# ACLED
Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project

Welcome to the July 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 a decrease in overall violence levels in the **Central African Republic** and a rise in clashes between nomadic herders in the northwest and settled populations; Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) reform protests that have concentrated in Nairboi and the Nyanza region of **Kenya** and increased attacks in Juba in **South Sudan.** A Special Report explores the **geography of protest** across Africa to understand how protest patterns and dynamics reflect local political contexts.

Elsewhere on the continent, **Nigerian** military forces successfully regained territory from Boko Haram in Borno State and in **Libya**, remote violence escalated in June as Islamic State militants lost territory to Presidency Council forces.

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Warning
Ongoing
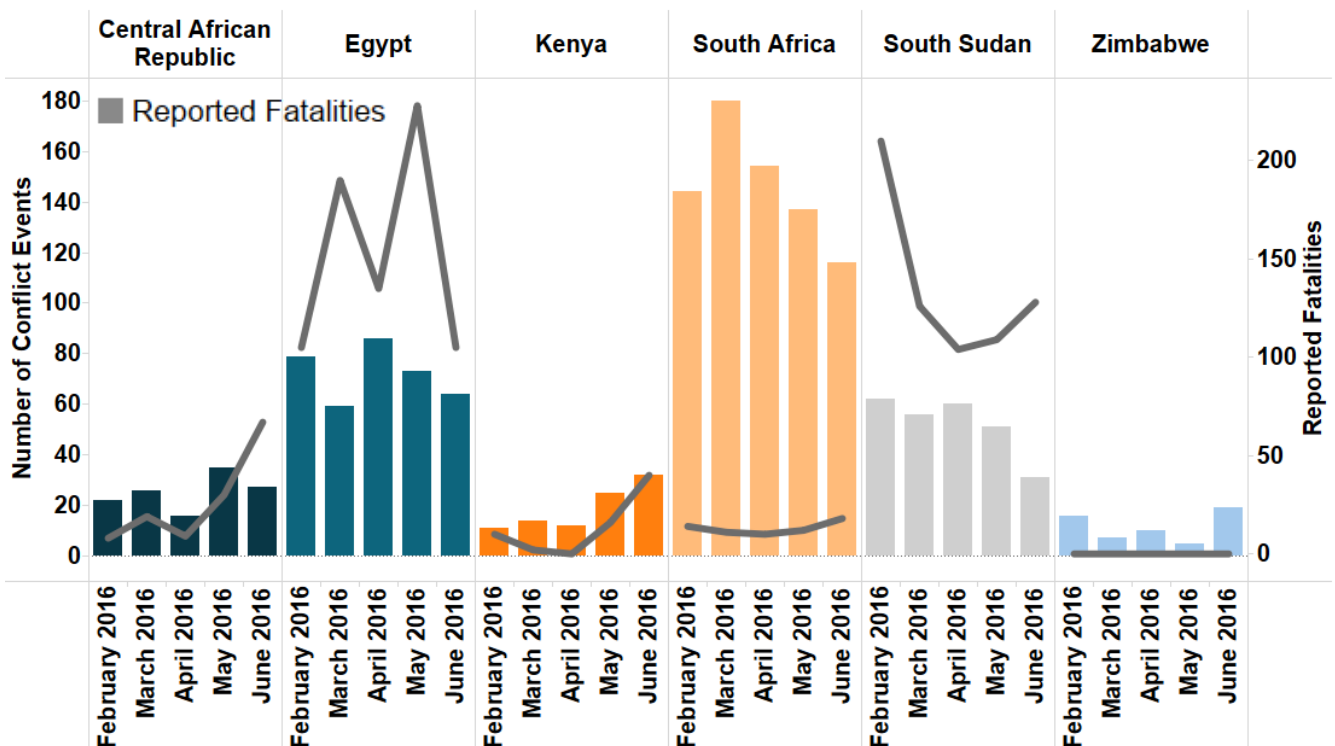Escalating
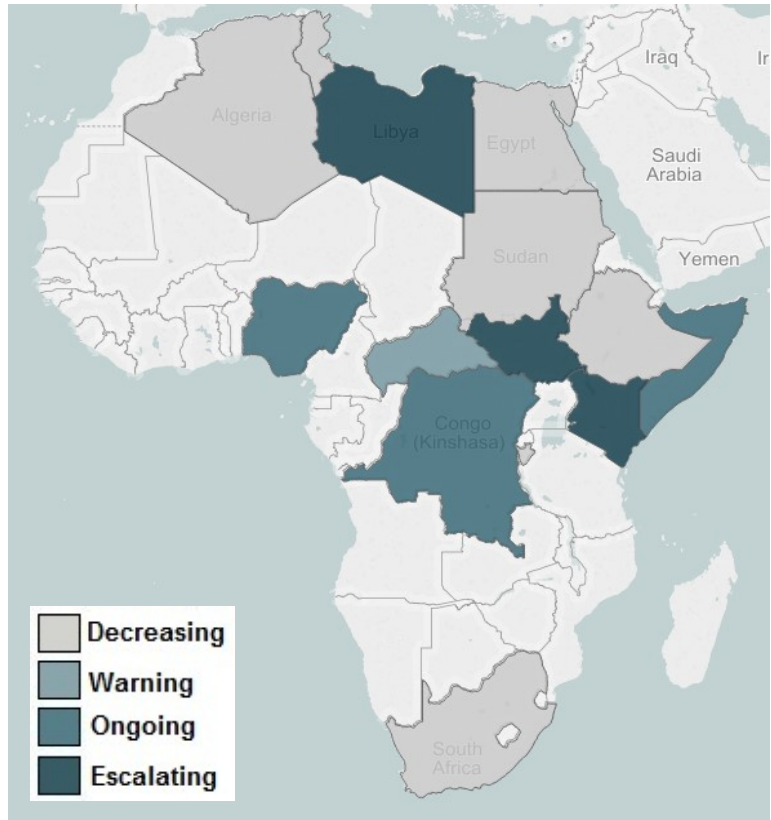
Conflict Trajectory, July 2016

Figure 1: Conflict Events and Reported Fatalities by Country, December 2015 - June 2016.

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Central African Republic

Reported fatalities in the Central African Republic (CAR) have continued to fall since May 2014 to levels not seen since before the outbreak of widespread violence between Seleka and Anti-Balaka groups in late 2013-early 2014. By December 2015 the number of events recorded had fallen to a third and the number of fatalities to a quarter of those reported by ACLED in September 2015, and have continued to stay low for most of 2016 (*see* Figure 2). This period of lower violence has coincided with CAR's elections which appear to have brought a degree of stability to the country, although parts of its territory still remain largely outside the control of the central government (**The Economist, 8 January 2016**).

Since May 2016, localised communal violence in the north has been on the rise (*see* Figure 2) and threatens to upset this renewed stability. Although the spike in violence between August and September 2015 was largely catalysed by sectarian tensions (*see* Figure 2), to a lesser degree it was also the result of conflict in the country's periphery between herders and the settled populations. Starting in May 2016, the potential for renewed sectarian violence has taken a backseat to communal conflicts as the movement of nomadic herders in the northwest has sparked tensions. In May 2016 for example, over 90% of the fatalities recorded by ACLED occurred in events involving armed herders, whilst a similarly high share of fatalities in June (74%) were related to conflicts between herders and

various local armed groups. These notably include violence in the Ngaoundaye area in mid-June following a refusal by residents of the area to allow herders to cross their land (**Daily Mail, 17 June 2016**) and most recently reports of large numbers of casualties and burnt villages in the Niem-Yelewa area involving "cattle rustlers" (**Radio Ndeke Luka, 2 July 2016**).

