

Introduction:

The Democratic Republic of Congo (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 1). Conflict levels during 2013 to date have reduced, following an unprecedented peak of activity in late 2012 but this year’s event levels remain significantly above average for the DR-Congo.

Across the coverage period, this violence has displayed a very distinct spatial pattern; over half of all conflict events occurred in the eastern Kivu provinces, while a further quarter took place in Orientale and less than 10% in Katanga (see Figure 2). As such, 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.

In order to explore key dynamics of violence across time and space in the DR-Congo, this report examines in turn M23 in North and South Kivu, the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) in northern DR-Congo and the evolving dynamics of Mayi Mayi violence across the country. The report then examines MONUSCO’s efforts to maintain a fragile peace in the country, and highlights the dynamics of the ongoing low-intensity conflict in Orientale and Katanga.

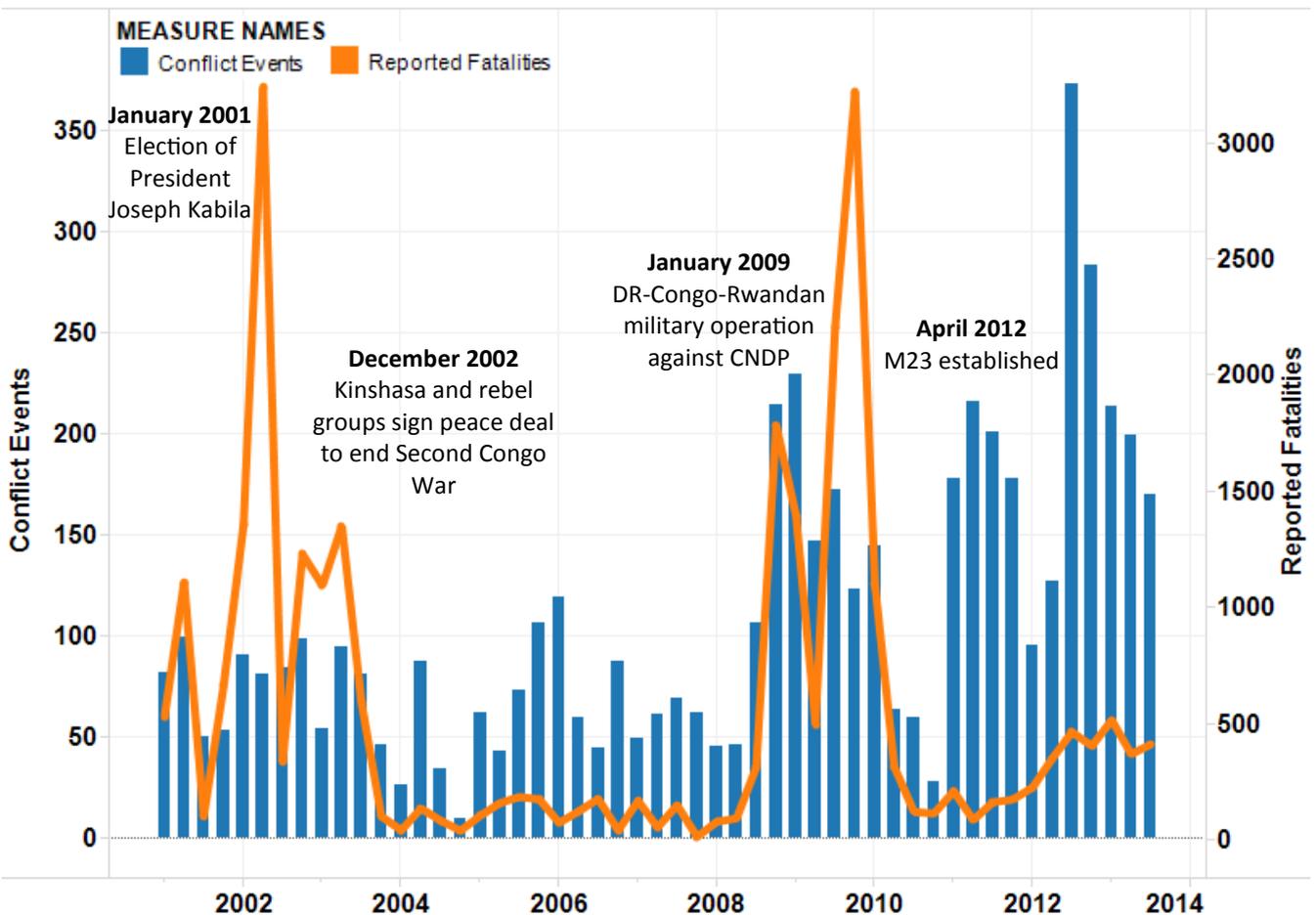


Figure 1: Conflict Events and Reported Fatalities, DR-Congo, January 2001 - September 2013.

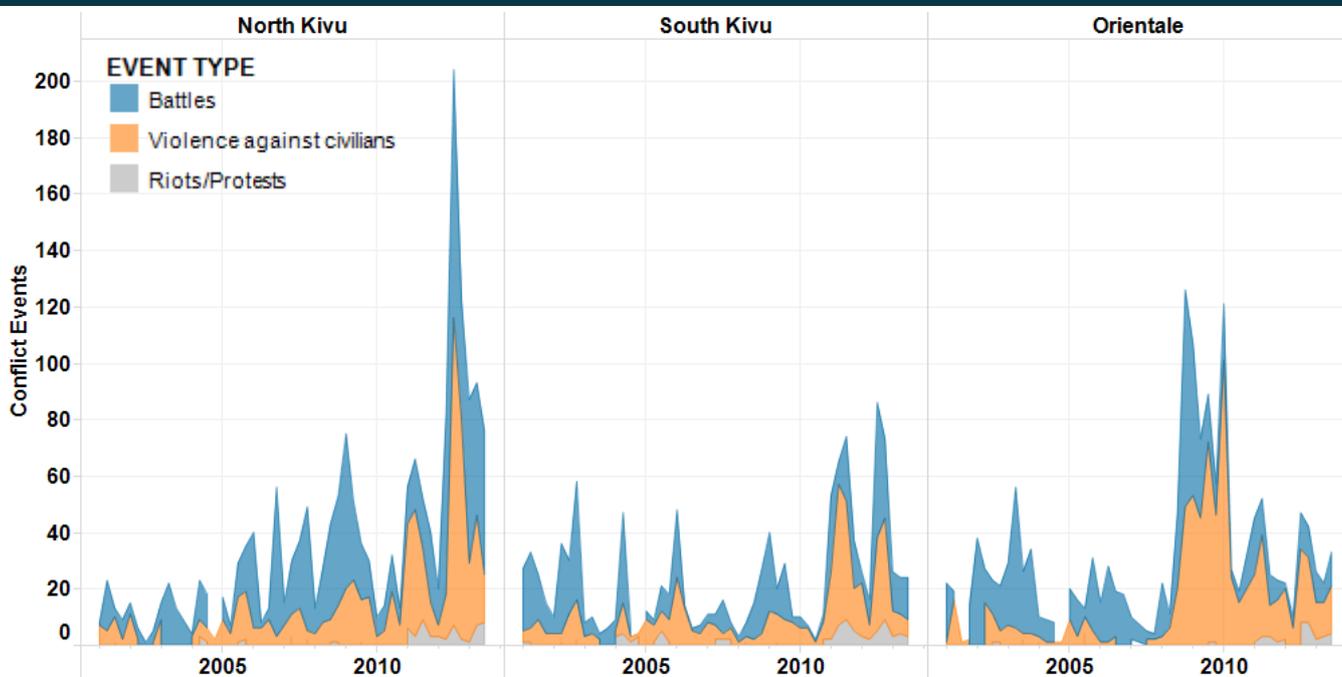


Figure 2: Conflict Events by Type, North Kivu, South Kivu and Orientale, January 2001 - September 2013.

M23 in North and South Kivu:

M23 is a militant rebel group founded in April 2012 by predominantly Tutsi members of the National Congress for the Defence of the People (CNDP), with documented military and financial links to Rwanda (United Nations 2012). It takes its name from the March 23rd peace agreement forged in 2009 between the government and CNDP rebels, integrating them into the national army.

