parts of the country, contributing to a significant decrease in VAC. These findings reflect the importance of micro-level approaches to understanding the success of PK mission in protecting civilians.

Special Focus Topic: Inequality and Conflict

Many have noted inequality as fuel for conflict (*see review in Lichbach, 1989*). It can serve to exacerbate grievances amongst those who have less-than within unequal contexts, which can in turn serve as a mobilizing factor in fueling violence (*Stewart, 2008*). Alternatively, it can make the ‘prize’ of conflict larger – within the most unequal societies, the poor have less to lose and more to gain – which makes conflict increasingly likely (*Collier & Hoeffler, 2004*).

Using conflict data from the [Armed Conflict Location and Event Data \(ACLED\)](#) project for 2014 and 2015, and inequality data from the [World Bank Development Indicators](#), the effect of inequality on future conflict and violence in Africa is explored here through mapping the geographic locations of all political conflict in Africa over maps of various inequality measures.

Figure 17 maps the effect of inequality as measured by the Gini Index on political conflict. “[The] Gini index measures the extent to which the distribution of income or consumption expenditure among individuals or households within an economy deviates from a perfectly equal distribution ([World Bank, 2015](#)). A Gini index of 0 (green)

represents perfect equality (i.e., where everyone has the same income), while an index of 100 (red) implies perfect inequality (i.e., where one person has all the income, and everyone else has 0 income). Numerous studies argue that increased inequality results in increased violent conflict (*see review in Lichbach, 1989*). In line with this, there are examples of states – such as the Central African Republic – where inequality is high that do indeed exhibit very high levels of conflict. However, the index suggests that inequality within states across much of the continent is not very high – a finding which would refute the inequality-breeds-conflict argument given the extent of conflict across the African continent. Indeed, in Southern Africa—where inequality is highest—most instability is experienced as riots and protests instead of coordinated armed movements. The societal and political conditions that are associated with riots and protests being the main form of instability are also correlated with fewer episodes of armed group emergence and action. Therefore the relationship between inequality and armed conflict is mediated through the state’s level of economic and political development.

Indicators used to measure facets of inequality can play a large role in how inequality is perceived. **Figure 18** compares the effect of inequality on political conflict when measured as the share of income held by the highest 10% (i.e. income/consumption that accrues to the highest 10% subgroup of the population, based on deciles) on the left versus when measured as the poverty gap (i.e. a measure of the mean shortfall from the poverty line – expressed as a percentage of the poverty line). The non-poor – who live above the poverty line – have zero shortfall) on the right. This latter measure reflects the depth of poverty as well as its incidence. A number of studies argue that a primary reason behind the rate of conflict in Africa is poverty (for example, see [Elbadawi & Sambanis, 2000](#); [Collier & Hoeffler, 2002](#); [Fearon & Laitin, 2003](#)). On the left, given perfect equality, the top 10% of the population would hold 10% of the income; hence, higher scores (red) denote that the top 10% of the population holds an increasingly larger proportion of income, suggesting greater inequality. On the right, higher scores (red) denote a greater shortfall, while lower scores (green) denote a lesser shortfall.

In line with studies that find that inequality breeds conflict, high levels of conflict are found in unequal places

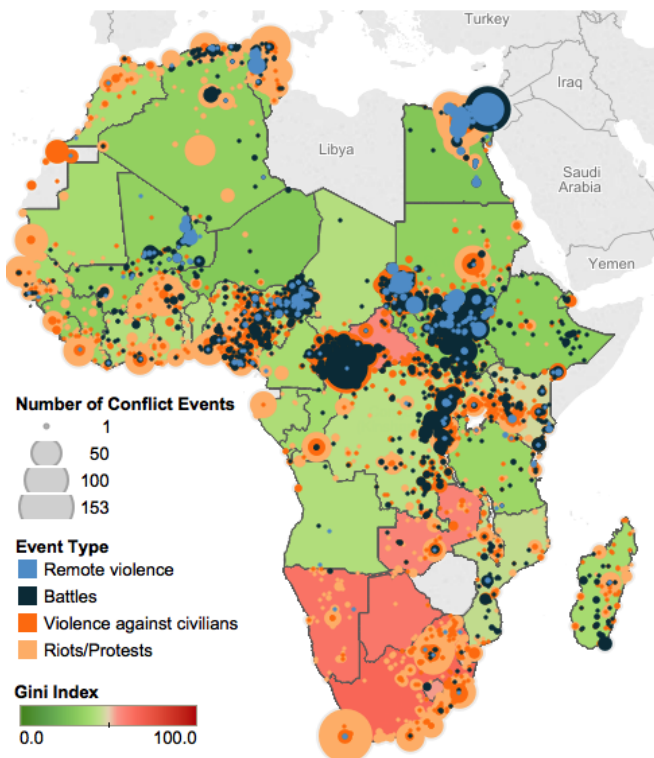


Figure 17: Political Conflict and Inequality as Measured by the Gini Index in Africa, from 2014 - 2015.