On the one hand, these attacks are a sign that the government of CAR needs to play a more active role in securing its territory by empowering its police and armed forces. This is demonstrated by MINUSCA's role in resolving these clashes, for example by intervening in unrest between former Seleka militiamen and Fulani herdsmen in the Batangafo area, which resulted in 16 deaths over two days (**France24, 21 June 2016**). A major obstacle remains that the armed forces of the Central African Republic (FACA) have been largely disarmed, and an arms embargo remains in place on the country, leavings its military impotent (**RJDH-Centrafrique, 2 July 2016**). On the other hand, while the on-going contention is indicative of larger problems facing CAR and the weakness of the central government, the current violence in the north appears to be localized. The question that remains to be answered os whether the government, even with international support in the form of MINUSCA, can effectively secure the country, especially as France's Sangaris mission prepares to leave in December 2016 (**France24, 30 March 2016**).
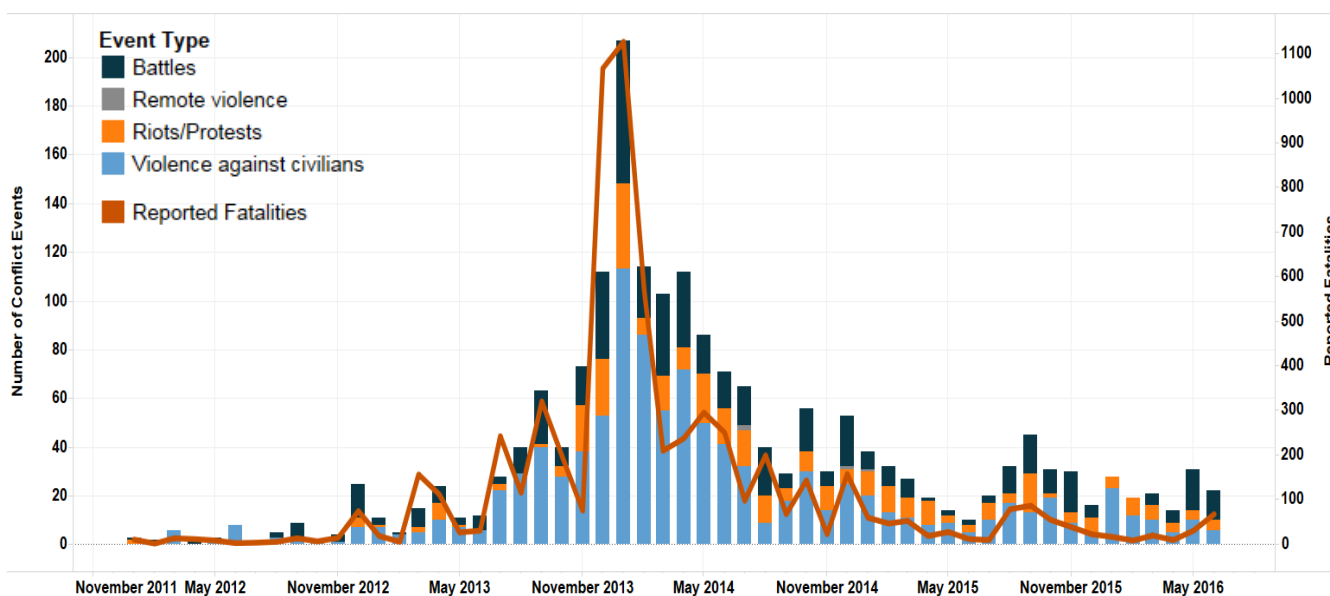

Figure 2: Number of Political Violence and Protest Events and Reported Fatalities in Central African Republic, from November 2011 – June 2016.

Kenya

Levels of political conflict and protest in Kenya rose in the last two months. This is reversing a continued, if non-linear, trend of decreasing unrest since the country's last elections in March 2013 (*see* Figure 3). The rise in political unrest has been driven by an increase in riots and protests led by the opposition Coalition for Reform and Democracy (CORD) and its leader - Raila Odinga. The source of the demonstrations is a disagreement between the opposition and the regime/Jubilee Coalition (also led by Uhuru Kenyatta) over whether the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) requires reform (**Africa Confidential, 10 June 2016**).

The start of these protests in April shows that the looming issue of the August 2017 general elections is already beginning to foment tension between the Kenyatta administration and CORD. Odinga and the opposition at large blame IBEC for their defeat in 2013 and argue that the organisation is biased against CORD (**Otieno, 9 May 2016**). The demonstrations have led to a violent response by police and security forces. There have been recorded beatings of demonstrators by police in Nairobi and police have used live ammunition against protesters in the CORD homelands of Kisumu and Siaya. The police have been open in their refusal to tolerate public dissent from the opposition and their constituents. The Nairobi County Police Commander warned the public not to demonstrate if 'you value your lives' (**Africa Confidential, 10 June 2016**).

So far ten demonstrators have been killed by police. Overall, 74% of IEBC demonstrations, violent and non-violent, have resulted in dispersal by state forces compared to 23% of all other demonstrations in 2016. This discrepancy in state repression indicates that Kenyatta is aware of the vital role a favourable IEBC will play in securing the Jubilee Coalition's victory in 2017.

Nevertheless, the government and the opposition engaged in a national dialogue early last month, leading to a slight decrease in unrest between the 6th and 14th of June. The government acquiesced to some opposition's key demands but the key issue is the dismissal of IEBC Chairperson Ahmed Issack Hassan, who oversaw the contentious 2013 elections. Kenyatta deemed Hassan's dismissal as a concession too far and violence once again spiked
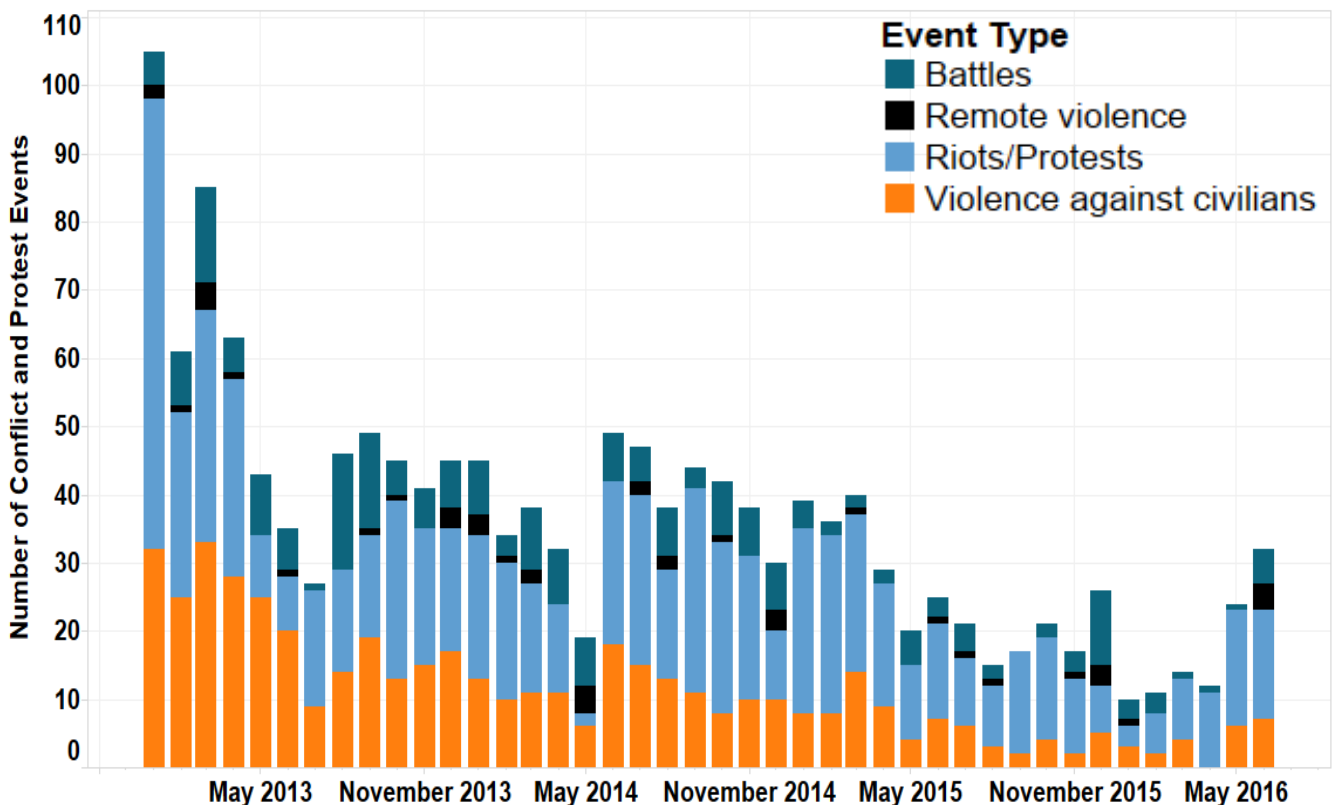

Figure 3: Number of Conflict and Protest Events by Type in Kenya, from January 2013 - June 2016.

