

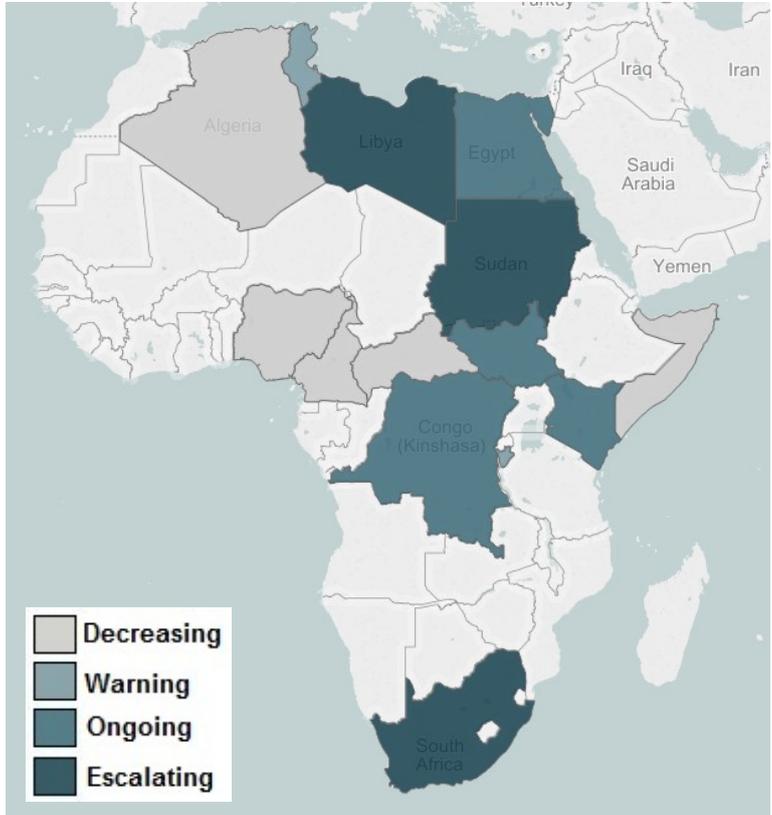
CONFLICT TRENDS (NO. 37)

REAL-TIME ANALYSIS OF AFRICAN POLITICAL VIOLENCE, MAY 2015

Welcome to the May 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 through our research partners at [Climate Change and African Political Stability \(CCAPS\)](#) and also on the [ACLED website](#).

This month’s issue focuses on the declining activity of **Boko Haram** in **Nigeria**, escalating protests in **Burundi**, an overview of an ACLED working paper on shifting forms and spatial distribution of protest activity in **North Africa**, an analysis of the neutrality and impartiality doctrine in **UN Peacekeeping Missions**, cycles of protest and Islamist militancy in **Tunisia**. A special focus topic explores calculating the risk of conflict-related mortality using **micromorts**.

Elsewhere on the continent, April saw a spike in xenophobic violence and reactionary protests in **South Africa**, clashes continued in the **Democratic Republic of Congo** between FARDC soldiers and ADF rebels and intense fighting south of Tripoli threatened to derail UN reconciliation in **Libya**.



Conflict Trajectory, May 2015

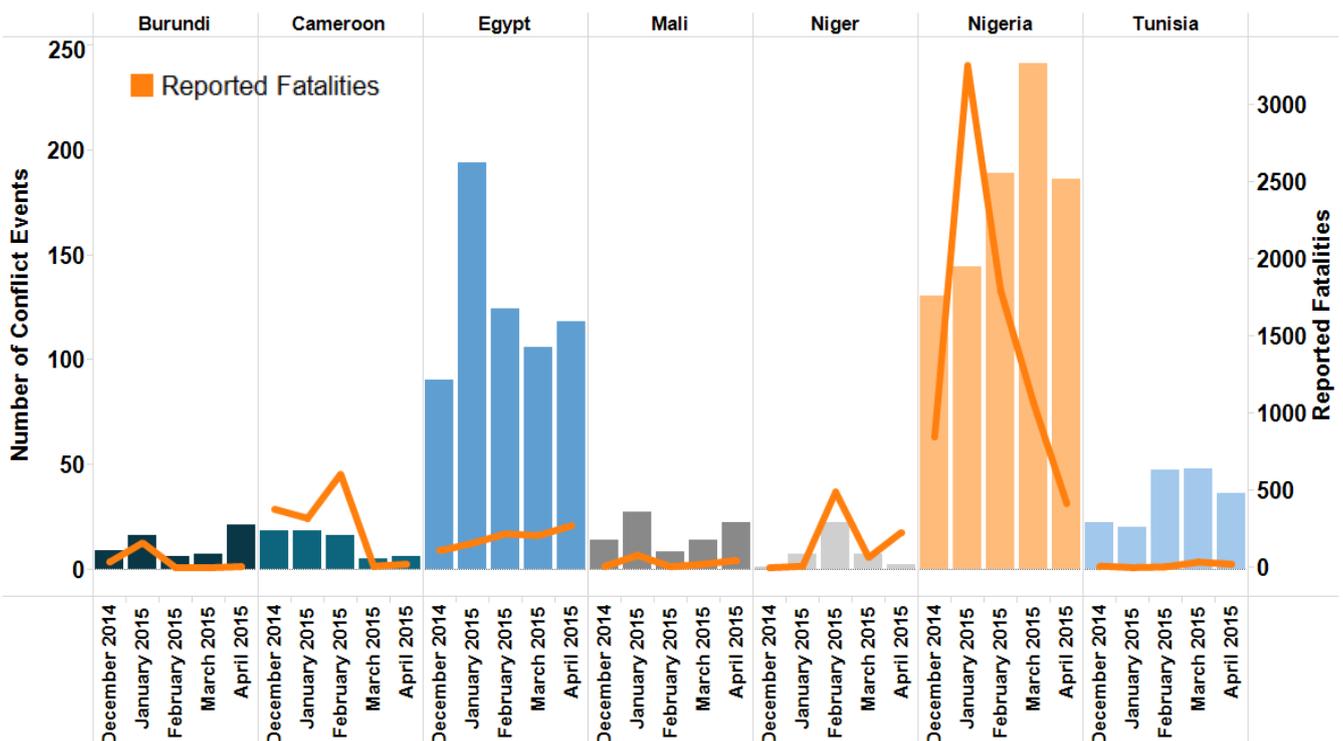


Figure 1: Conflict Events and Reported Fatalities by Country, December 2014 - April 2015.

