

Welcome to the February 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. Monthly updates to realtime conflict event data are published through our research partners at [Climate Change and African Political Stability \(CCAPS\)](#) and also on the [ACLED website](#).

In addition, historical data from January 1997 to December 2013 is contained in ACLED Version 4 is available online at [acleddata.com](#), along with previous *Conflict Trends* reports, country profiles and other resources.

This month, the *Trends* report focuses on the dramatic escalation of conflict in **Central African Republic**, political developments in **Kenya** and **Mozambique** and prospects for peace in **South Sudan**, as well as providing an overview of Version 4 of the ACLED dataset through the lens of reported fatalities. Elsewhere on the continent, conflict levels have continued to gradually decline in **Somalia** for the fourth month in a row, alongside a more recent decline in fatalities; while conflict has been ongoing and escalating in the north-east of the continent in Tunisia, Libya and Egypt.



Conflict Trajectory, January 2014

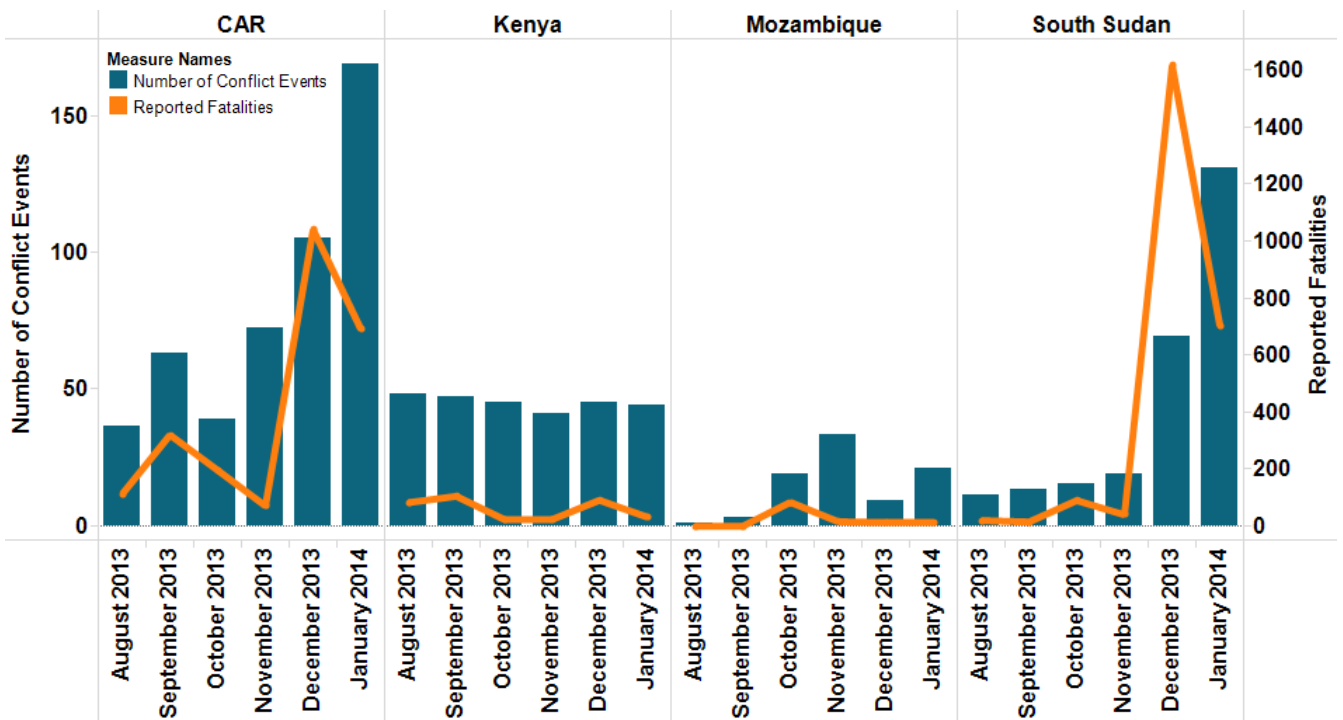


Figure 1: Conflict Events and Reported Fatalities, CAR, Kenya, Mozambique, South Sudan, August 2013 - January 2014.