Kenya

with police shooting dead five demonstrators in Nyanza in late June (**Macharia, 22 June 2016**).

The demonstrations have been overwhelmingly concentrated in Nairobi and the Nyanza region, both strongholds of Odinga's Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) (*see* Figure 4). However, there have been barely any protests in the political homelands of the other main CORD coalition partners. There are been no serious demonstrations in Kamba, the homeland of Stephen Kalonzo Musyoka's Wiper Democratic Movement-Kenya (WDM-K), nor have there been protests in the Coast or Bungoma, the home of Forum for the Restoration of Democracy-Kenya (FORD-K).

While other senior partners in CORD have joined Odinga in his calls to reform IEBC, the lack of demonstrations in other CORD areas may reflect disunity and weakness in the coalition (**Kenya Political Report, 26 June 2016**). In 2013, the opposition agreed to support Odinga for a one-term presidency, to be followed by Stephen Kalonzo Musyoka or Moses Simiyu Wetangula in 2017 (**Africa Con-**

fidential, 27 August 2015). The ODM argue that as Odinga did not win the election that the agreement is void and that Odinga once again should be the nominee (*ibid*.). Musyoka and Wetangula have both already launched their bids for the presidency (**Ongera, 20 June 2016**). However, lack of demonstrations in Musyoka's and Wetangula's home regions and the dominance of the ODM in the IEBC demonstrations shows that Odinga's followers are more dedicated and more willing to risk violence at the hands of the state. Musyoka's political support has been limited by Kenyatta's incorporation of Kamba elites into senior government positions while Wetangula faces a challenge in his Luhya political homeland from former Vice President Musalia Mudavadi (**Kenya Political Report, 26 June 2016**). While support for the other major coalition parties within CORD remains capricious, political unrest is likely to remain concentrated within the ODM strongholds of Nyanza and Nairobi.

It is likely that the main source of political contention between the government and the opposition in the coming year will be control of the institutions that govern the electoral process. In addition to the IEBC, there has been political manoeuvrings to have a pro-Kenyatta judge take over as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court (**Africa Confidential, 24 June 2016**). In both the 2007 and 2013 elections, Odinga accused both the electoral authorities and the courts of impartiality and bias. While allegations of electoral fraud and a biased judiciary in 2007 resulted in the worst period of political violence since independence, in the latter case political unrest, while still high, was comparatively contained. In spite of the recent spike in demonstrations, political unrest as a whole is still well below the levels witnessed during the run up to the 2013 elections (*see* Figure 3), which were lauded as comparatively peaceful (**ISS, 20 March 2013**).

While there remains a distinct possibility of electoral violence, the fact that there are already negotiations between the opposition and government over how these institutions are run raises the possibility of compromise and reduces the probability of the electoral loser violently mobilising their constituents. However, should either party refuse to negotiate then Kenya's trend of continually decreasing violence may be reversed.
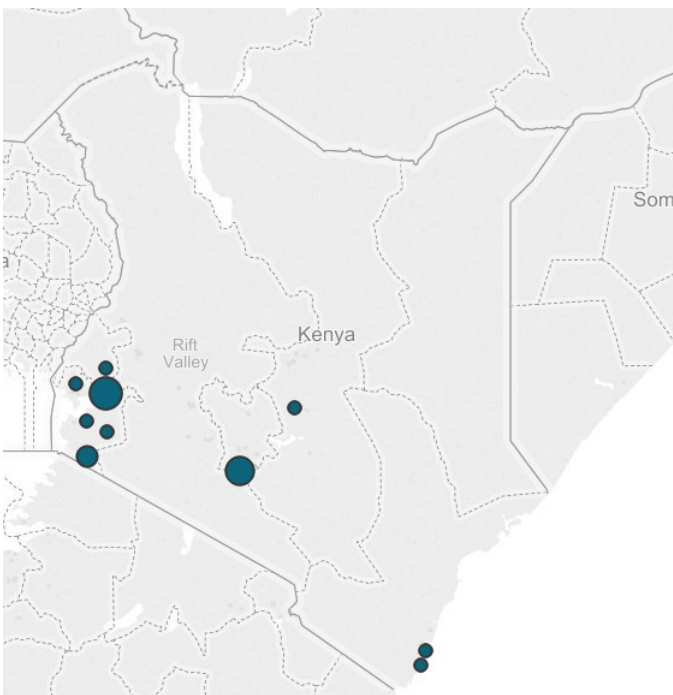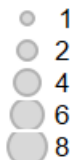
Number of Riot and Protest Events

Figure 4: IEBC Riot and Protests Events by Location in Kenya, from January - June 2016.

South Sudan

Despite both the SPLA and the SPLA-IO signing a peace agreement in August 2015, conflict has continued across South Sudan (*see* Figure 5). To date, almost 17,000 people have been killed in the five years since Independence; over 15,000 since the 'civil war' of 2013 onwards. There are multiple active conflict zones, and a recent count for 2016 suggested three rebel groups and upwards of forty active militias (both political and communal) (*see* Figure 6 and 7).

A recent increase in attacks across Juba is concerning mainly because of the combatants: both the SPLA (as the armed faction of both the government of South Sudan, hereafter GoSS and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-SPLM) and SPLA-IO (the Sudan People's Liberation Army-In Opposition) are in contest again. This cleavage has dominated the civil war that has gone on nearly as long as the country's short existence. The August 2015 peace agreement has had little effect on the actual fighting patterns throughout the state. There are important caveats to that general pattern:

1. The conflict has demonstrated a shift from the north/ northeast area to the south and southwest of the state over time (*see* Figure 6).

2. There are several active conflicts throughout the state, which are linked through strategic relationships, but are loosely integrated into the dominant competition between the SPLA and SPLA-IO.

3. Changing the political geography of the country through the 28 states plan has created multiple new grievances, land disputes, resource access conflicts, and opportunities for politically connected agents who want to benefit from the newly enforced distribution of resources.