Boko Haram’s Diminished Regional Presence

Since the beginning of 2015 the situation in Northeastern Nigeria has changed dramatically. In January of this year, Boko Haram was estimated to be in control of over 20,000 square miles of territory ([The Telegraph, January 10, 2015](#)) and had just carried out the deadliest attack of its insurgency, killing as many as 2000 people in Baga ([BBC News - Africa, February 2, 2015](#)). This attack was not just tragic in terms of the large number of fatalities but also extremely demoralizing for the region's militaries as Baga had been the headquarters of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) until the attack drove the force out ([BBC News, January 4, 2015](#)). As of April 2015 however, Boko Haram has largely been driven back into an enclave within the Sambisa Forest (see Figure 3), with every few days bringing stories of hostages being freed by the Nigerian military ([BBC News, April 30, 2015](#)).

There are many factors that played into this turn of events against Boko Haram, including Nigeria's acceptance of military assistance from neighbouring countries, the hiring of private military forces to supplement the Nigerian army, and the push by the Nigerian government in the run-up to the election to better equip and supply their own military forces ([VICE News, April 20, 2015](#)). What this has meant is a dramatic decrease in the amount of violent events involving Boko Haram in Nigeria and the surrounding countries which had seen sporadic attacks in the case of Chad, and more regular violence in the cases of Cameroon and Niger (see Figure 2). While between January 2015 and February 2015 almost 6,000 fatalities involved

Boko Haram in Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria, this has dropped dramatically in April 2015 (see Figure 2).

As would be expected, the level of violence within Nigeria involving Boko Haram has also fallen dramatically since it peaked in March 2015 (see Figure 2). With the successful recapture of much of the former territory of Boko Haram, the drop in violence points to a major degradation of operational capacity, while the Nigerian army has also managed to free over 700 captives from the Sambisa Forest region over the past week ([The Globe and Mail, May 2, 2015](#)).

The upshot of the new normal which is emerging is thus that Boko Haram no longer exists as a regional threat to Nigeria's neighbours in the way that it did as recently as March 2015. But although it has been pushed back, the potential for Boko Haram to shift gears back to a guerilla warfare and insurgent tactics still remains.

This possibility carries particular risks for civilians, as even groups with dramatically reduced operating capacity (such as Al Shabaab, and the [LRA in Uganda](#)) can continue to prey on civilians, and even escalate their violence against non-combatant populations where their ability to engage with military forces is reduced. Boko Haram violence in late-April included several instances of violence against civilians in both Cameroon and Nigeria. Similarly, remote violence (including the use of landmines and rockets) by the group around Baga and in the Sambisa Forest Area may point to increasing reliance on these remote forms of engagement.

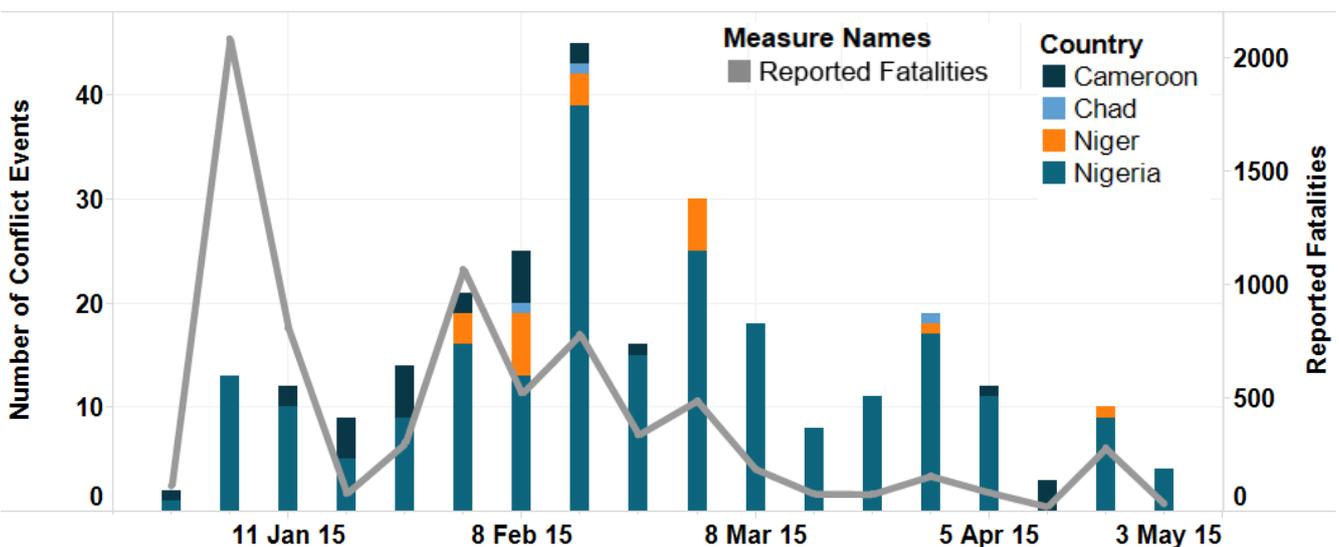


Figure 2: Violence Involving Boko Haram by week, from January - 3 May 2015.