Special Focus Topic: Inequality and Conflict

according to these measures of inequality. However, failures by both measures in explaining the relatively high rate of conflict in places such as Sudan and South Sudan – where the highest 10% hold a relatively low share of the income, and a smaller proportion of the population lives below the poverty line (relative to other African states) – or the relatively low rate of conflict in places such as Benin and Togo – where again the highest 10% hold a relatively high share of the income, and a larger proportion of the population lives below the poverty line (relative to other African states) – highlights potential issues in using these measures in explaining conflict occurrence.

Further, differences in the categorization of inequality within certain states by the measures also illuminate the issues with using proxy indices to measure more complex issues. For example, while the highest 10% hold a relatively low share of the income in Mali and Liberia (see states in green on map on left), large(r) proportions of the populations of these states fall short of the poverty line (see

states in red on map on right). Or, while the highest 10% hold a relatively high share of the income in Kenya, Botswana, Namibia, and South Africa (see states in red on map on left), large(r) proportions of the populations of these states do not fall short of the poverty line (see states in green on map on right).

Numerous studies argue for a link between inequality and obstacles in attaining successful development, contending that mitigating unfairness within societies is crucial in minimizing potential conflict in these regions – which can itself be a barrier in reaching development goals. Inequalities amongst groups within societies (*horizontal inequalities*) may be more of an impetus for conflict than inequalities amongst individuals (*vertical inequalities*) – as measured by the various indices here. “Horizontal inequalities’, or inequalities that coincide with identity-based cleavages...may enhance both grievances and group cohesion among the relatively deprived and thus facilitate mobilization for conflict” (Øtsby, 2008, p.143).

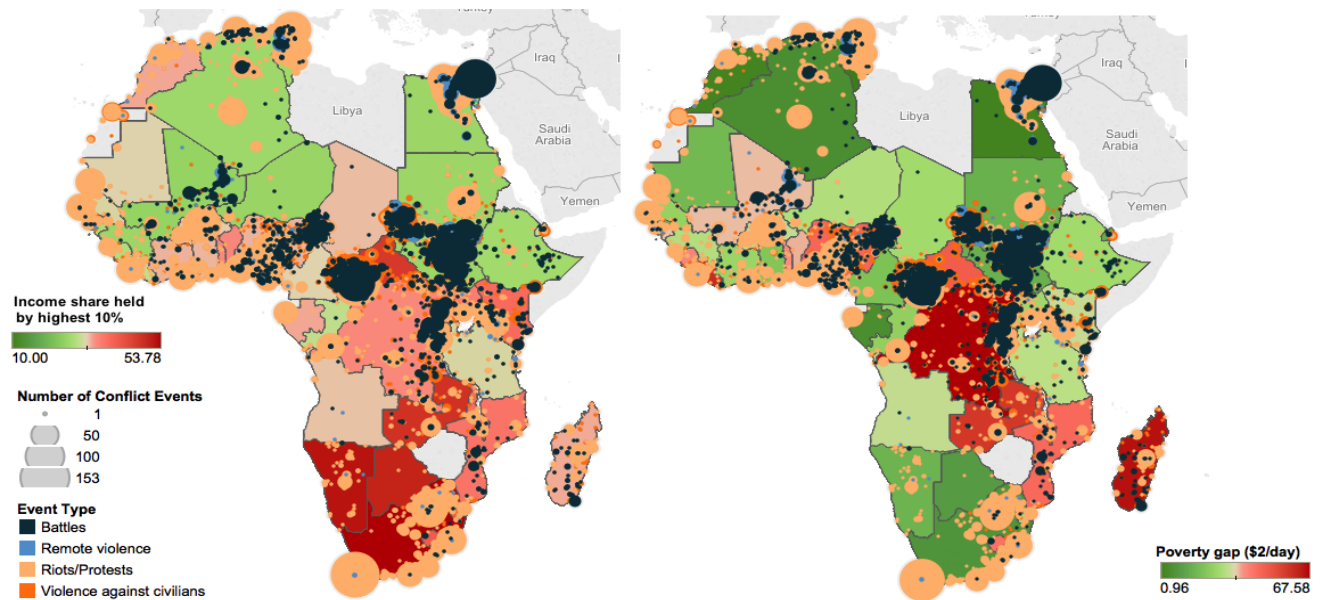


Figure 18: Political Conflict and Inequality as Measured by the Income Share Held by the Highest 10% (left) and the Poverty Gap (right) in Africa, from 2014 - 2015.

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. European Commission Grant no. 283755 supported the work of Prof. Clionadh Raleigh and Caitriona Dowd.

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 on the [ACLED website](http://www.acleddata.com).