A renewed focus on South Sudan is in order given the recent conflict in Juba from July 7-11; this time period coincided with the country's fifth anniversary. There are many questions as to who is behind the violence, although that appears to be a superficial question given the highly contentious nature of Southern Sudanese politics; the level of militarization across the society at large; the ineffectiveness of the peace agreement; and the presence of high ranking, discontented elites who can benefit from further
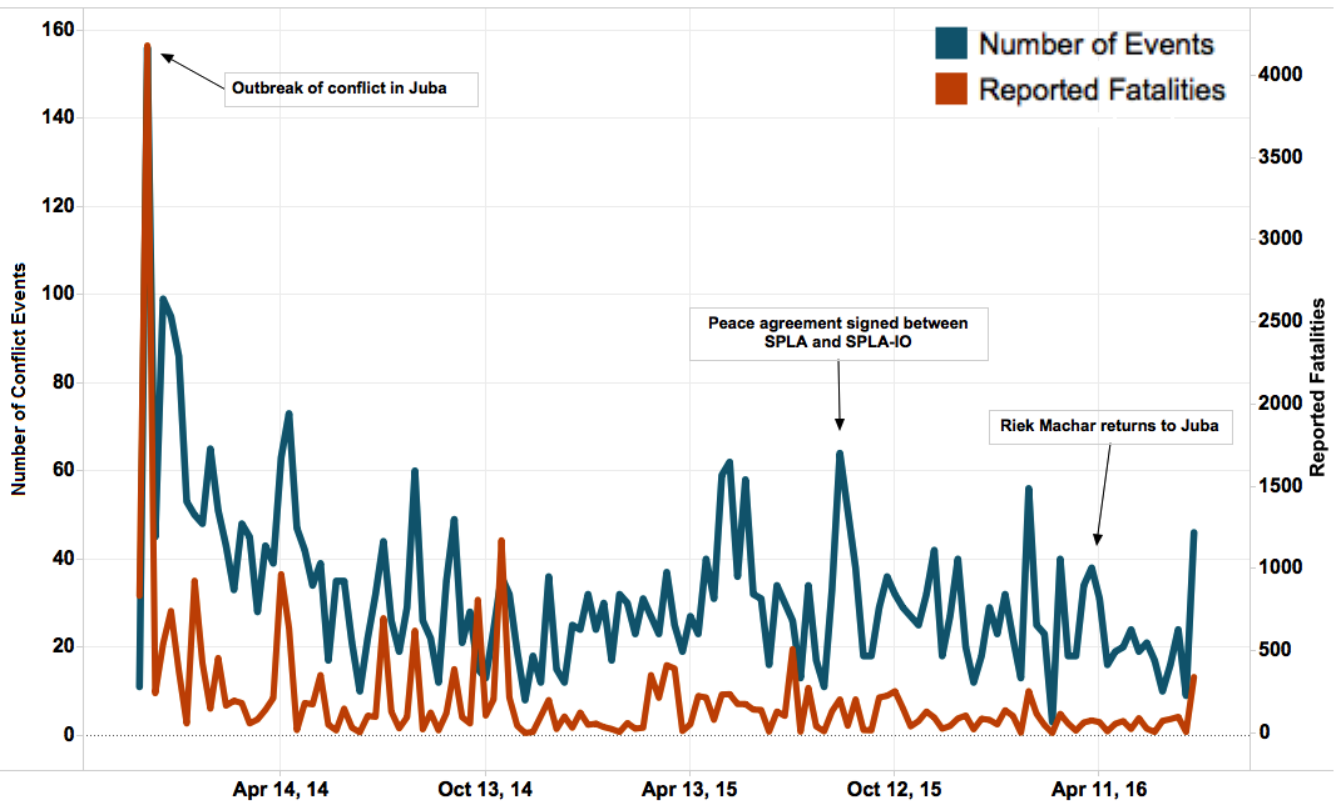

Figure 5: Timeline and Rates of Conflict Events in South Sudan, from December 2013 - 9 July 2016.
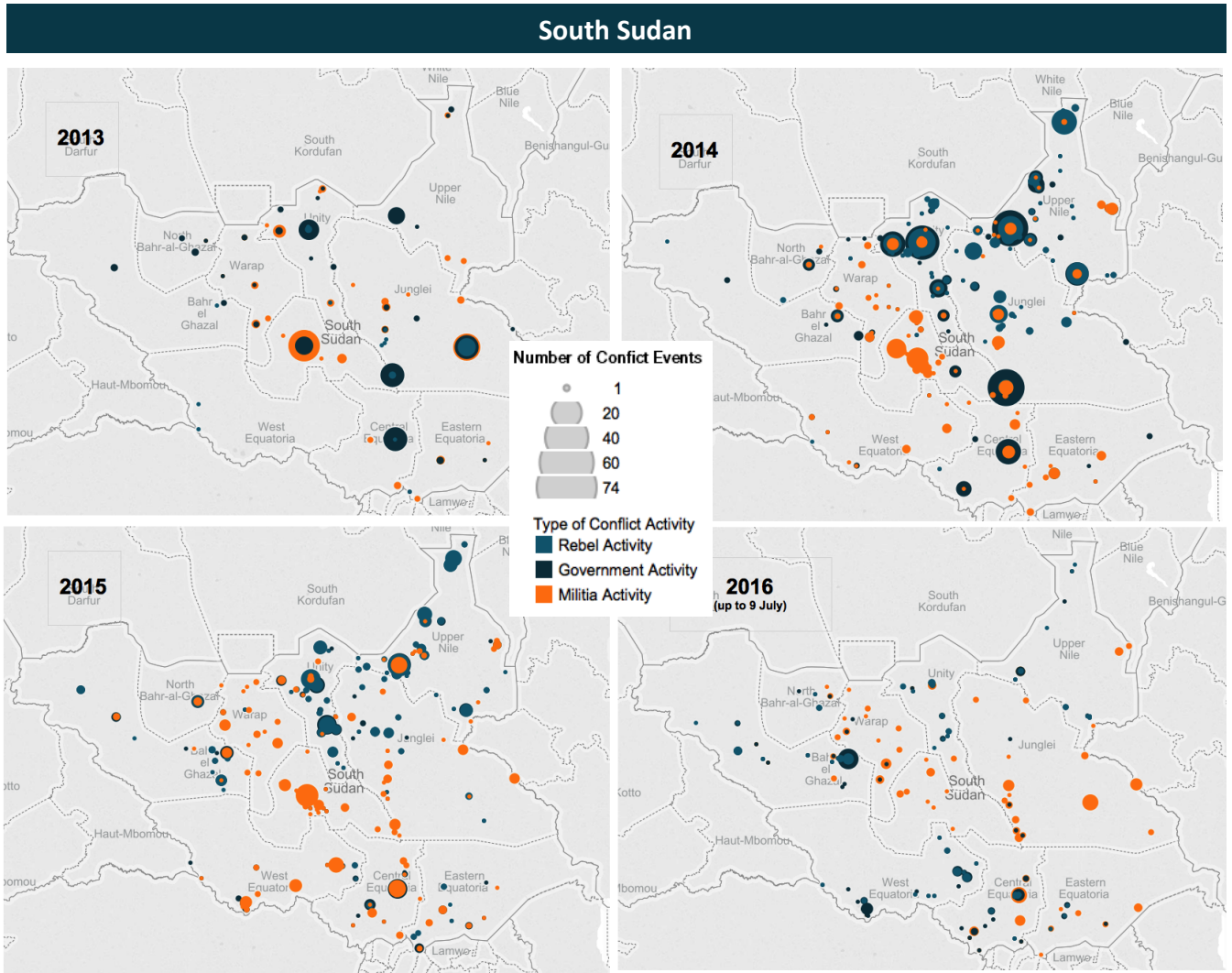
South Sudan

Figure 6: Temporal Trends of Conflict Activity by Type in South Sudan, from January 2013 - 9 July 2016.

violence.

The violence is likely to have massive ripple effects, similar to the situation in December 2013. However, the agents, issues, and locations of interest have shifted somewhat to make this probable return to conflict unlike earlier instances.

The patterns of the conflict underscore that political wrangling and opportunism is behind most of the violence in Southern Sudan, and that local defense forces and militias are responsible for conducting campaigns to benefit national level elites, who have cast politics as distinctly ethnic. Despite this casting, the alliances throughout the state are not uniformly the same for ethnic communities. For instance, in some cases, sub-clans of Nuer and Dinka (the main ethnic cleavage represented by Vice President Riek

Machar and President Salva Kiir, respectively) are fighting against their dominant clan association (SPLA-IO and SPLA, respectively).