African Overview

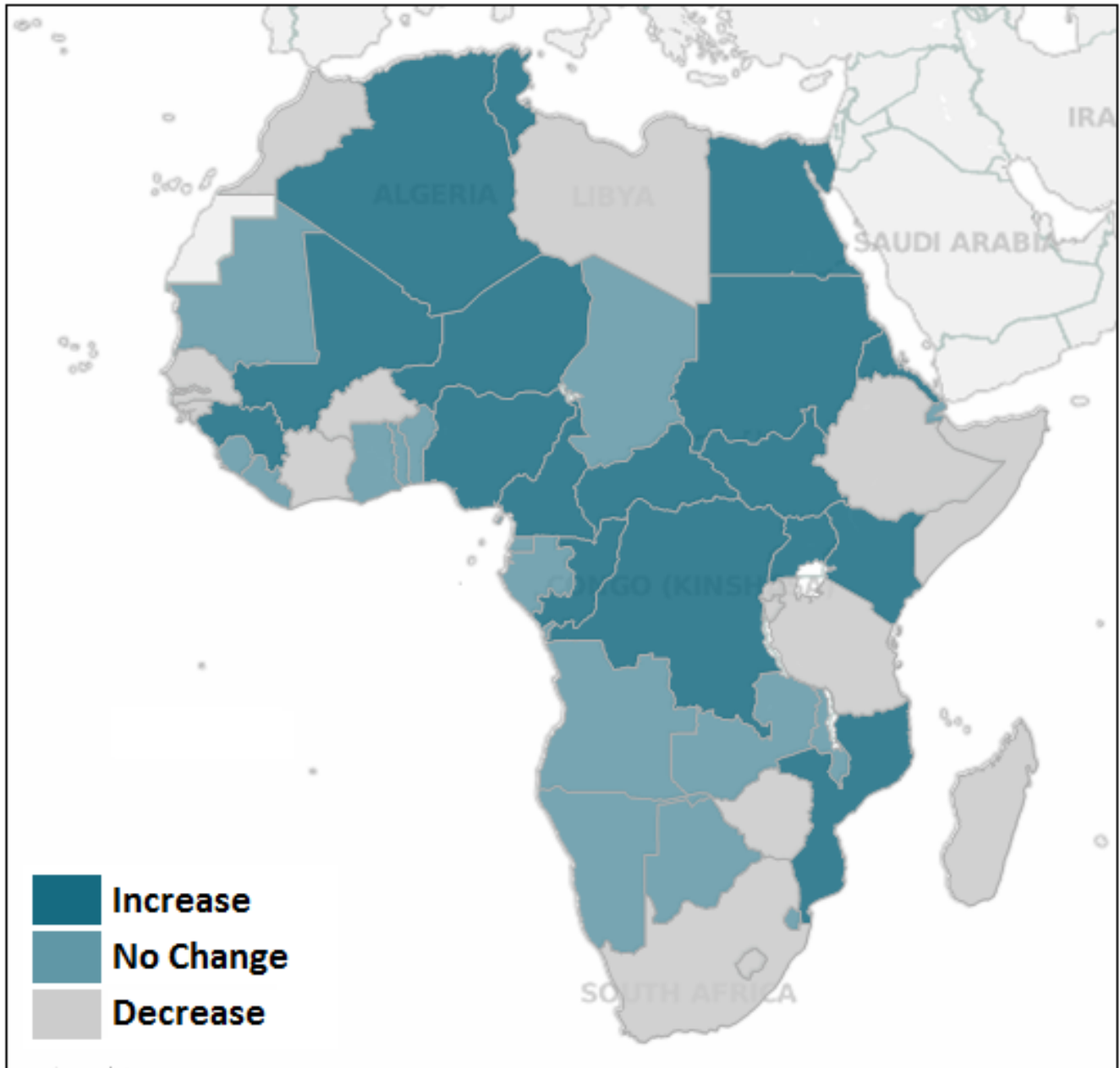


Figure 2: Reported Fatalities Increase, Decrease and No Change across Africa, 2012 - 2013.

In January, ACLED launched Version 4 of its conflict events dataset, covering all reported political violence on the African continent from January 1997 to December 2013. While ACLED continues to make realtime monthly conflict event data available through its website and research partners, last month's *Conflict Trends* report profiled overall levels of conflict events on the continent in 2013. This month, we review the same data through the lens of reported fatality figures.

Fatality figures are often difficult to obtain, verify and cross-check, and are subject to higher levels of reporting bias than overall conflict events. Nevertheless, they provide a useful means of assessing conflict intensity across different conflict affected countries.

Figure 2 highlights those countries in which reported conflict-related fatalities increased, decreased or remained relatively unchanged from 2012 to 2013. Among the most

African Overview

high-profile states, some interesting patterns emerge: the intensification of conflict in Egypt, Mali, Nigeria, Sudan and South Sudan over the course of the year was reflected in predictably higher fatality rates year-on-year in those countries. Fatality rates also increased in DR-Congo, although this coincides with an overall drop in conflict event levels, indicating that the conflict dynamics in the East of the country have intensified, although the instances of individual attacks have reduced.

Among those states where fatality rates fell, Libya and Somalia are the most notable. In Libya, conflict levels increased while fatalities fell, suggesting a reversal of the trend evident in DR-Congo: as the country attempts to stabilise following the civil war, comparatively low-grade but widespread conflict persists.

The potentially destabilising impact of this lower-intensity violence should not be under-estimated, either in Libya or Somalia. In the latter, conflict events increased dramatically, while fatality rates fell only marginally (from over 3,300 to 3,150). The frequency of attacks and what they

indicate about Al Shabaab’s continued - thought reduced - operational capacity should serve as a stark reminder of the cracks in the post-conflict ‘Somalia Rising’ narrative being pushed by the international community.

**Fatality levels increased in DR-Congo Egypt, Mali, Nigeria, Sudan, South Sudan.**

**Fatality rates fell in Libya and Somalia.**

**Both Nigeria and South Sudan witnessed extremely high rates of civilian fatalities.**

Figure 3 illustrates the countries and event types which witnessed the highest levels of conflict-related fatalities: Sudan and Nigeria both surpassed Somalia, reflecting the intensity of the violence in two states with widely different but clearly devastating internal dynamics of conflict.

Meanwhile, both Nigeria and South Sudan witnessed extremely high levels of civilian fatalities: conflict-related fatalities spiked in South Sudan in December with the onset of widespread unrest there, but the burden of violent conflict on civilians in Nigeria has been persistently high for years. Kenya and

South Africa, though with lower levels overall, both had high proportions of fatalities attributed to attacks on non-combatants, reflecting the vulnerability of civilian populations to attack in those relatively more stable states.

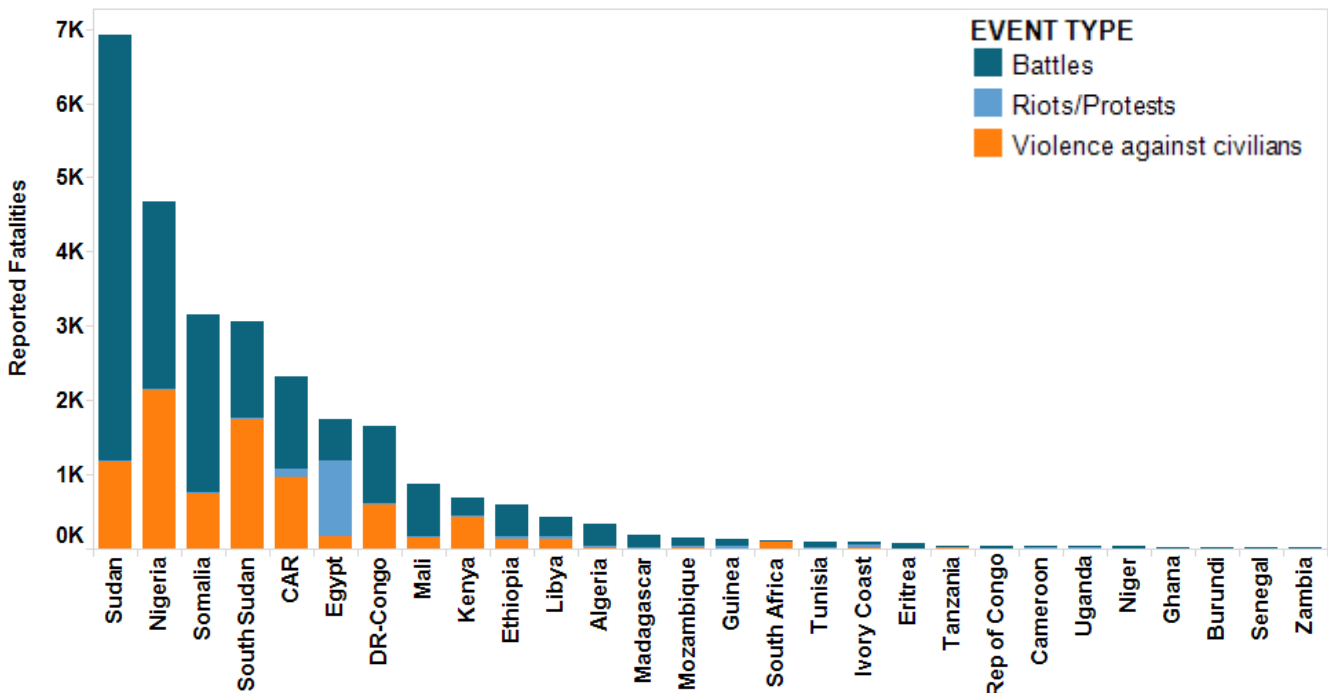


Figure 3: Reported Fatalities by Conflict Event Type and by Country, 2013.