Boko Haram's Diminished Regional Presence

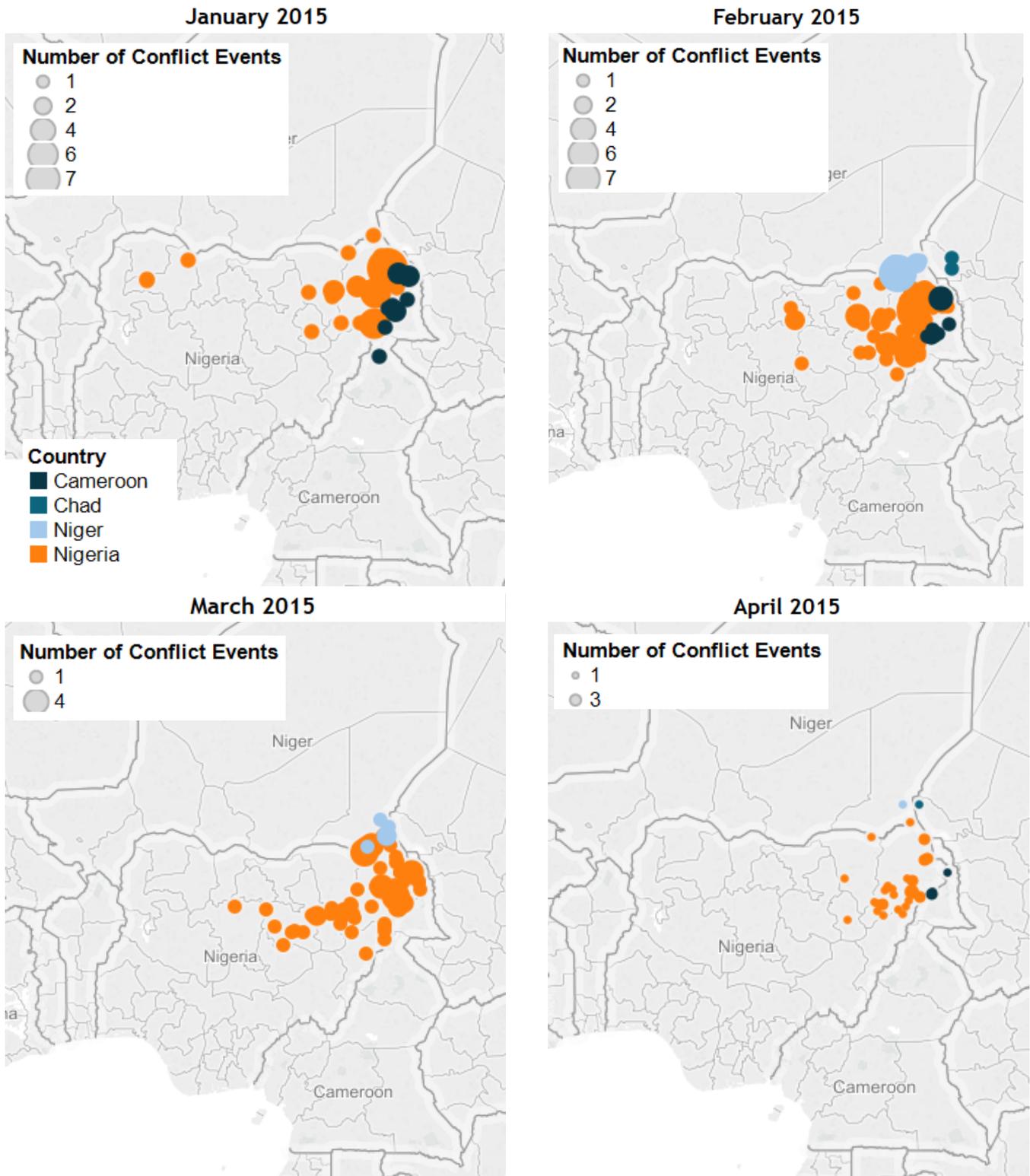


Figure 3: Violence involving Boko Haram by Location, from January - April 2015.

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REAL-TIME ANALYSIS OF AFRICAN POLITICAL VIOLENCE, MAY 2015

Burundi

With elections scheduled later this month, Burundi is in the throes of protests and ongoing unrest as President Pierre Nkurunziza bids for a third term in office (see Figure 4). April has seen an increase in riots and protests sparked by the National Council for the Defence of Democracy-Forces for the Defence of Democracy (CNDD-FDD) announcement of the sitting president as its nominee for president (BBC News, April 27, 2015). Nkurunziza was appointed President by Parliament in 2005, and reelected in 2010 with 92% of the vote – though a majority of the opposition boycotted (African Arguments, April 10, 2014). Because Nkurunziza was first appointed and did not acquire the position through a direct vote, the CNDD-FDD considers him eligible for a third term without violating the constitution or the Arusha agreement.

The bid has sparked widespread anger: a majority of riots and protests have occurred in and around the capital Bujumbura, with isolated protests occurring in the northern province of Kayanza and southern provinces of Bururi and Makamba (see Figure 5). In the past six months, 23% of demonstrations have involved rioting, and police forces have been involved just under one-third of all riots and protests in the country. In late April, Bujumbura experienced six straight days of demonstrations, as thousands of

rioters threw stones and burned tyres in protest of CNDD-FDD’s announcement (Reuters, May 2, 2015; BBC News, April 27, 2015). Police used teargas and live ammunition to disperse the crowds, killing three people (BBC News, April 27, 2015).

Opposition to Nkurunziza’s bid is not the only source of unrest in the country: Burundi began 2015 with a surge of conflict events followed by a few months of relative calm. January’s spike in violence is associated with a wave of extrajudicial killings carried out in the northwestern province of Cibitoke (HRW, February 12, 2015). Although no fatalities were reported in February, March and April, this may signal a calm before the storm. There is growing criticism of the ruling CNDD-FDD for its treatment of political detainees (HRW, February 12, 2015). This combined with tension surrounding President Pierre Nkurunziza’s bid for a third term may bring an increase in conflict events leading up to presidential and parliamentary elections set for the 26th of June.