This return to violence is taking place within a context of many national and local issues and grievances, including the government's decision earlier in 2015 to postpone June's scheduled elections in the interest of: ongoing peace negotiations; the extension of Kiir's presidential term until 2017; and the 'redistricting' plan which nullifies the proposed system of power-sharing of the existing 10 states (SPLA/M-IO was to be given control of oil-rich Upper Nile and Unity States), replacing it with 28 ethnically-divided states (per Kiir's unilateral decree in late 2015). Kiir recently agreed to allow a committee to review the borders of the 28 new states, but not to consider a reversal of the decree.
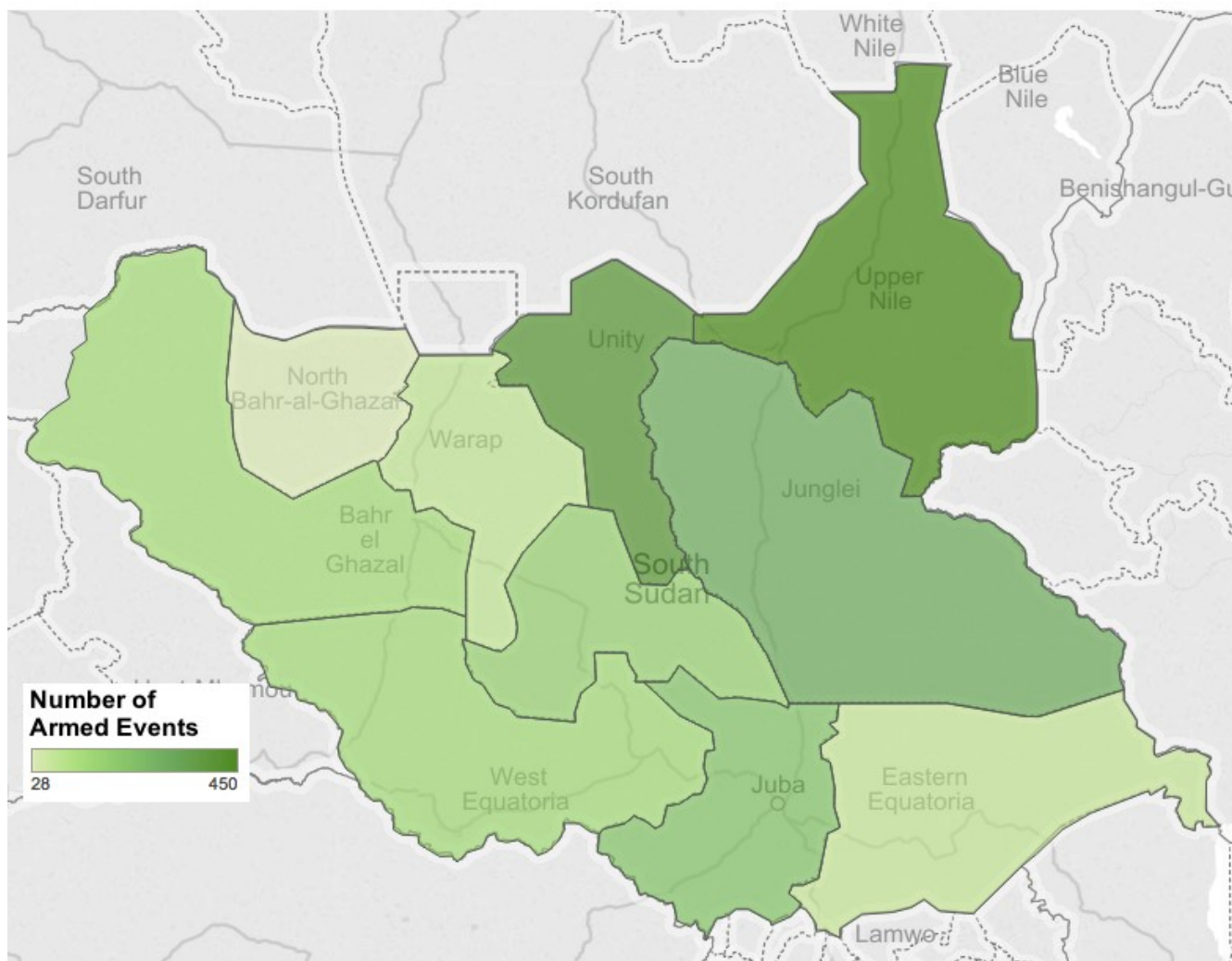
South Sudan

Figure 7: Number of Armed Events per State, in South Sudan, from December 2013 - 9 July 2016.

The various rates of activity by type of agent, and the increasing role of communal militias, are detailed in Figure 8. Ethnic and communal militias outside of Juba continue to fight through cattle raiding and revenge attacks. Jonglei state has the most battles involving ethnic and communal militias (due mainly to the Murle ethnic militia). Also, communal militias are involved in cattle raids and violence. Most unidentified communal militia activity over the past year takes place in Jonglei state.

The outcome of the Juba conflict will have serious ramifications for whose civilians are safest within that space, as well as for the losing party. Rumors about cracks in the government political elite (e.g. Malong splits from Kiir) will likely lead to a severe restriction in the formal SPLA forc-

es, as they are dependent on the militias created and sustained by Malong. Further, new fronts (including Northern and Western Bahr El Ghazal) could open, as the conflict in Wau continues to increase. Should this pass, an agreement is likely between Kiir and Machar, and those communities allied with both.

Agents of Violence

While much of South Sudan's activity involves the main two groups in opposition, a number of other political militias, and a plethora of communal militias (approximately 40) are also active. The South Sudan 'relational' space is best thought of as a national elite competition core, surrounded by a number of militias that operate both as local and supplemental troops for both core members (SPLA
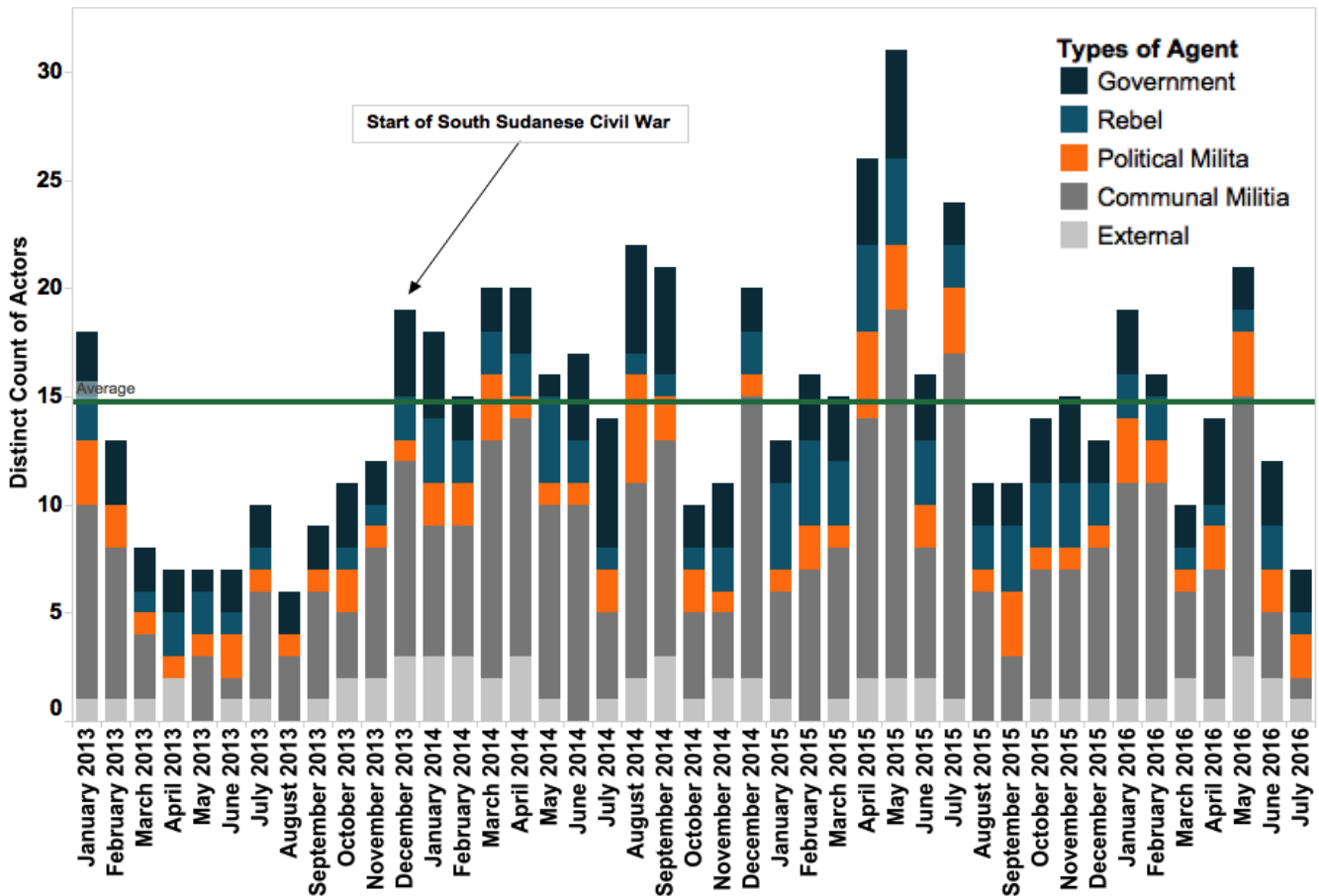
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South Sudan