Three years after the agreement, former CNDP members, led by General Bosco Ntaganda, mutinied in response to Kinshasha’s perceived unwillingness to implement the terms of the peace deal and the group has gained prominence since then. They have remained highly active in North and South Kivu, with a notable spike in activity during the group’s control of Bunagana and Rutshuru in July 2012 and reaching a peak in November 2012 when the rebels held the strategic city of Goma for ten days (see Figure 3). The capture of Goma proved a pivotal moment in the M23’s campaign, demonstrating the group’s ability to control a major city both 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.

As of November 2013, the Congolese army has recovered all M23 strongholds in North Kivu and the rebel group has surrendered arms. Peace talks have resumed but a definitive agreement has yet to be reached.

CNDP, the predecessor of M23, were themselves formed from predominantly Tutsi former members of the Rally for Congolese Democracy (RCD), a rebel group which played a key role in the Second Congo War (1998-2003). Their activities reached a peak in October 2008 when, like their M23 descendants, the group attempted to seize the city of Goma (Stearns 2012: 40). 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 reveals however that the two groups have distinct conflict profiles reflecting tactical changes adopted as the group evolves. Overall M23 are significantly more violent than their CNDP predecessors, which could indicate that M23 has a higher operational capacity in terms

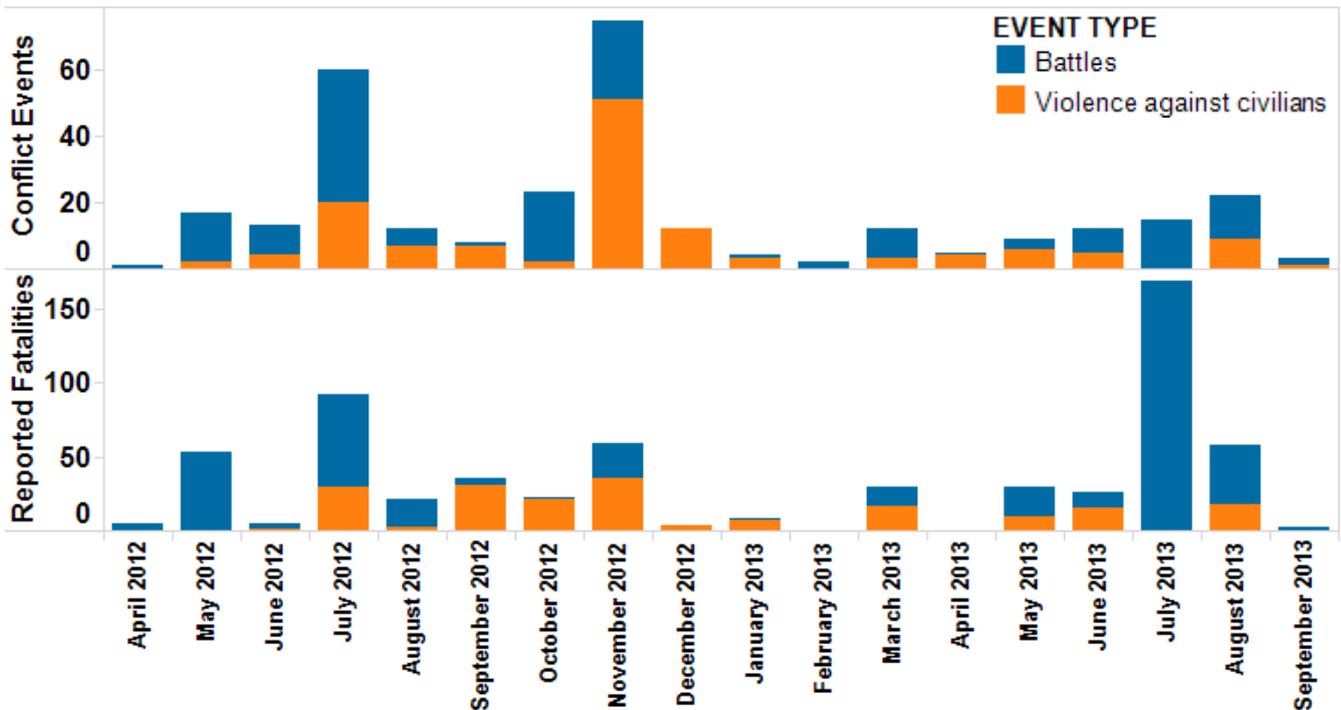


Figure 3: Conflict Events and Reported Fatalities by Type, M23, DR-Congo, April 2012 - September 2013.

of funding and logistics, that it has higher rates of popular support, or that the response of Congolese and international military actors has increased in intensity.