Between the 30th of December 2014 to the 3rd of January 2015, Burundian National Defence Forces, police, and *Imbonerakure* (armed members of the youth league of the ruling party) carried out at least 47 reported extrajudicial killings of surrendered or captured rebels in Cibitoke

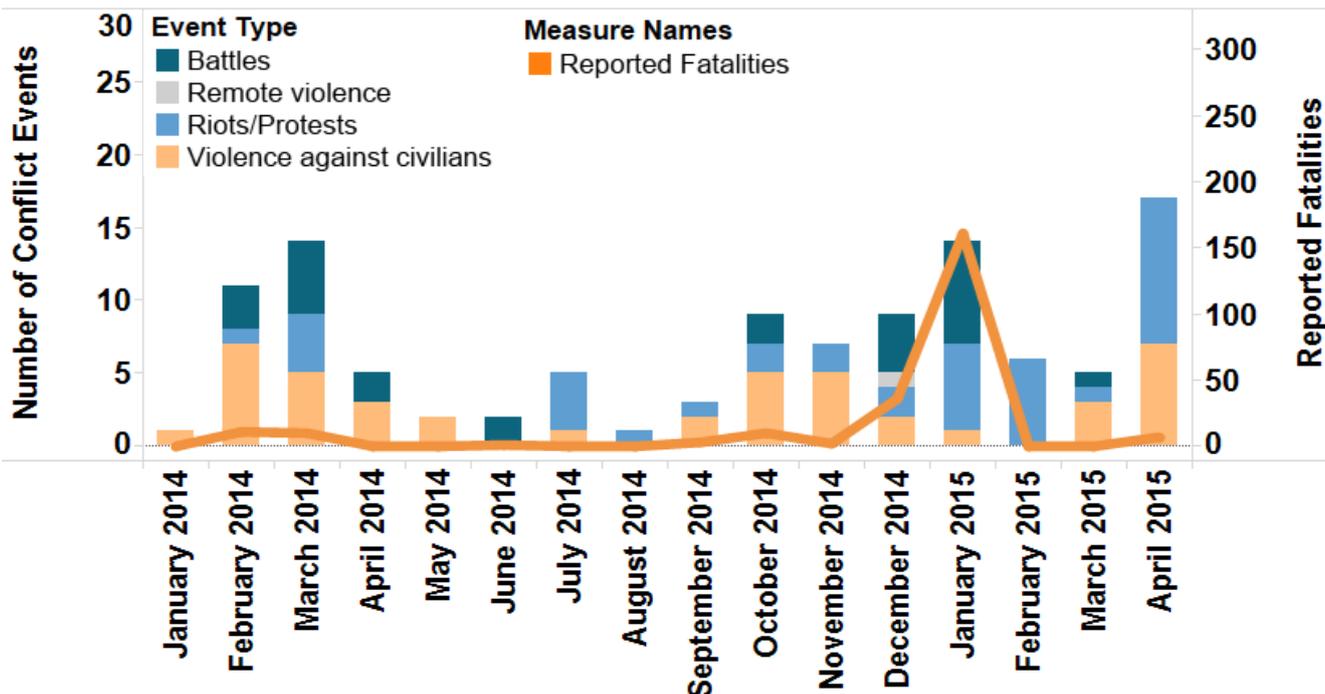


Figure 4: Number of Conflict Events and Reported Fatalities in Burundi, from January 2014 - April 2015.

Collective Action in North Africa—Working Paper

Studies on political violence in sub-Saharan Africa have been dominated by civil war dynamics, intrastate insurgent activity and political and rebel militias undermining stability and security. Yet popular protest constitute almost 26% of all conflict events recorded in the ACLED Dataset across Africa since 1997, and in the first four months of 2015, civil uprisings were the dominant conflict typology, amounting to 40% of all political violence (see Figure 6).

An ACLED [working paper](#) begins to address the theoretical gap in the study of protest movements across Africa by identifying how patterns of collective action have transformed in the post-Arab Spring period in their form, intensity and emergence of key agents of change across Egypt and Libya. It explores the impact of key state policies on the behaviour and strategies adopted by popular protesters, providing a preliminary framework for understanding how non-violent anti-regime protests can escalate into more organised forms of violence. As Sellers argues, “shifts in societal interests and movements over time are often a consequence of the feedback effects from earlier policies and institutions” (2011: 137).

The paper goes on to explore the spatial dynamics of collective action by analysing how elite-mass interactions have shifted from 2011-2015, demonstrating that changing power relations between the Muslim Brotherhood, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) and the executive have affected the geographical distribution of violence on a sub-national level in Egypt. Three geographic shifts are identified: 1) the diffusion of violence from peripheral regions to urban centres and increased incidence

of remote violence (bombings etc.); 2) reduced Muslim Brotherhood protests in tandem with increased remote violence and Islamist insurgency in the Sinai Peninsula; and 3) heightened sectarian clashes in Upper Egypt between Coptic Christians and Muslim groups.

The paper contends that state-dissident interactions are situated within cycles of contention that create incentives and disincentives for collective actors to escalate their demands into more violent forms of conflict. Adopting a state-society perspective of revolutions, the paper establishes that “large-scale conflict grows out of lower-level state-dissident interactions and that the key to understanding civil war onset lies in identifying the escalatory process that leads from one form of contention to another” (Davenport, Armstrong and Lichbach, 2006: 3).

It concludes by outlining two areas of further research. Firstly, the need to explore how political processes on the national and sub-national level interact, to understand the distinct geographical spaces of violence produced through challenges to the state. Secondly, following della Porta’s view of “violence as escalation of action repertoires within protest cycles” (della Porta, 2008: 221), it calls for fresh attention towards the mechanisms and processes through which political violence escalates from a social movement perspective. Understanding the role of the state, non-state actors, and political opportunities in establishing governance practices will contribute to our knowledge on the ways in which non-violent forms of conflict are able to radicalise or transform into more organised, violent confrontations.

The full working paper can be found [here](#).