Figure 8: Distinct Count of Actors by Type in South Sudan, from January 2013 - 9 July 2016.

and SPLA-IO), surrounded by a much larger group of militias who operate solely within a communal, local space. Violence is significant from all of these violent agents.

The main opposition force is SPLA-IO, which is now technically part of the transitional government. Multiple offshoots of SPLA-IO that were angered when Machar reconciled with the Government (i.e. Gen. Peter Gadet) now exist. In 2015, the government promised an amnesty to rebels that disarm. Some did not want to disarm unless local forces first replaced Dinka elements of the army. In Yambio (Western Equatoria), the government signed a peace agreement with the South Sudan National Liberation Movement (SSNLM) in April 2016, after engaging in clashes with the military in January 2016.

In protest of Kiir's 28 states decree, military defectors of the Shilluk ethnic group formed the Tiger Faction New Forces (TFNF) under the leadership of Yaones Okij in Manyo County (Upper Nile) (Radio Tamazuj, 3 October

2015). On 31 October 2015, TFNF held the Manyo County Commissioner hostage, claiming control of Wadakona as its headquarters. In November, the group clashed with military forces in Malakal. "The mobilization of armed young men highlights the peace deal's limitations in addressing the deeply rooted grievances of smaller ethnic groups" (**Al Jazeera, 21 November 2015**).

In Eastern Equatoria, the South Sudan Armed Forces (SSAF), led by Anthony Ongwaja and consisting predominantly of Latuke ethnic group members, announced its arrival by taking control of a police station in Idolu in December. SSAF was also involved in battles in Longiro and Torit in Eastern Equatoria in December, in which 34 soldiers, police officers, and rebels were killed. Since December, SSAF has not reportedly been active.

Some of the most significant violence emanates from Dinka and Nuer militias, operating in and out of their home areas. South Sudan has had a long history of militarizing

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South Sudan

and training Dinka cattle herders, which are then partially or unofficially incorporated into government forces, leading to "hybrid domains of security" (**Pendle, 2015**). Prior to independence, Dinka youth often become *de facto* armed groups, comprised of young men protecting their land against raids committed by the Government of Sudan and by the White Army (the Nuer militia armed by Machar in the mid-1990s which would raid Dinka areas controlled by SPLA, at the time led by John Garang). Dinka militias such as *Duk ku Beny* received *quasi* support from SPLA forces, or at least tacit permission to become armed, in what was then Southern Sudan.

This tacit support effectively caused the Dinka militia in South Sudan to act similarly to the government-supported Janjaweed militia in Sudan. In other words, the presence of armed youth militias (whether Dinka in South Sudan, or Janjaweed in Sudan) is not simply a product of local disputes, but rather the effect of government forces arming cattle herders as a method of creating proxy fighters to ally against any existing opposition forces, as well as ensuring that new opposition is not created (by keeping local communities content and feeling able to defend themselves). Over time, the status of the Dinka militia may have changed (from informal to semi-formal and back

again); however, their actions have remained essentially the same, except for violence being moved to new geographical spaces.

Disarmament campaigns amongst Dinka and other militias have been presented from the 2000s onward as an alternative to integration into armed forces. This has blurred the "government – home boundary" and altered limits of "legitimate violence" for communal militias that had become accustomed to being able to defend their lands through the acquisition of guns (**Pendle, 2015**). In order to remain legitimately armed, Dinka groups had to become increasingly (but still only *partially*) government-affiliated. Some armed groups were transformed into 'community police', eventually becoming Mathiang Anyoor. This group fought alongside Kiir against the SPLM-IO, further blurring the lines between 'community police' and soldiers. The integration of the Dinka militia into government forces or the transformation of Dinka groups into 'community police' has also left the impression that the GoSS has favored Dinka over 'illegitimately' armed Nuer groups, such as the White Army. The groups such as Mathiang Anyoor are believed to underscore the newest violence in the state.

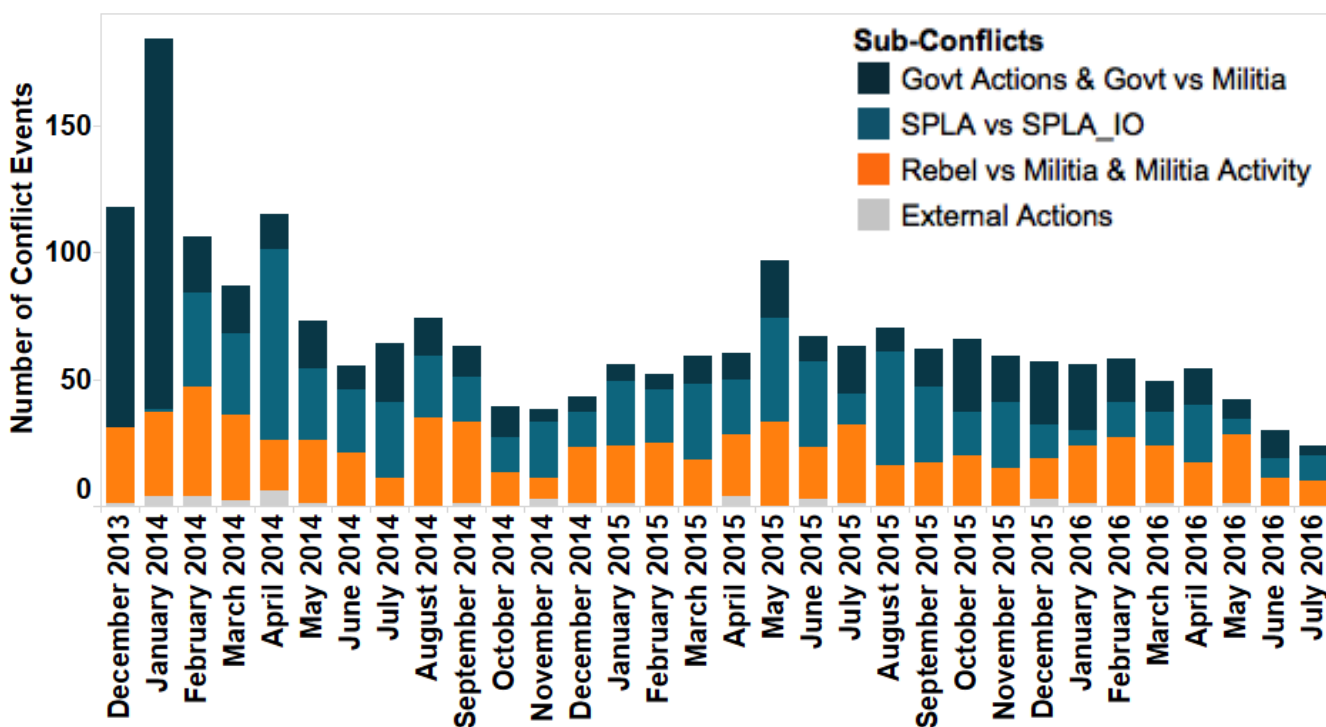The full version of trends in South Sudan can be found **here**.