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 33 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 28 fatalities per month attributed to M23 during the period April 2012 to September 2013.

Tactically, violence against civilians constitutes only 6% of CNDP conflict activities while 46% of M23 events target civilians. These figures seem to indicate quite a dramatic tactical shift in approach between CNDP and M23. For both groups, the majority of battle events do not involve any changes in territorial control. This could indicate that for both groups the creation of 'disorder and widespread violence' is 'a strategic goal in itself' (Stearns 2012a: 52).

Violence against civilians constitutes only 6% of CNDP activities, while almost half (46%) of M23 events target civilians, reflecting a dramatic tactical shift in the transformation of the group from CNDP to M23.

Regionally, both CNDP and M23 rebels were highly active in North and South Kivu, with negligible violence levels outside the Kivu provinces and approximately five times as many events in North Kivu as in South Kivu (see Figure 4). ACLED data is also uniquely placed to track engagement patterns between conflict actors in the DR-Congo and reveals 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.

During 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.

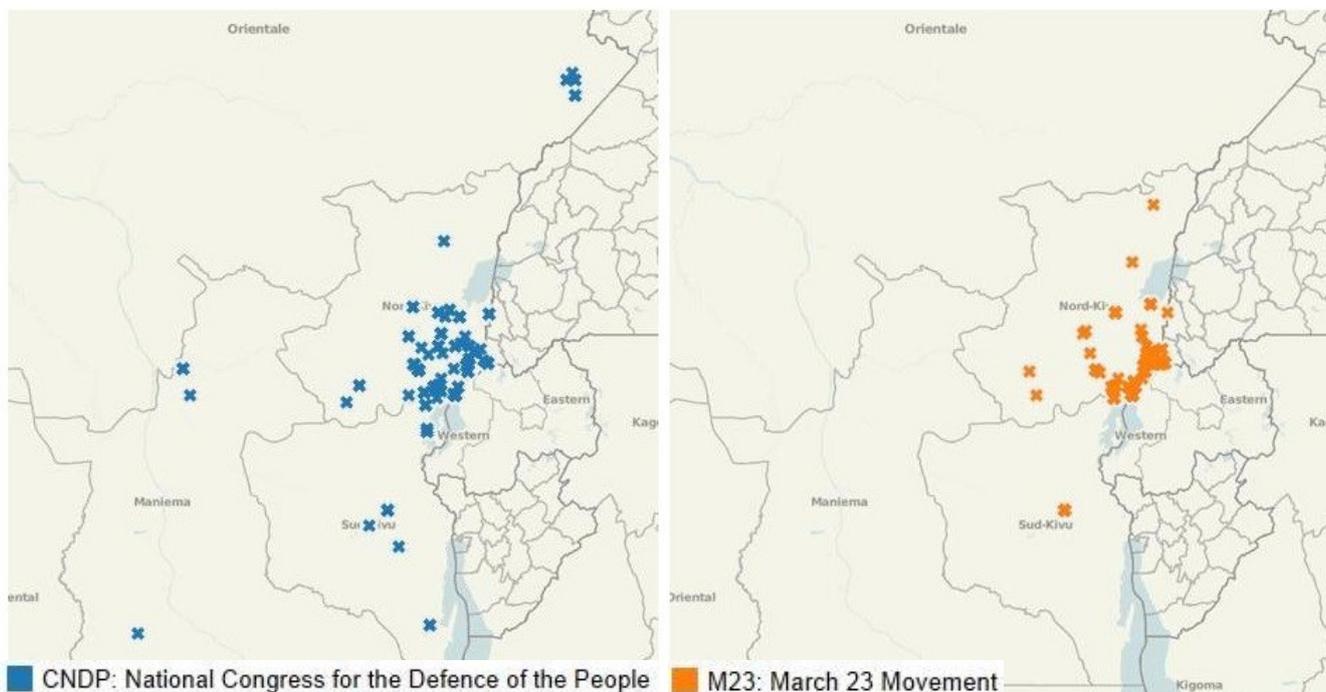


Figure 4: Maps of CNDP and M23 Conflict Event Locations, DR-Congo, January 2006 - September 2013.