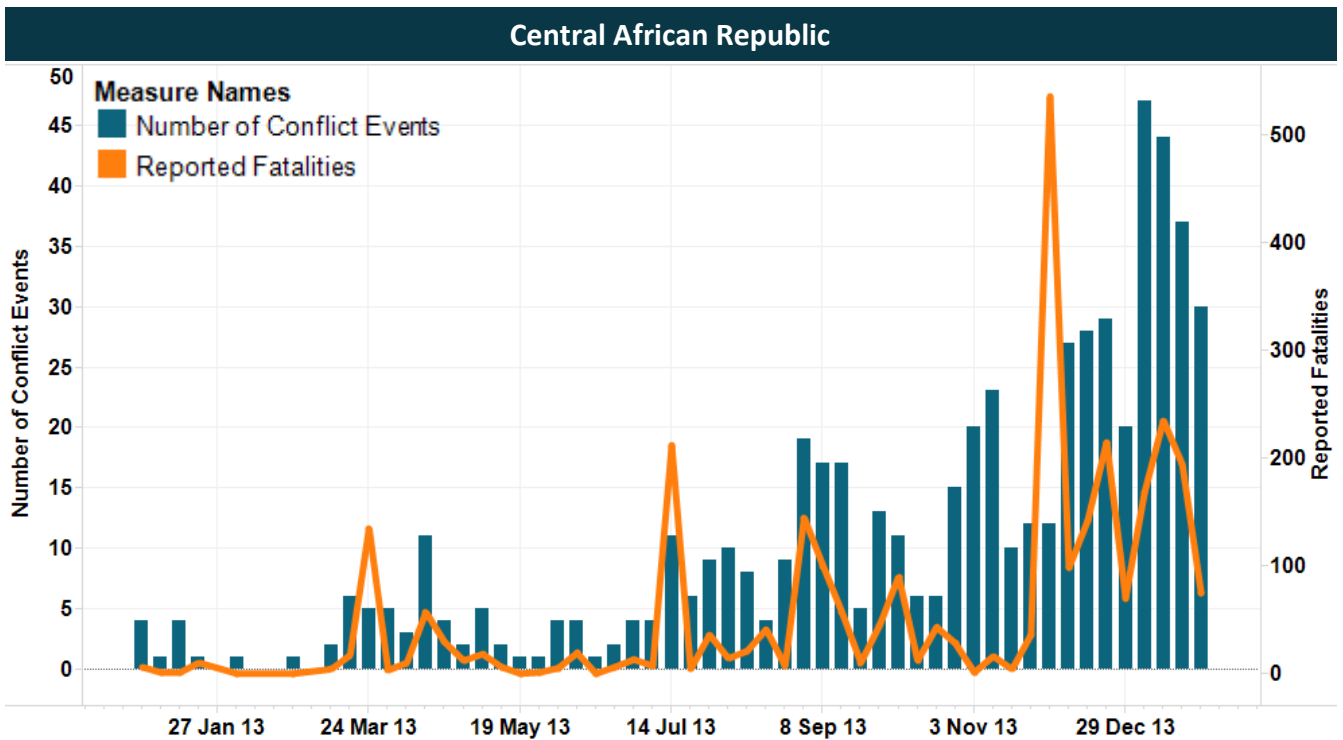


Figure 4: Conflict Events and Reported Fatalities, Central African Republic, January 2013 - January 2014.

Conflict in the Central African Republic continued to make headlines in January, with reports of a wave of brutal, mob lynchings of civilians across the country (BBC News, 17 January 2014; 30 January 2014; 5 February 2014). Previous issues of *Conflict Trends* have described substantial increases and shifting dynamics in violence in the Central African Republic throughout 2013.

Conflict events increased in late 2013 and into January 2014, and levels of reported fatalities also reflect a general upward trend following a series of clashes between Séléka and anti-Balaka militia in Bangui in early December (see Figure 4). Of the different types of conflict events, violence against civilians has increased the most, accounting for the larger proportion of conflict events (see Figure 5).

The significance of this on-going and increasing violence (with increasing fatalities) is reflected by the International Criminal Court’s decision, on February 7, 2014, to launch a preliminary investigation into the violence in the Central African Republic, in response to allegations of mass killings, sexual violence, destruction of property and pillaging, forced displacement, and the use of child combatants, on the part of various armed groups (ICC, 2014).

**Levels of violence against non-combatants have witnessed the most significant increase since mid-2013; speaking to pronounced civilian vulnerability in CAR.**

Discussions of the current conflict in the Central African Republic often focus on the religious dimensions of violence and continued attacks and reprisals involving Séléka and anti-Balaka militia, including reports of anti-Balaka violence targeting Muslim and Séléka violence targeting Christian civilians. Indeed, of all conflict actors, Séléka militia (members of the ex-Séléka rebel forces, officially dissolved in September 2013) and anti-Balaka militia (community “self defence” militias, reportedly with some ties to the Bozize regime) are the most active, in battles as well as civilian violence.

Séléka militia are involved in slightly more events than anti-Balaka, and various communal militia, (e.g. Mbarara, Mbororo, Fulani, Christian, and other groups), are involved in a significant level of violence against civilians, reflecting the complexity of the religious dimensions of the conflict (see Figure 6). The violence in the Central African Republic reflects a localised, urban-centred conflict, with by far the greatest number of conflict events taking place in Bangui.