Figure 9: Types of Violence by Sub-Conflict in South Sudan, from December 2013 - 9 July 2016.

Special Focus Topic: The Geography of Riots and Protests

Since 2013, riots and protests have been the dominant political expression recorded in African countries in the ACLED dataset. Populations took to the streets to express their grievances at a higher rate than more violent organised activity conducted by rebel groups or political militias. In 2016, the recent protests in the Oromia region of Ethiopia, pre-electoral uprisings in Kenya, violent protests in South Africa and demonstrations by political activists and youth in Harare, Zimbabwe demonstrate how protest varies over time and space.

Where protest occurs and its spatial characteristics tells us a great deal about the political organisation of the state in that area and precipitators of wider forms of violence. Protests do not occur within a vacuum; "one cannot understand social life without understanding the arrangements of particular social actors in particular social times and places … [N]o social fact makes any sense abstracted from its context in social (and often geographic) space and social time" (Abbott cited in Lancaster and Kamman, 2016). Therefore, the spatial clustering, diffusion or containment of protest over space informs us of the local political structures that enable different forms of contention to emerge. Geography reveals who is involved in street demonstrations, how they are organised, facilitated

or repressed, who stands to benefit, and their potential to mount a sustained challenge to regimes or escalate into wider patterns of violence. As such, we need to look beyond the immediate characteristics of protests themselves to examine their geography.

This report begins with a case study of the spatial patterns of protest and state repression in Cairo in 2013, 2014 and 2015. This reveals the prerogatives of the Egyptian regime and the ways in which they interpreted and responded to non-state threats. It illustrates how the structures of governance in African political systems (*see* Arriola, 2013) and the ability of protesters to organise condition *where* we see the emergence of protest. It then briefly analyses recent protests in Kenya and South Africa from a geographical perspective to show how protest patterns reflect local political contexts.

At the city-level, protesters often choose strategic locations for claims-making. This includes demonstrations outside institutions of state power, such as government buildings, political party offices or economic and financial areas to maximise their impact. But to emerge in the first place there must be a degree of organisation that enables this. The scale of organisation varies across contexts, from grass-roots networks outside of state control to integrat-
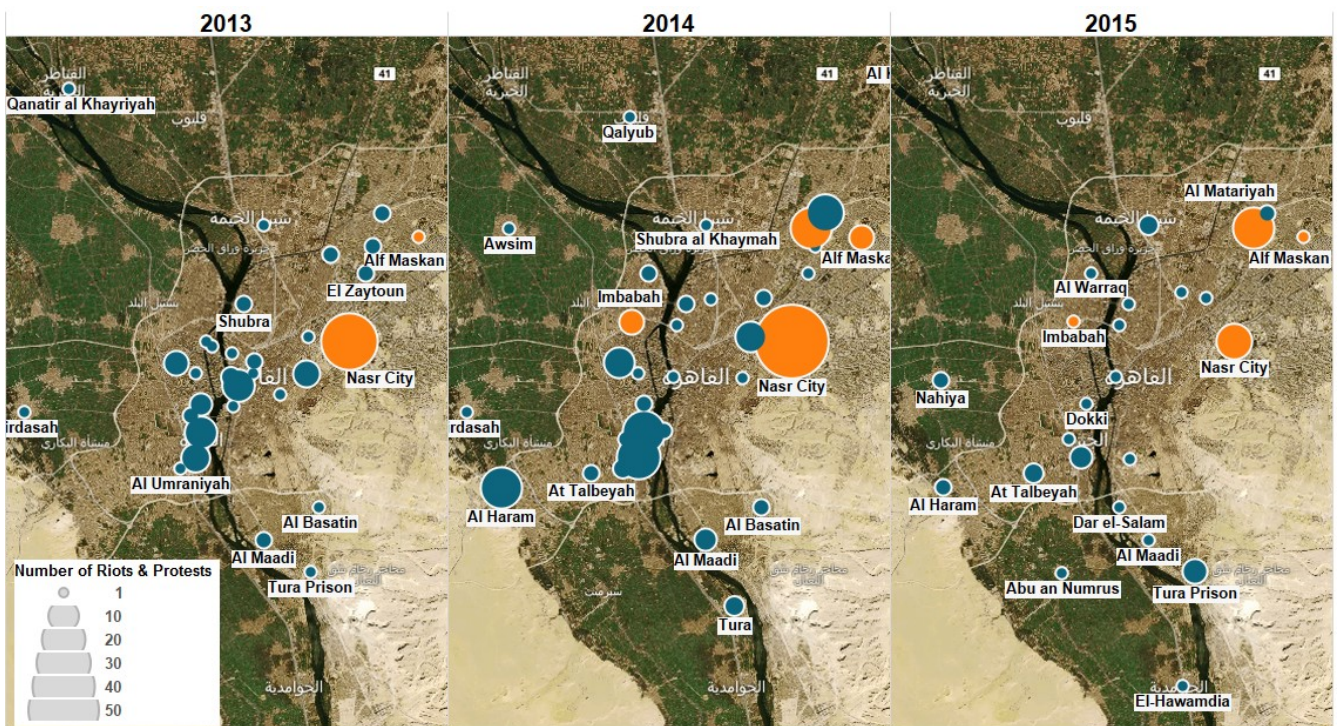

Figure 10: Number of Riots and Protests Repressed in Cairo, Egypt, in 2013, 2014 and 2015.

Special Focus Topic: The Geography of Riots and Protests

ed networks of local and national government such as in Zimbabwe. This conditions the logic and therefore the pattern of protest.

The case of Cairo demonstrates that the internal characteristics of the protest event alone, such as the number of participants or frequency of protest (*see* Biggs, 2016) cannot fully account for trends in protest dynamics. Figure 10 shows the distribution of protests that were repressed by Egyptian security forces in Cairo in 2013, 2014 and 2015. The map indicates a clear pattern of targeted state repression. The districts of Al Haram, Giza, Mohandiseen, Ain Shams, Zamalik and Zaytoun witnessed higher overall protests but were subject to none or much lower levels of state response. Instead, districts cited as Muslim Brotherhood 'strongholds' (Nasr City, Imbabah, Alf Maskan and Al-Matariyya) (Atlantic Council, 12 January 2015; BBC 5 September 2013; Elaph, 24 August 2011; Mada Masr, 25 January 2014) were consistently subject to heavy repression (highlighted in orange, *see* Figure 10). Furthermore, the level of indiscriminate state violence against unarmed civilians also concentrated in the same areas from 2013-2015. This pattern demonstrates the level of threat the regime perceived from the protests due to their capacity to organise relative to other weak political and civic par-

ties. In 2011, an 'unholy alliance' was struck between the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) and the Muslim Brotherhood "in a bid to buy votes and provide Islamist parties a military supported upper hand in the upcoming parliamentary elections" (Huffington Post, 23 November 2011). However, once the SCAF had secured its position and the Brotherhood's comparatively strong organisation led to a power base that threatened to undermine the interests of the military, state-led violence targeted those areas where grassroots networks had the potential to destabilise the regime. Here, local political contexts manifested into geography, resulting in the patterns of violent contention observed in Figure 10.