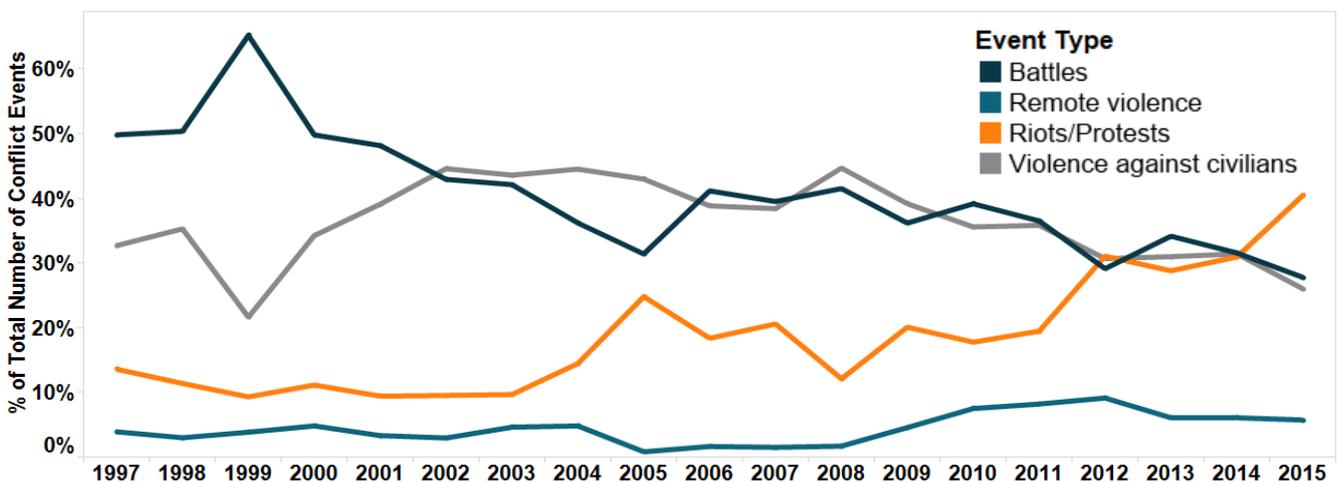


Figure 6: Number of Conflict Events by Type, All Africa, from 1997 - April 2015.

Special Focus: UN Peacekeeping - The Relationship between Doctrine and Observable Patterns

Peacekeeping missions spearheaded by the United Nations (UN) must conform to three specific doctrines, commonly referred to as the ‘trinity’: the non-use of force, except in situations of self-defence; the neutrality/impartiality of the UN forces; and consent from the host nation. However, the inability of the international community to prevent the Rwandan genocide and the failure of UN peacekeepers during the Bosnian crisis undermined the perceived effectiveness of this trinity. Therefore, the last decade has seen the emergence of robust interventions, with UN peacekeeping missions adopting a more proactive strategy. Though the UN internal Brahimi Report reasserted the centrality of the trinity, it highlighted that there may be cases where UN forces may need to break these doctrines in order to fulfil their mandate ([Brahimi Report, 2000](#)). Presently, the mandates of UN operations still state full impartiality, but there is always a possibility for UN conduct to fall within a grey zone ([Boulden, 2005](#)) with regards to impartiality and armed violence. Therefore, tensions between the trinity and demands of the

mission-specific mandates may mean that UN forces sometimes break from their doctrine.

Are both neutrality and impartiality respected? The former regards the UN missions as apolitical, whereas the latter dictates that UN activity should not modify the balance between the warring parties ([Yamashita, 2008](#)). It is therefore useful to observe – using the ACLED dataset from 1997-2015 – the interactions between UN peacekeepers and others actors.

Regarding to the African countries where UN peacekeeping missions have been implemented, we find that UN peacekeepers most commonly clash with political militias (50%), followed by rebel groups (29%) and rioters (6.8%). UN peacekeepers rarely clash with government forces (5%) and are, in fact, more likely to target civilians (6.3%) than soldiers belonging to the host state. This unwillingness to violently engage with state forces likely stems from the UN’s requirement of the host country’s consent to deploy peacekeepers. This means that clashes between peacekeepers and the military, even in the context of self-

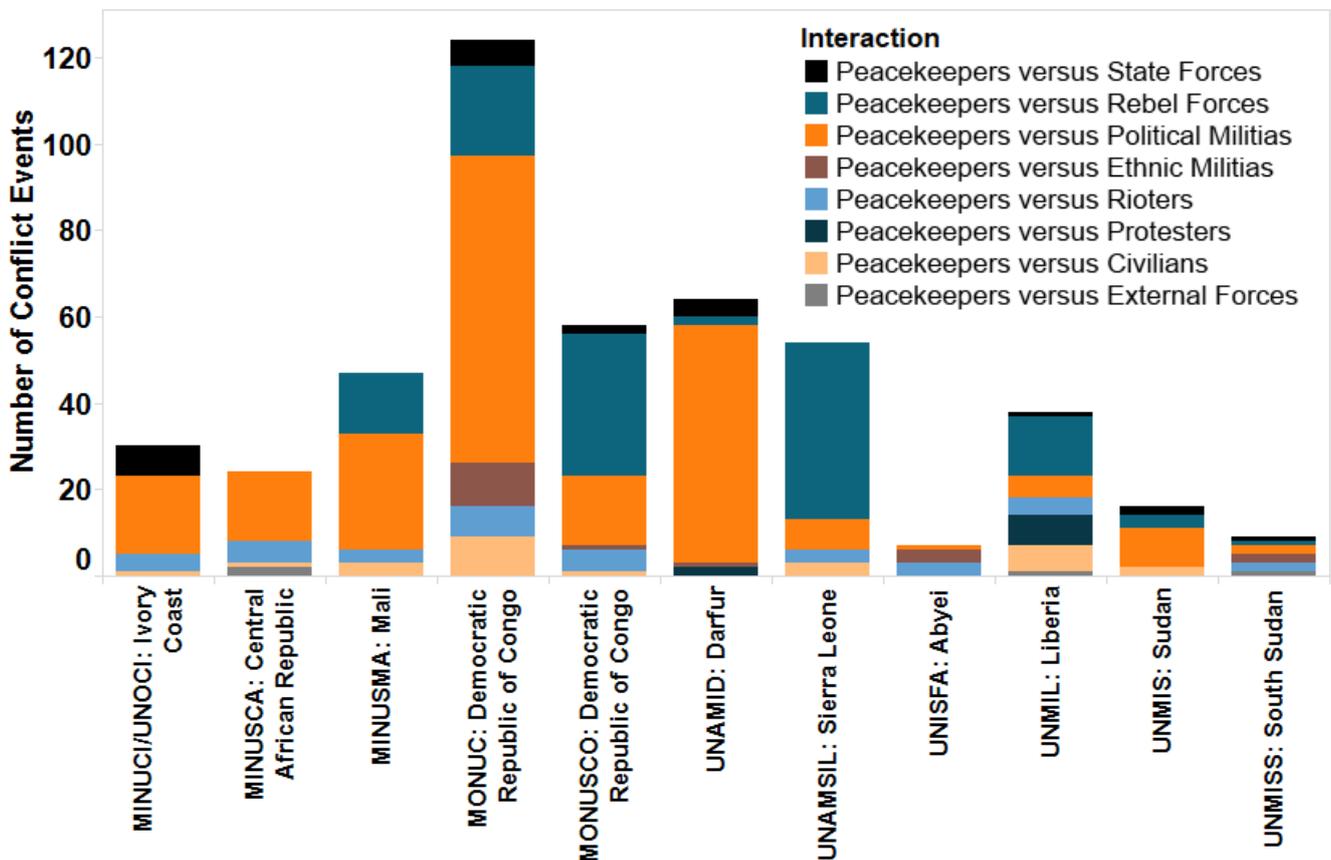


Figure 7: UN Peacekeeping Missions by Interaction, from 1997- April 2015.