Most other conflict events take place in the North West part of the country, in Ouham, Ombella-M’Poko, and Ouham-Pendé. The particularly high levels of violence in the

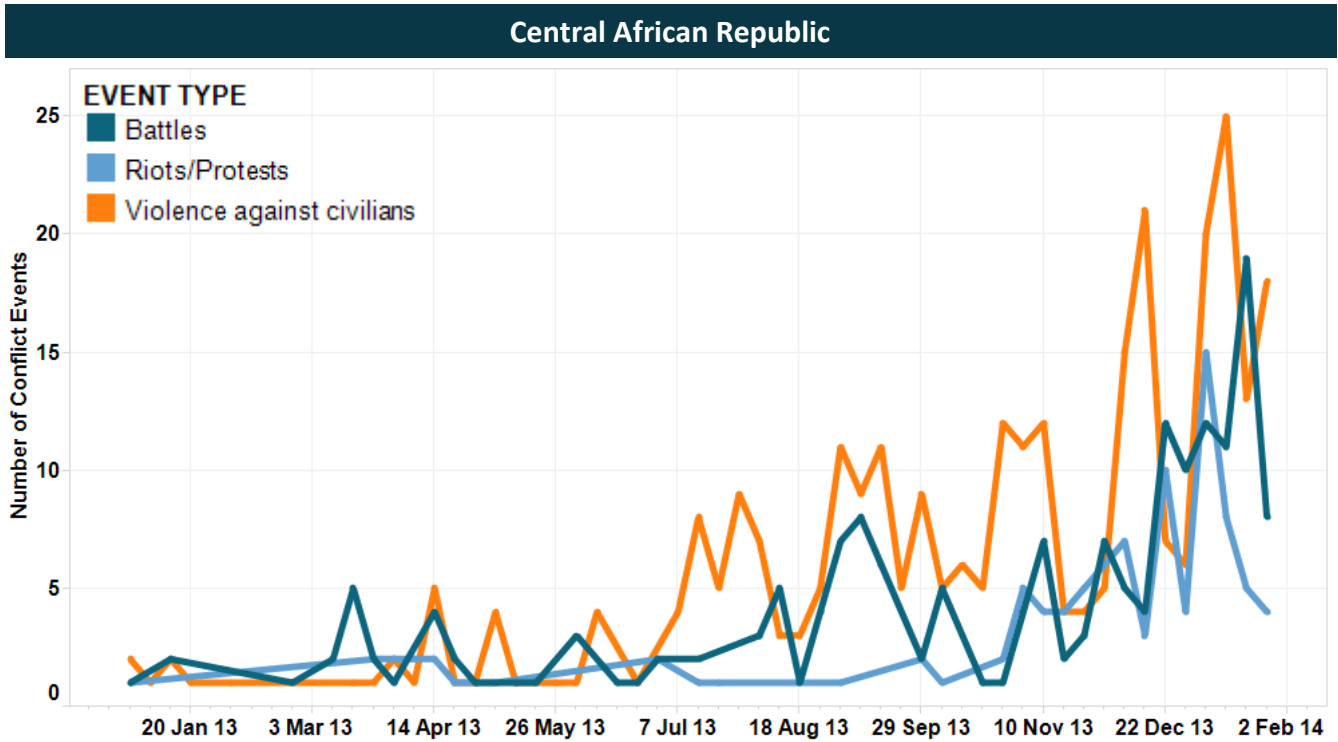


Figure 5: Conflict Events by Type, Central African Republic, January 2013 - January 2014.

capital city have significant implications for conflict dynamics and stability across the country. Former interim president Michel Djotodia was forced to resign on January 10, 2013, and Catherine Samba-Panza, former mayor of Bangui, was appointed interim president on January 20, voicing a commitment to stability, national unity, and

peace. This new leadership faces substantial pressure to respond to increasing levels of violence against civilians, particularly in Bangui, to negotiate a durable settlement with dominant armed groups, Séléka and anti-Balaka in particular, and to address violence in other parts of the country, involving diverse communal groups.

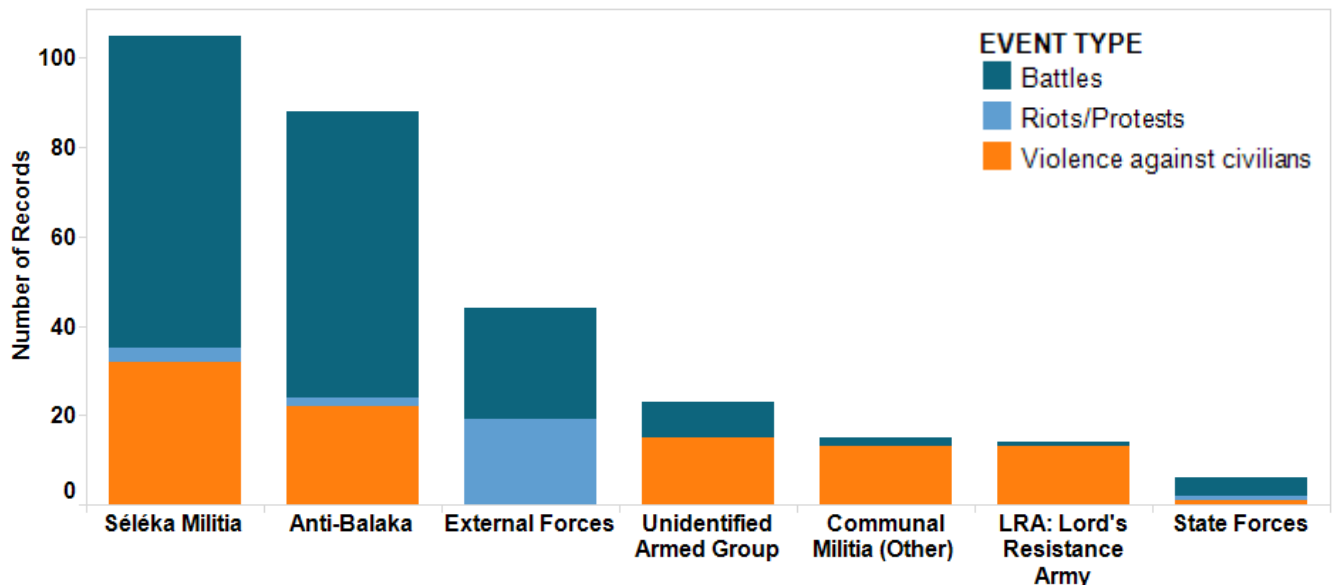


Figure 6: Conflict Events by Actor and Conflict Type, Central African Republic, December 2013 - January 2014.

Kenya

Conflict event levels remained relatively stable in Kenya in January, for the sixth month in a row (see Figure 6); although reported fatality levels have fluctuated considerably over this time, reflecting pronounced volatility in conflict intensity. Fatality levels dropped significantly in January from a sharp spike in December, driven largely by clashes in Moyale involving Gabra and Borana ethnic militias. Clashes continued between the two groups, though at a lower intensity, in January.

Kenya plays host to multiple conflict dynamics, which are often geographically discrete. International attention has focused on the country’s leadership’s trial at the International Criminal Court for their alleged role crimes against humanity during the post-election violence of 2007/2008. Last month, the ICC prosecutor sought to adjourn the date of President Uhuru Kenyatta’s trial because the loss of two key witnesses meant the case did not ‘satisfy the high evidentiary standards required’ for prosecution (BBC, 19 December 2013).