The LRA in northern DR-Congo:

The Lord’s Resistance Army has long been an active player in the Congo’s network of conflicting groups, having first become active in the DR-Congo in January 1999. Over the course of the dataset, the LRA have been predominantly active in Orientale province, with 97% of the group’s violent activity taking place there. More specifically, the group perpetrated approximately two thirds of its violence in the Haut-Uele district, with a further 10% in Bas-Uele and 8% in Ituri. The LRA also engaged in sporadic low-level activity in Kivu, Équateur and Kasai-Oriental, accounting for the remaining 3% of activities.

Tactically, the LRA gained global notoriety for extremely brutal attacks on civilians and forced recruitment of minors into its ranks (IRIN 2013). ACLED data reveals that during the period of their activities in the DR-Congo, over two thirds of their activities directly targeted civilians, with an average rate of 12 fatalities per event, while the remaining third involved battles with other armed groups. This ratio of violence against civilians compared to battle events

differs significantly to some other countries where the LRA are active.

In the Central African Republic, 81% of the LRA’s activities target civilians but conversely in Uganda, while overall event levels are much higher across the recording period than in the DR-Congo or in the Central African Republic, the percentage of these events directly targeting civilians falls to 43%, with an average of approximately 4 civilian casualties per event.

The LRA’s activities in the DR-Congo have declined very significantly since mid-2012, following a peak in violent events in early 2008. While the group continues to be active in the Central African Republic, LRA event levels have all but subsided in the DR-Congo (see Figure 5).

During 2013, the LRA have been involved in only a handful of events in the DR-Congo, all targeting civilians. However, with long-standing militant ties across central Africa, it remains to be seen whether the LRA’s significantly reduced military capacity will continue its decline in the DR-Congo.

ACLED data reveals that over two thirds of LRA activities in the DR-Congo directly target civilians, with an average rate of 12 civilian fatalities per event. This compares to over 80% of LRA events in the Central African Republic involving civilian targeting, and 43% in Uganda.