Special Focus: UN Peacekeeping - The Relationship between Doctrine and Observable Patterns

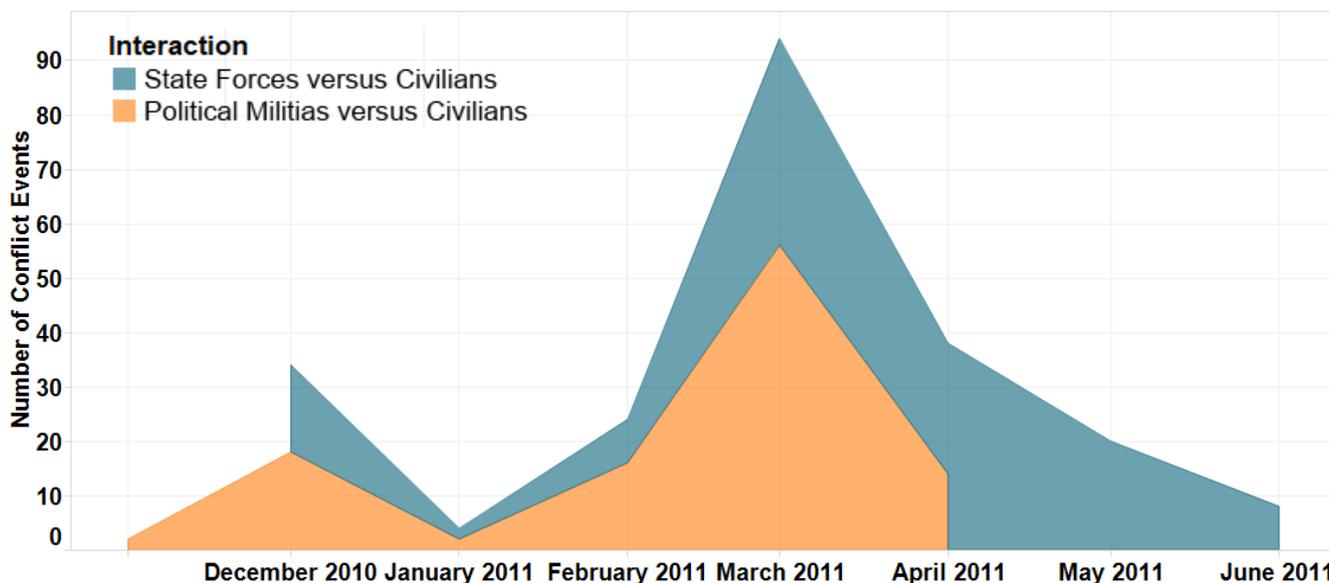


Figure 8: Violence Against Civilians by Perpetrator in Ivory Coast, from November 2010 - June 2011.

defence or defence of non-combatants, can endanger the long-term mission.

An examination of a range of UN peacekeeping missions across Africa shows that missions vary in both aggregate number of events and conflict profile. Missions with robust mandates, which enable peacekeepers to act outside of the trinity in order to fulfil the mandate, are more active (see Figure 7). Examples include MINUSMA and MONUSCO. These missions also often entail more clashes with rebel forces as many of the mandates focus on the sovereignty of territory and the legitimacy of government.

In contrast, self-defence, state building and defence-of-civilian missions, such as MUNUCI and UNAMISS, tend to be less active and are more likely to interact with non-rebel groups such as political militias and rioters.

The case of Ivory Coast shows how the UN is liable to refrain from clashing with government forces, even in the face of extreme provocation. The UN’s mission in Ivory Coast began in 2003 with the aim of establishing dialogue between the Gbagbo regime and the rebels holding the North. The mandate later expanded to include the protection of civilians and UN staff. During the unrest of 2011, UN peacekeepers were directly attacked by government forces and pro-Gagbo militias such as the Ivorian Young Patriots. While UN peacekeepers engaged with the militias, they did not respond violently to attacks by state forces. This unwillingness to fight the Gbagbo regime was criticised as limiting the ability of the peacekeepers to

fulfil their mandate and protect civilians (Smith, 2011). This assertion is supported by the data with instances of violence against civilians jumping from 4 in Q3 2010, to 138 in Q1 2011. During this period, state forces were the second most active perpetrators of violence against civilians (see Figure 8).

However, the UN, supported by the French air force, launched airstrikes against Gbagbo’s forces and state targets in early April (Fairclough, 2011). The attack occurred after the African Union had confirmed electoral victory of opposition politician Alassane Ouattara, meaning that Gbagbo no longer had the legitimacy to evict the peacekeepers. This dynamic shows adherence to one of the core doctrines of the trinity, the importance of consent, but also the UN’s lack of impartiality and bias towards government forces.

The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) launched in April 2013 with the aim of taking over from the peace mission spearheaded by the French military. The mandate of the mission is to reaffirm the integrity/sovereignty of Malian forces over all the territory (Resolution 2100). MINUSMA could use any means to conduct operations against terrorist groups that undermine state control – mainly over the northern territories. However, because the mandate challenges the balance of power, the doctrine of impartiality is not respected. Its goals and field’s results are visible with ACLED Dataset (see Figure 9).