The loss of witnesses raises doubts over the safety and insulation of those testifying against the country’s leadership, but has not been the only obstacle to the ICC’s pursuit of a case against Kenyatta: the prosecutor’s office has also alleged that the President has not cooperated, most recently by failing to provide financial records through

which sponsorship of post-election violence might be traced. Kenyatta’s fervent denunciation in recent months of the Court as an instrument of neo-colonialism and imperialism do little to convince observers of his commitment to the process (*The Nation*, 21 October 2013).

The ICC prosecutor and lawyer for the victims are primarily concerned with seeking justice for the violence which engulfed the country in 2007/2008, but there is also a more immediate risk of a resurgence of violence if Kenyatta’s case crumbles. The ICC is forging ahead with its case against Deputy President, William Ruto, which may drive a wedge between the coalition partners, although they remain – at least superficially – united at present. Elites close to Ruto maintain that key civil servants from the Kikuyu ethnic group under former President Mwai Kibaki gathered evidence against the current Deputy President and coached witnesses to shore up the case against him (*Africa Confidential*, 10 January 2014), sowing distrust on both sides. The risk of discontent among Ruto’s supporters and members of the Kalenjin community spilling over into inter-ethnic violence is both real and mounting as Kenyatta appears to be decoupling his fate from that of his Deputy.

In a second key dynamic, the Coastal area, and Mombasa in particular, have received renewed attention in the

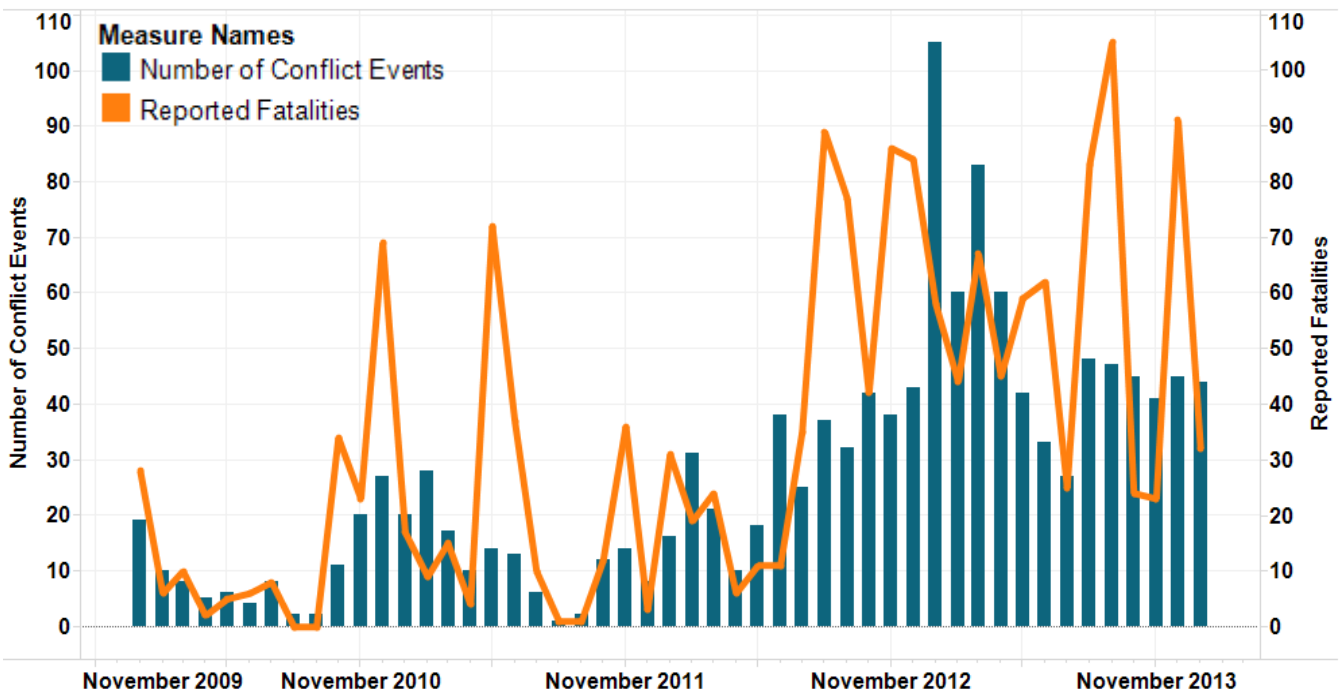


Figure 6: Conflict Events and Reported Fatalities, Kenya, January 2010 - January 2014.