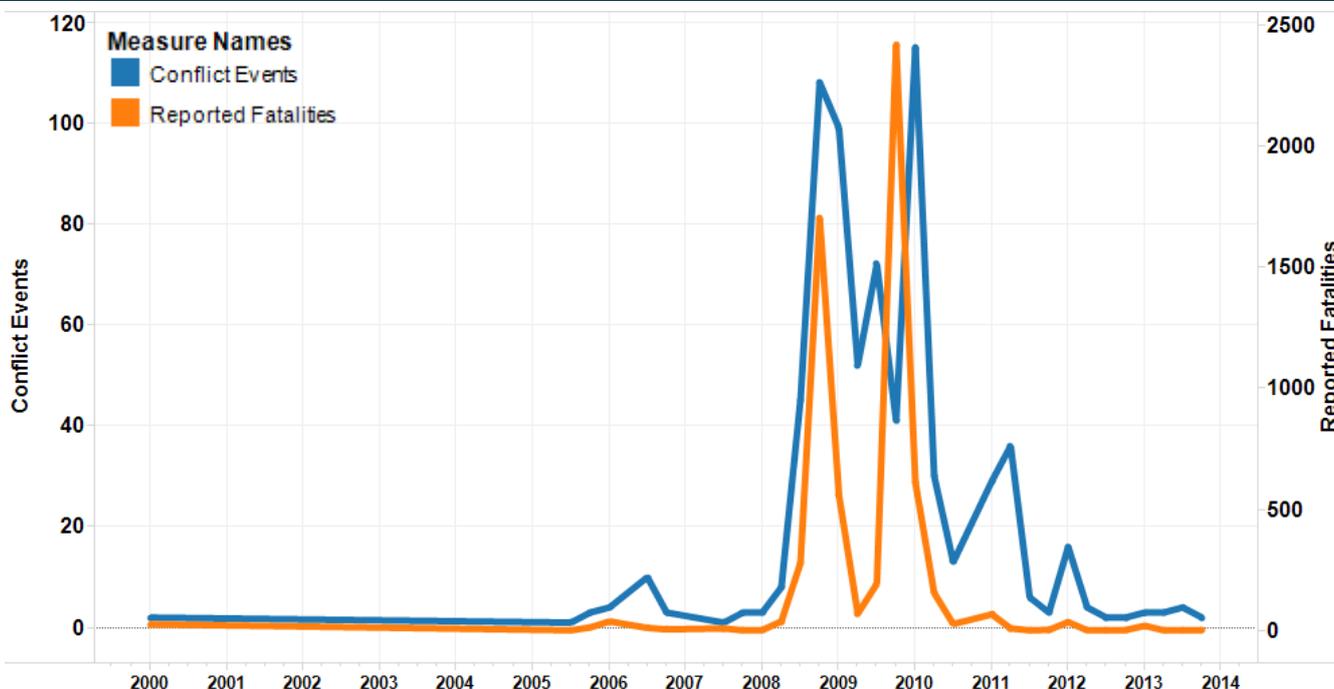


Figure 5: Conflict Events and Reported Fatalities, Lord's Resistance Army, DR-Congo, January 2000 - September 2013.

Mayi-Mayi violence across the DR-Congo:

Both M23 and the LRA are consistently the subject of extensive international attention but national security in the DR-Congo is impacted by a far more complex web of actors, including ethnic militant factions, militia organisations and international forces. Among the most dominant militant groups in the DR-Congo comprises the loose and disconnected Mayi Mayi community.

There are at least thirty distinct Mayi Mayi groups operating in the DR-Congo including the Raia Mutomboki, PARECO and Mayi Mayi Simba militias. Taken together, they have been the most violent non-state actor in the country since the end of the Second Congo War in 2003 by count of violent events (see Figure 6 for distribution of activity); they have been more active in 2013 (January - September) than either the national military or M23.

The term Mayi Mayi comes from the Kiswahili word meaning water and has been adopted by a wide range of communal militias (Stearns 2013: 9), emerging at different times across the DR-Congo. Mayi Mayi organisations played a key role fighting the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire (AFDL) rebellion during the 1990s and rose to greater prominence acting as a proxy for the national military forces, opposing Rwandan-backed militants and the Rally for Congolese Democracy (RCD) rebels during the Second Congo War (ibid.).

As different factions have come to the fore, it can be problematic to analyse Mayi Mayi groups individually due to the often loose organisational structures, shifting alliances and evolving leadership struggles. ACLED data reveals Raia Mutomboki to be the most active group across the coverage period, followed by the Yakutumba, Nyatura and PARECO factions.

Raia Mutomboki, meaning citizens in anger (Think Africa Press 2013), was established in 2005 in the Shabunda, South Kivu region with the aim of defending the local communal groups in response to a massacre of 12 civilians perpetrated by the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) (Enough Project 2013). Approximately half of the group's activities to date have taken place in South Kivu, with over a quarter occurring in North Kivu and 11% in Maniema. During the period 2007-2011, Raia Mutomboki largely fell into decline but re-emerged during the summer of 2011 as the M23 campaign gained momentum.

Taking the name of its military leadership, Yakutumba was founded in 2007 and is very predominantly active in the Kivu region; over 90% of its activities occur in the province, approximately half of which take place in Fizi, South Kivu, with a further 6% in Katanga and 1% in Orientale. Since the group became most active in late 2008, it has perpetrated just over half the number of violent events of Raia Mutomboki. However, during the same period, its

activities have resulted in almost the same number of fatalities, suggesting the lower number of attacks are much higher in intensity. However, fewer Yakutumba conflict events directly target civilians (at 28%), compared to Raia Mutomboki events (at 34%).

The newly offensive UN Intervention brigade appears to have substantially reduced the capacity of M23 within the last month. Similarly, the noticeable abatement in Mayi Mayi activity in the Kivu province during September when compared to August levels, could suggest that the newly deployed UN troops have also curtailed the capacity of Mayi Mayi militants in Kivu. It remains to be seen whether communal violence in Katanga, Maniema and Orientale will be affected.