Special Focus: UN Peacekeeping - The Relationship between Doctrine and Observable Patterns

MINUSMA is primarily involved in clashes with political militias (57%), either unidentified or related to Islamist groups. MINUSMA also regularly battles against rebels groups (20.2%) – mainly represented by AQIM’s forces - whilst engagements with civilians (13%) and rioters (9.7%) are the least common interactions. As expected by the mandate, there is no interaction with governmental forces showing that the actions of peacekeepers on the ground mirrors in partisan nature of the mandate.

Intervention by French troops and AFISMA rapidly reduced armed group activity, but MINUSMA has experienced serious clashes recent months. Since August 2014, the average number of events per month is 3.3, versus an average of 2 events for the previous 16 months. Furthermore, there is an increasing disenchantment with the peacekeepers in the northern territories. In January 2015, civilians demonstrated in Kidal, shouting “Azawad yes, MINUSMA, no” (RFI, 2015). Lastly, the peace process is currently stuck between the Malian government and representatives of Azawad – secessionist movement in the northern territory – when the latter refused to sign a peace agreement in April (Jeune Afrique, 2015).

The mandate and its implementation has had limited success in remedying the situation in northern Mali. French, AU and UN-led operations may have pacified the situation by force, but the conflict’s roots still persist. The lack of public services and tough living conditions continue to foster frustration in the North, providing a rich pool of

recruits for terrorist groups (Crisis Group, 2014: 12). Previous studies have found that the presence of third-party ‘enforcers’ reduce the risk of peace settlement failure (Hartzell and Hoddie, 2003), but MINUSMA’s partisan activities have limited its ability to serve in this capacity.

Previous studies have shown that the presence of UN peacekeeping forces is almost always a conflict-limiting factor (Mason et al., 2001). However, the cases of Mali and Ivory Coast show that in some cases contradictions within the UN’s peacekeeping doctrine can limit their effectiveness. In the case of Mali, which has a robust doctrine, the contradiction between the mandate and the trinity meant that UN peacekeepers acted as, and were perceived as, a partisan actor. This limits the ability of the peacekeepers to settle a peace agreement.

In the case of Ivory Coast, the contradiction within the trinity between the doctrine of consent and doctrine of neutrality. Peacekeepers were unable to face government troops without jeopardizing their mission. This also undermined the mission’s traditional mandate of protecting civilians.

The impartiality resulting from these contradictions limits the effectiveness of UN peacekeeping in two ways. Firstly, UN peacekeepers are limited in their ability to prevent state actors from engaging in political violence. Secondly, UN peacekeepers are limited in their ability to broker peace deals as they are liable to be perceived as a partisan and pro-state actor.

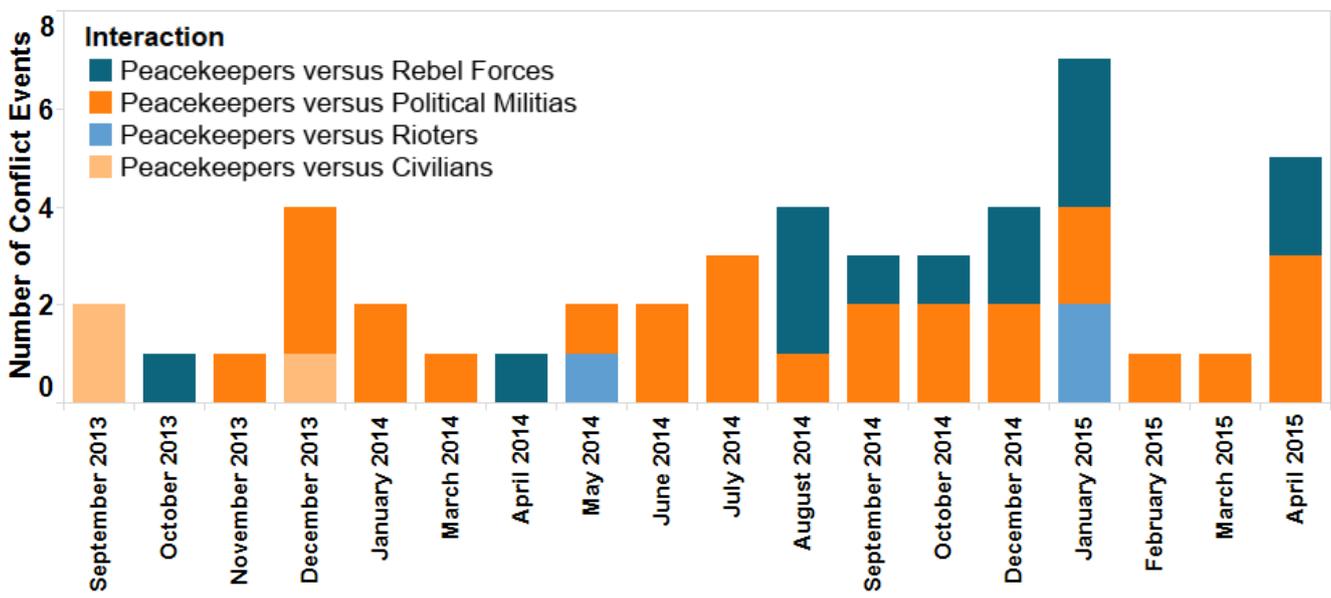


Figure 9: Conflict Events Involving Peacekeepers by Interaction in Mali, from September 2014 - April 2015.

Tunisia

After a lull in conflict events that coincided with the parliamentary and presidential elections in late 2014 (ACLED, March 2015), political violence in Tunisia has markedly increased in recent times. Figure 10 vividly illustrates that political violence has increased in 2015 both in terms of total conflict events and reported fatalities. Riots and protests take place regularly in the poorer Southern regions, where a difficult socio-economic situation combines with dissatisfaction about the political system. While these events demonstrate the widespread malaise among Tunisians, the attacks carried out by armed Islamist militias represent a serious challenge for the country’s national security.

The Okba Ibn Nafaa Brigade, an Islamist group that pledged allegiance to the Islamic State in September 2014, has claimed responsibility for a number of attacks against military units and civilians, including the raid on the Bardo National Museum that killed 22 people mostly foreign tourists (Amara and Argoubi, 29 March 2015). The militant group, which has inflicted heavy losses on Tunisian security forces since 2013, is mostly based in the Western regions on the border with Algeria such as Kasserine and Gafsa. Although large-scale military operations in the Western regions of the country were already underway, they have intensified since the attack on Bardo and resulted in the killing of the head of the Islamist militant group, Lokman Abou Sakhr (Tunis Afrique Presse, 29 March 2015).