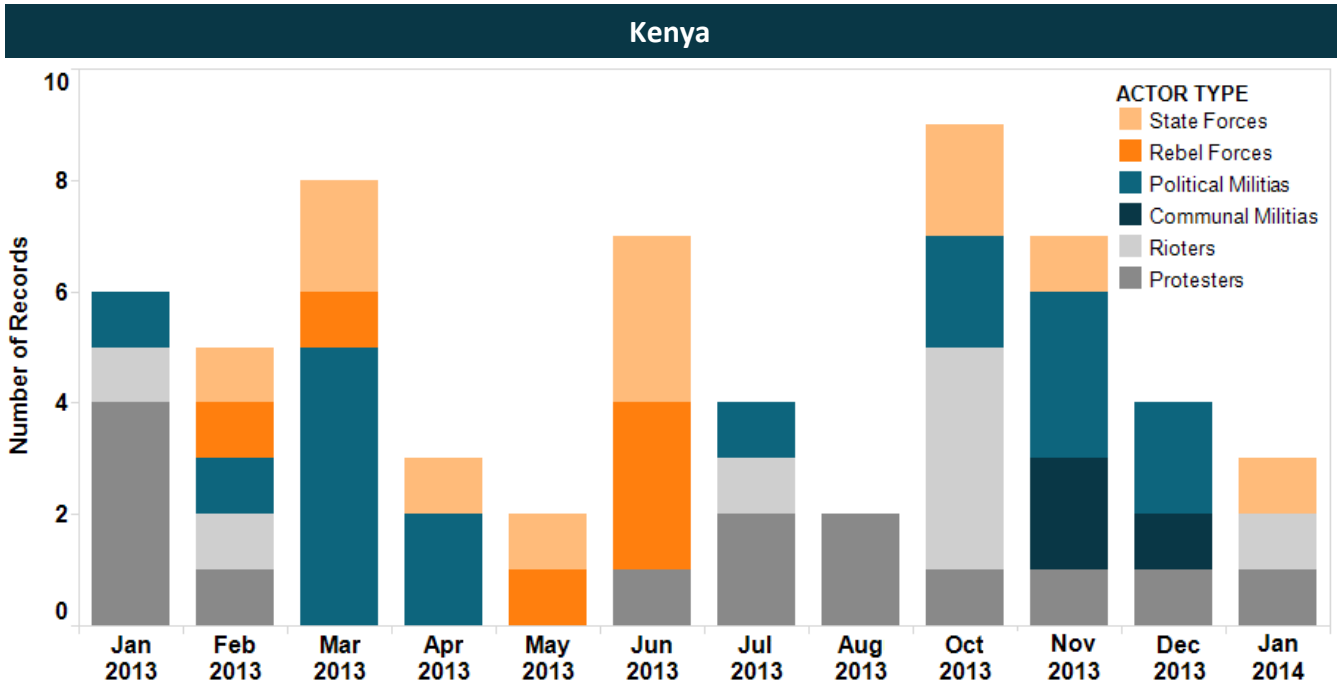


Figure 7: Conflict Events by Actor Type, Mombasa, January 2013 - January 2014.

wake of the September 2013 attack on Westgate Shopping Centre in Nairobi, claimed by Al Shabaab militants. Mombasa is seen by many as a potential hotspot for violent Islamist recruitment and militancy. In early February, state forces raided a mosque and broke up a meeting reportedly called and attended by militant Islamists, which resulted in a three deaths, and a wave of subsequent clashes and demonstrations. In the longer term, events have been decreasing for several months in the area (see Figure 7). The relatively sudden spike associated with the raid, subsequent clashes, arrests and demonstrations against the treatment of the 120+ detainees in police custody attest to the volatile nature of Coastal politics.

However, conflict in Mombasa is driven by a range of complex and interrelated issues, only some of which overlap with religious cleavages, while others are have a strong ethnic dimension. Secessionist claims mix with issues of social and political marginalisation, land disputes involving the purchase of land by elites from outside the region, and religious radicalisation among some Muslim groups to produce a highly volatile conflict environment.

Grievances are coterminously expressed in competing and diverging narratives of religious, ethnic and regional exclusivity, sometimes from within the same civil and political organisations. For example, a confederation of Christian churches previously pledged support for the Mombasa Republican Council [MRC] agenda as a 'response to the

long-standing grievances of the coastal people against the government of Kenya' (quoted in Willis and Gona, 2013, p. 65), although a number of attacks on Christians and churches in Mombasa have recently been attributed to members of the MRC suggesting inter-religious conflict is a faultline along which some members identify strongly. Moreover, while some narratives of Coastal secession appear to advance an ethnically and religiously inclusive view of the residents of Mombasa and its environs, as Willis and Gona (2013) have shown, the same organisations sometimes advance calls for secession which are expressed in terms of the indigeneity of specific local groups.

One factor which has aggravated this already explosive mix of grievances and militarism is a series of assassinations over the past two years of local Muslim clerics by unidentified armed groups, acts which many attribute to the Kenyan Anti-Terrorism Police Unit (ATPU). In one illustration of the radicalising role these acts have had among Muslim communities in Mombasa, the same Masjid Musa mosque which was raided for 'jihadist' activity in early February was earlier a site of rioting following the assassination of a prominent local cleric in October 2013. The sequencing of these events should serve as a caution to Kenyan authorities and international donors supporting police training and funding (*Africa Confidential*, 13 December 2013) of the dangers of a heavy-handed approach to routing out militarism in the region.

Mozambique

Currently a period of instability is marked by violent conflict and threats of a return to civil war in Mozambique. A pattern of violent battles involving the two main political parties have significantly increased in the last quarter of 2013, which saw nearly five times more battles in comparison to the whole of (see Figure 8). The increase results from the strategy of the main opposition party the Mozambican Resistance Movement (RENAMO) reverting to armed conflict as they express their frustration with the monopoly of political power held by Frente de Libertacao de Mocambique (FRELIMO) since the first democratic elections in 1994.

RENAMO's threats to return to war began in June 2013, and the intensity of clashes escalated during the last quarter of 2013 which contributed to an increase in overall event levels, and in incidences of violence against civilians in particular (see Figure 8).

Violent attacks have been concentrated in the province of Sofala along the main highway between Muxungue and the river Save, in which civilians have been targeted and military outposts attacked. Since January 2013, Sofala has seen more the highest rates of violence in the country (at 53 recorded conflict events; compared to the next highest rate of 25 in Maputo). It has also witnessed the highest rates of reported fatalities by a wide margin: in the past

13 months, 126 reported fatalities have occurred in Sofala; compared to 10 in Nampula and fewer elsewhere in the country. Once more, civilians bear the brunt of this violence in many cases: in Nampula, Sofala and Maputo, violence against non-combatants has made up around half of all conflict events since January 2013 (see Figure 9).

An impasse in negotiations enables RENAMO to sustain the threats to take control of the centre and north of the country which is rich in natural resources. With such declarations, it hopes to gain support and demand a separation between the north and south of the country with the hope of securing control over the region's considerable wealth (*Africa Confidential*, 1 November 2013). However, by using the military option to influence a significant political change, it might further marginalise the party because the people and the country have for fifteen years (1975-1992) gone through the hardship of civil war.

In addition to the high profile conflict between RENAMO and FRELIMO, civil unrest in the form of rioting and protesting is very high and rose sharply in Mozambique towards the end of 2013. 2013 saw almost three times as much rioting and protesting as the previous year. Geographically, these were concentrated in Maputo which had almost twice as many events (10) as Sofala and Zambezia (both 6).