MONUSCO and the UN Intervention Brigade:

UN peacekeepers have been active in the DRC since 1999, with a budget of approximately \$1.5 billion per year (Vogel 2013) and 19,815 military personnel (UN 2013). The UN force began its operations as the United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC), a small peace observer mission employed to assist the fragile peace which followed the Second Congo War and was re-deployed as the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) in July 2010 to reflect a 'new phase reached in the country' (ibid.).

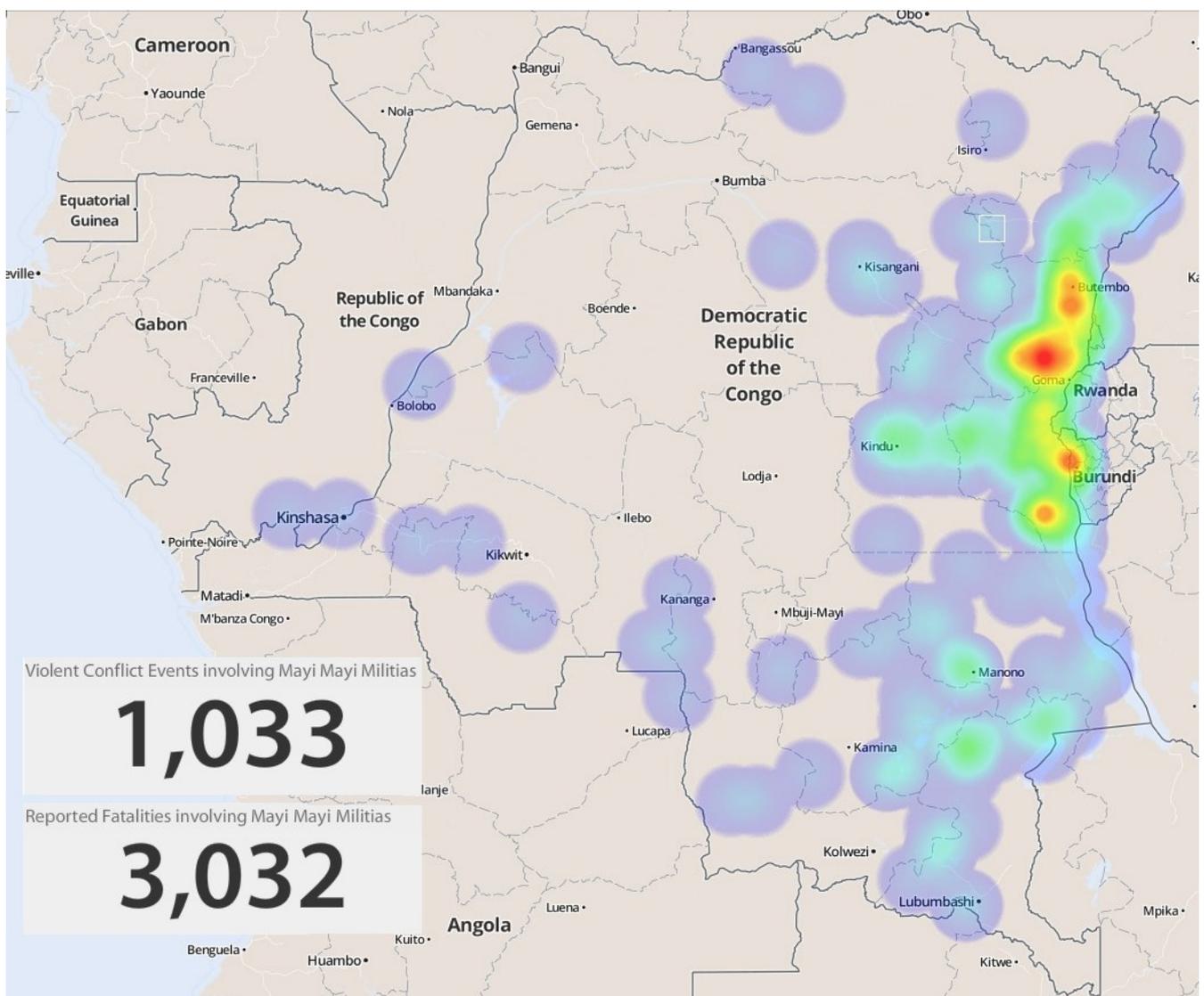


Figure 6: Heat Map of Conflict Events attributed to Mayi Mayi groups, DR-Congo, January 1997 - September 2013.