Despite calls for nationwide protests against the IEBC in In recent electoral violence in Kenya, protests have predominantly concentrated in Kisumu (*see* Figure 4). Whilst the Coalition for Reforms and Democracy (CORD) called for nationwide protests (Standard Media, 24 May 2016) so far they have only managed to take a foot hold in Nairobi, where they are mobilised and led by Raila Odinga and in the southwest Nyanza region, which enjoys strong opposition support. Similarly, protests occurred in Nairobi over the extrajudicial killing of a lawyer (Guardian, 4 July 2016), but in areas that have experienced similar grievances
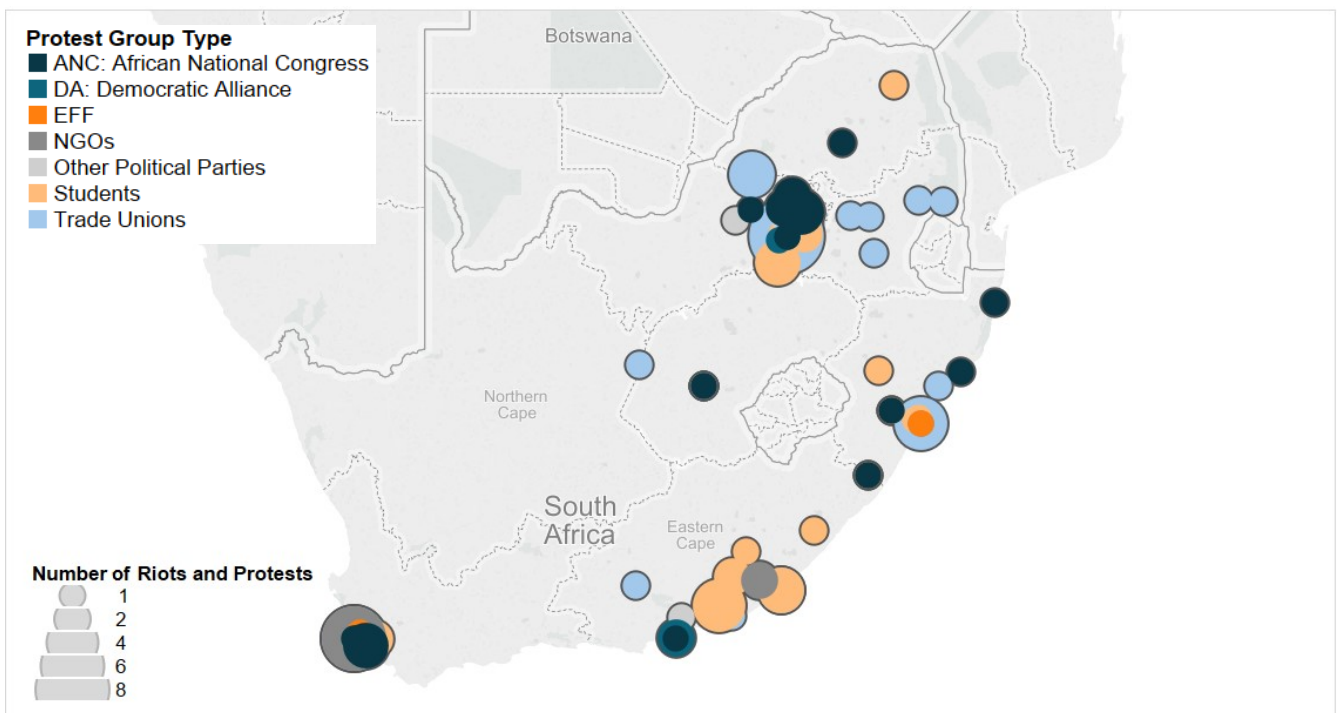

Figure 11: Number of Riots and Protests by Location and Organised Group in South Africa, from 1 April - 2 July 2016.   **11**

Special Focus Topic: The Geography of Riots and Protests

against police brutality, such as Mandera County where Kenya's ethnic Somalis are reportedly subject to state violence (**Pulitzer Centre, 8 January 2016**) protests are largely absent. As **Will Swanson** notes "[it] seems #Kenya's protest movement is reserved for down country Kenyans, no protests for killings on the coast". To explain the spatial distribution of protests in this context researchers must go beyond grievances to examine networks of power and the political organization of the state that facilitates or promotes collective violence.

By contrast, the wave of violent protests in South Africa have been much more diffuse, with multiple protest movements co-occurring over mayoral candidates and electoral lists, student clashes on university campuses in Cape Town and Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and other worker-based protests (*see* Figure 11). Born out of intra-ANC competition, violent protests have fuelled violence for local representation and redistribution. Concentrated in large urban areas, the successful political candidate would gain access to a huge body of states funds for redistribution. This contrasts with the voter registration protests in March and April 2016, which predominantly took place in ANC-dominated rural localities with populations under 100,000 who were dissatisfied with ruling party performance. Strikingly, these protests have remained localised, lacking coordination and leadership against a central regime or policy.

In both of these instances, the issue of space and the influence of political structures influences the form and location of protest (*see* Figure 12). As the political process develops, intra-ANC violence is predicted to turn into inter-party violence, concentrating in Gauteng (**ISS, 1 July 2016**). In theory the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) have an opportunity to capitalise on the protests that erupted in Pretoria, Durban and Port Elizabeth in late June 2016. Yet, should the protests continue to decrease support for the ANC (**Bloomberg, 30 June 2016**) without the need to bridge ties between other discrete movements, it is politically expedient for the EFF to stand on the sidelines. Therefore, these protests are unlikely to be channelled into a more coherent, organised and spatially concentrated movement if this trend continues.
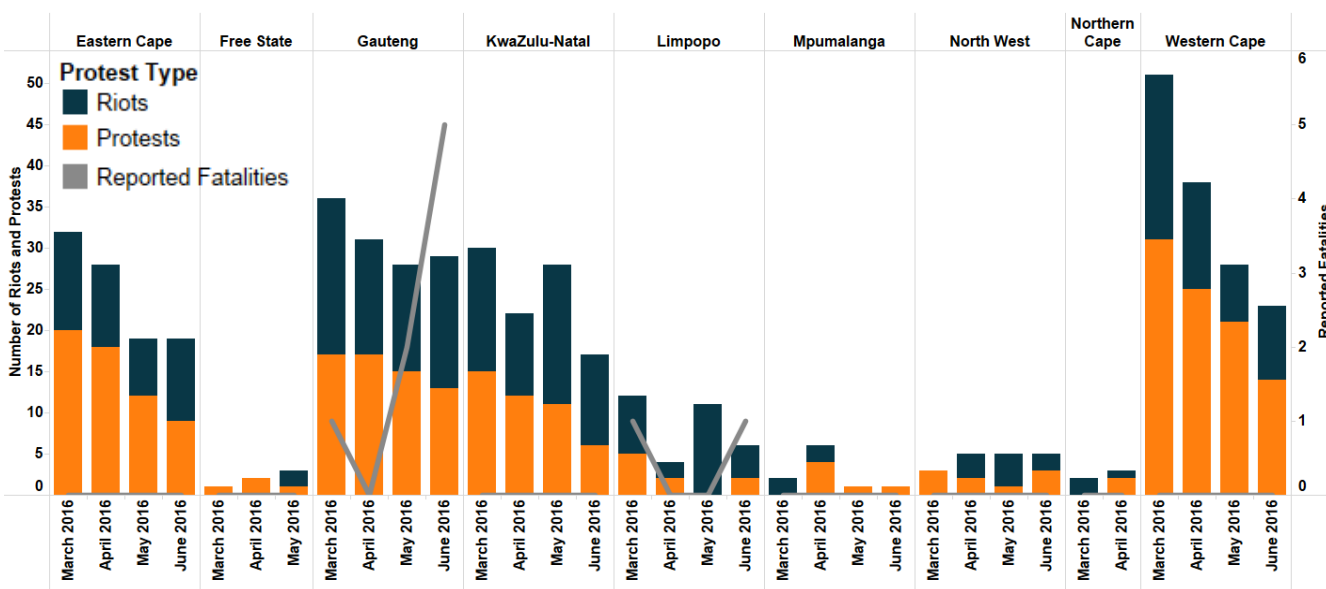

Figure 12: Number of Riots and Protests and Fatalities by Province in South Africa, from March - June 2016.

Support

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**.