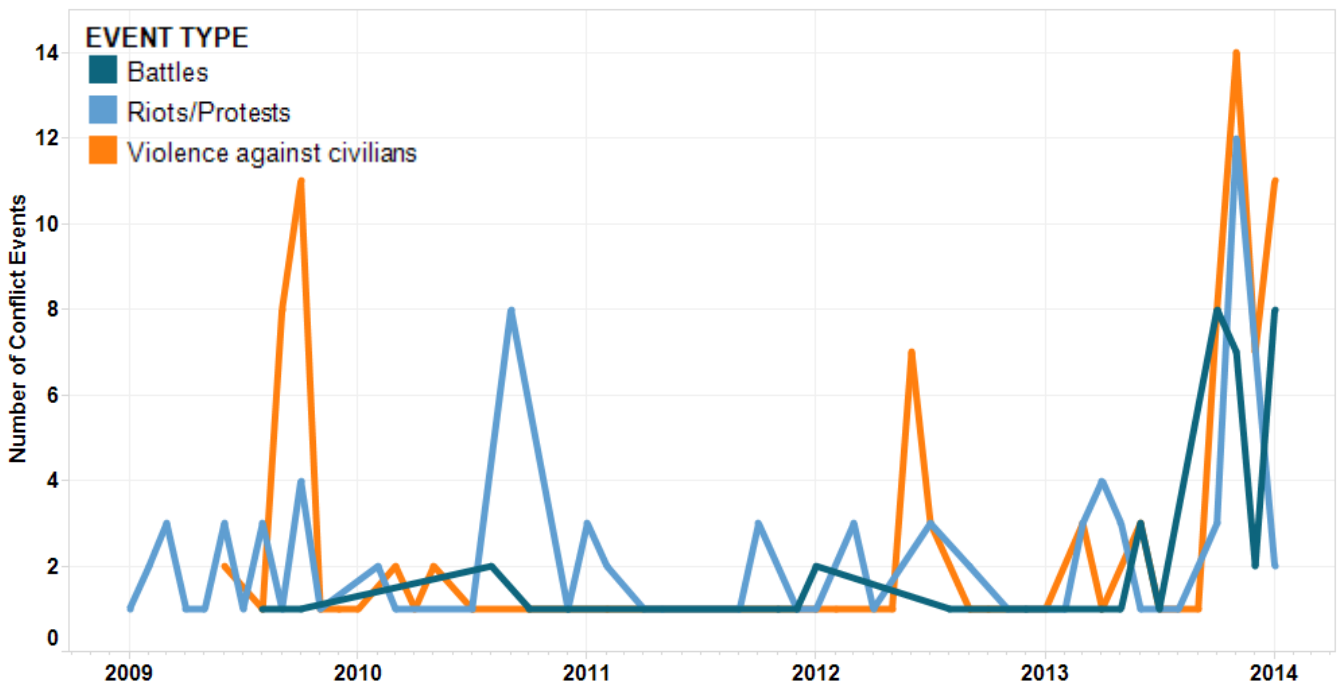


Figure 8: Conflict Events by Type, Mozambique, January 2009 - January 2014.



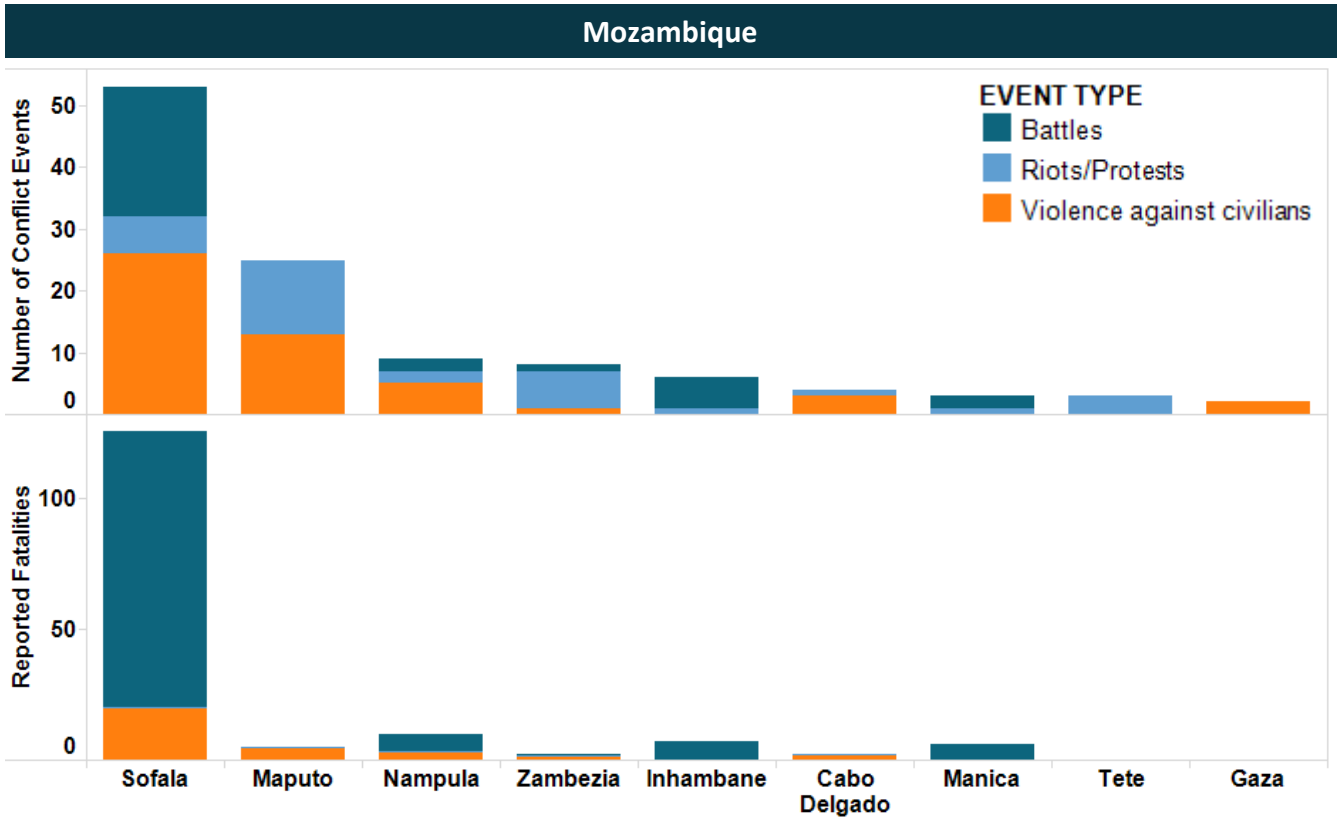


Figure 9: Conflict Events and Reported Fatalities by Type and Province, Mozambique, January 2013 - January 2014.

As the province hosts the country’s largest urban centre, Maputo is home to a larger number of people with heightened perceptions of the country’s inequalities: since 2012, protests have concentrated on a range of issues including political rights, concerns over living standards and wages,

and the role of demobilised soldiers in society. As the democratic process is challenged it is likely that upcoming election periods will be characterised by increased violence raising the question of the countries democratic system.