However in early 2013, following fourteen years of the largest peacekeeping mission in the history of the UN, the force came under increasing criticisms for being ‘ineffective’, ‘inefficient’ and ‘stretched’ (Global Policy Forum 2013), with Uganda’s premier accusing the force of ‘tolerating’ and ‘co-existing with rebels’ (*The Star*, Nairobi 2013).

Most recently, the newly deployed UN Force Intervention Brigade has been given an unprecedented mandate to carry out targeted offensive operations to ‘neutralise...and disarm’ all armed groups for the first time in UN history (IRIN 2013a). The UN peacekeeping force has been active quite consistently since its formation, aside from significant spikes in activity during 2003, towards the end of the Second Congo War. From 2005 onwards, the troops also became quite active supporting the Congolese military, particularly during 2006 when they were active in 25 events in conjunction with the Congolese military within the first three months of the year.

UN forces in the DR-Congo have primarily engaged with rebel groups, such as M23, as well as militia groups including the Union of Congolese Patriots (UPC), the Lendu communal militia and Mayi Mayi militants. Since the formation of M23 in April 2012, MONUSCO’s activities have increased significantly from an average of approximately 1.3 events per month during the period July 2010 to March 2012, rising to 2.5 events per month since the M23 campaign began.

UN military activity reached its peak during July 2012, when the force intervened to curb the escalating M23 campaign and most recently we see a significant spike in activity in late August 2013 when UN the Intervention Brigade reached full deployment.

As MONUC, 51% of peacekeeping activities took place in Ituri, Orientale, with a further 19% in North Kivu and 8% in South Kivu. This deployment pattern changed significantly when the force returned as MONUSCO. Since early 2010, 85% of UN military activity in the DR-Congo has taken place in the Kivu provinces, with 12% in Équateur and 3% in Katanga. These figures represent a very major shift in the focus of global attention and highlight the current tendency of the international community to overlook the on-going low intensity conflict levels in Orientale and Katanga.

Low-intensity conflict in Orientale and Katanga:

Approximately one third of the DR-Congo’s conflict events and just over a quarter of conflict-related fatalities have occurred in the Orientale and Katanga provinces over the course of the ACLED coverage period. Both regions experience a high proportion of communal violence compared to other provinces, including high levels of Mayi Mayi militant activity, as well as other localised conflict actors such as the Lendu communal militia.

The eastern Kivu provinces are sometimes presented as outliers in the country’s overall conflict patterns. However, while the Kivus do witness significantly higher violence levels than any other part of the country, Orientale and Katanga display some similarities to Kivu in terms of on-going violence patterns, secessionist movements and civilian targeted violence.

Over the course of the ACLED coverage over one quarter of the DR-Congo’s violence has occurred in the Orientale province with a very sharp increase in conflict in the province during 2008 and 2009 (see Figure 2) largely due to an increase in rebel activity. Battles make up over half of the region’s violence, while 45% of conflict activity is civilian targeted and the remaining 3% involves rioting. The LRA has been by far the most violent group during the period 1997 to September 2013, although their activities have subsided greatly since mid-2012.

In Katanga, violence levels have increased very significantly since 2011. From late 2012 onwards a range of Mayi Mayi militia groups have increased clashes with military forces, as well as civilian targeted conflict. Certain Mayi Mayi formations, most notably the Bakata Katanga faction have displayed secessionist intentions, although their demands have not received the same national or indeed global attention as Kivu secessionist activities.

Nevertheless, on-going violence levels in Katanga, as well as in Orientale and the Kivu provinces may serve as a note of caution for the DR-Congo’s future security situation. While the new UN Intervention Brigade’s support seems to have greatly strengthened the military capacity of the national military against M23 opposition, it remains to be seen whether the force can regain control given the multiplicity of other conflict actors across the country.

While the UN Intervention Brigade’s support seems to have greatly strengthened national military capacity against M23 opposition, on-going violence levels in Katanga, Orientale and Kivu may serve as a note of caution.