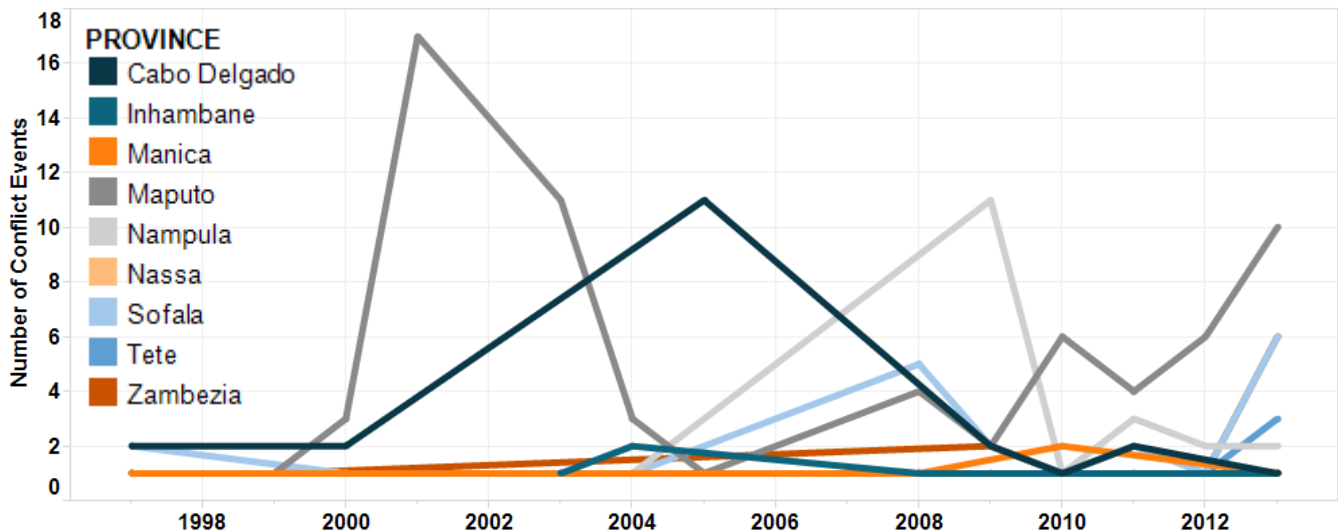


Figure 6: Riots and Protests by Province, Mozambique, January 1997 - December 2013.

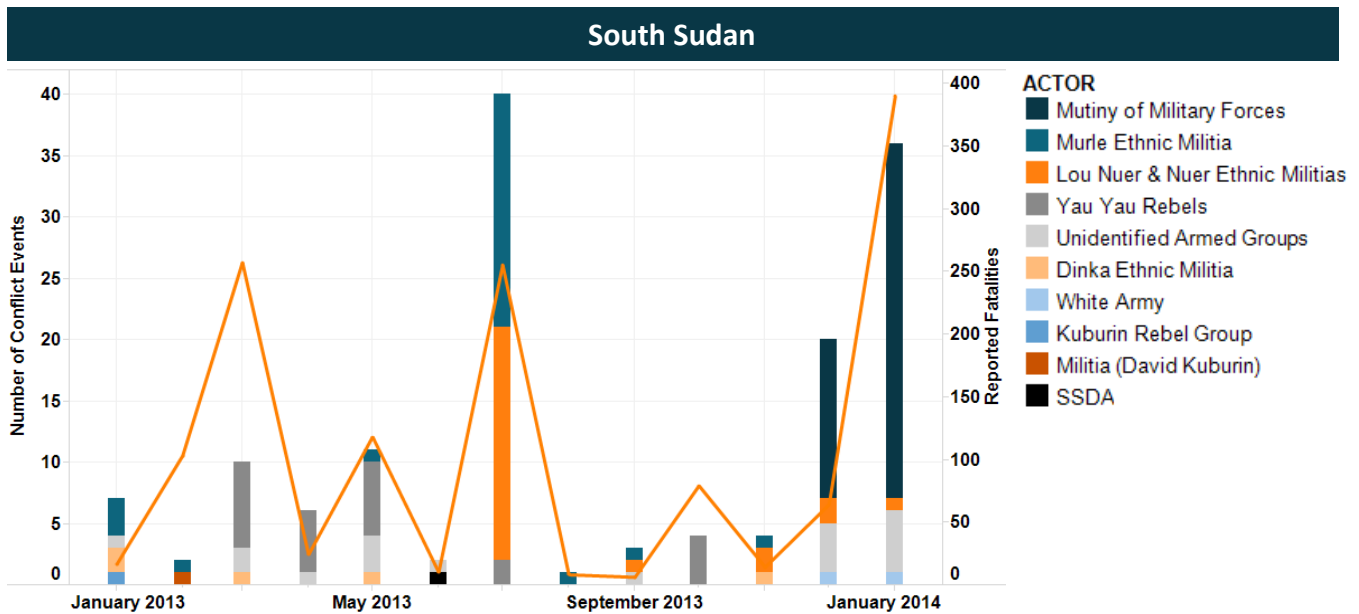


Figure 10: Conflict Events by Actor Type and Reported Fatalities, Jonglei, South Sudan, January 2013 - January 2014.

Despite peace talks ongoing in Ethiopia, South Sudan is still heading towards a civil war. Significant movements by Salva Kiir and Riek Machar to bolster their forces for the fight ahead underscore ongoing accusations by both sides that the other is not committed to peace.

The South Sudanese conflict that started in late December, has largely been seen as a manifestation of intra-SPLA competition, and triggered by what many saw as President Kiir’s blatant power grabs during 2013 (and reports that he was creating the hallmark of many an African president- an army recruited from his home area). Former vice president Machar managed to gather the forces and political elites disaffected by Kiir to mutiny in late December, and after a brief set of battles in Juba, the mutinous troops headed to Jonglei to the Northeast. Multiple rebel, militia and violent communal groups are embedded within Jonglei (see Figure 10) making it fertile revolutionary ground. Machar hoped to benefit from alliances, logistics and sympathies against the Kiir regime.

As reported last month, conflict has been largely clustered in the main towns in Jonglei, Unity and Upper Nile; pitched battles are found in areas that are logistically critical and resource wealth. The geography of the recent

struggles are occurring along administrative borders, which do largely correspond to ethnic patterns although the complexity of the alliances to both Machar and Riek suggest an overly ethnicized explanation for this contest is an exaggeration.

Finally, the main developments this month are that Riek Machar has named his forces and will heretofore be called SPLA-N/in opposition. Keeping South Sudan’s various and numerous SPLAs, SSLMs, SSDPs straight is a challenge even for seasoned Sudan watchers, and suggests either a deep and loyal regard the ideology of the original movement(s), or a stunning lack of creativity on the part of various violent players. SPLA-N/in opposition claims that SPLA-N (associated with Kiir’s government) has not kept the spirit of revolution alive, and Machar represents the true SPLA (in opposition to the sitting SPLA).

The conflict has also become highly regionalized: recognizing that he will not be able to counter the forces of this serious mutiny effectively without outside assistance, Kiir has called upon the Ugandan military, JEM from Darfur, SPLA-N and (reportedly at the behest of Uganda), the ‘defeated’ Congolese M-23 movement to assist in Unity state. Peace is damned.

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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](http://acleddata.com).