Over the course of the last two years, several Islamist militias were held responsible for armed attacks on public institutions and security forces as well as for the assassi-

nation of prominent political leaders. Conflict levels in the first few months of 2015 confirm the escalation of political violence in the country, a trend that could undermine the stability of the fragile Tunisian democracy. These recent trends of political violence in Tunisia are consistent with the overall evolution of the protest cycle since the beginning of the transition in January 2011.

The protest cycle model, introduced by Donatella Della Porta and Sydney Tarrow (1986), is based on the escalation of political violence in Italy during the 1960s and 1970s, and seeks to explain the emergence of violent conflict by placing emphasis on the internal dynamics of contention. According to their model (1986: 610), a cycle of protest is typically constituted by five distinctive elements. First, the levels of peaceful and violent conflict in the protest cycle is noticeably higher if compared to the average levels in periods of contained conflict. Second, the conflictual behaviour permeates a wide range of professional categories and geographical locations, involving an increasing number of social actors. Third, new conflictual actors enter the social movements arena and older ones resort to innovative forms of claim-making and collective action. Fourth, social actors make use of renewed ideological frameworks to formulate their claims and express their grievances. Fifth, given the increased levels of conflict, the institutional system may resort to alternative tactics to engage the protesters.

In Della Porta and Tarrow’s model, political violence emerges at a later stage of the cycle. While protests grow in intensity and new groups join the uprising, conflictual actors attempt to consolidate or expand their social base

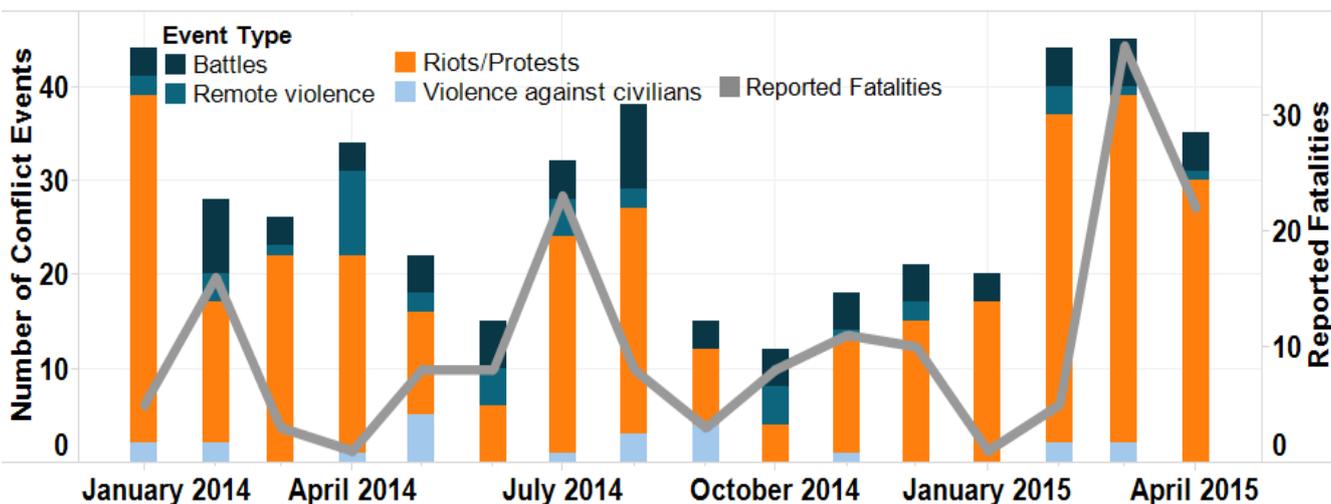


Figure 10: Conflict Events by Type in Tunisia, from January 2014 - April 2015.

Tunisia

and progressively differentiate themselves from other groups taking part in the protests. They thus develop new forms of collective action and claims, in what the two authors call “a process of competitive tactical differentiation” (1986: 611). As these forms of collective behaviour take over the traditional repertoires of action, innovative forms of contention emerge.

Smaller or younger political organisations resort to confrontational forms of action in order to distance themselves from other competitors in the social movement sector and gain greater visibility. In this climate, increased competition within the social movement sector on the one hand, and ineffective state repression on the other, will give the most conflictual actors the incentives to resort to violent forms of collective action. As political conflict becomes more radical, a smaller segment of the protesters side with these more aggressive groups, while the less militant either join traditional movements or demobilise and leave the social movement sector altogether.

To what extent can this model be applied to describe the evolution of the protest cycle and the progressive emergence of Islamist violence in Tunisia since 2011? Conflict trends show that political conflict remained predominantly non-violent until January 2013 (see Figure 11). Following the assassination of Chokri Belaïd, leader of the left-secular Democratic Patriots’ Movement, in February, and Mohamed Brahmi, member of the NCA for the People’s Movement (Najjar, 2014), heavier state repression goes

hand in hand with the rise of militia violence and an overall decline in non-violent protesting activity. In other words, the protest cycle escalates and mass non-violent mobilisation was replaced by a more confrontational militia activity.

Islamist groups began to emerge and to engage in organised violence on a more regular basis. Sceptical about engaging in traditional politics, these groups have provided a cohesive ideological framework for collective action and for the mobilisation of militants in the peripheral areas of the country. It is not by chance that nearly 3000 Tunisians have joined the Islamic State in Syria as foreign fighters, more than any other single country has contributed thus far (The Economist, 2014). Facing the prospect of state repression, violent Islamist actors resorted to militia activity, seeking out clashes with governmental forces, external actors or political rivals.

These findings suggest that the increased expressive and organisational capacity of violent militant groups was instrumental in escalating the conflict cycle. Recent conflict patterns in 2015 confirm that militia activity and state repression will continue to affect Tunisia’s national security, feeding the spiral of violence that started in 2013. Furthermore, the persistence of acute socio-economic grievances and anger over police repression may weaken the state’s legitimacy and increase the reach of anti-system, radical groups.

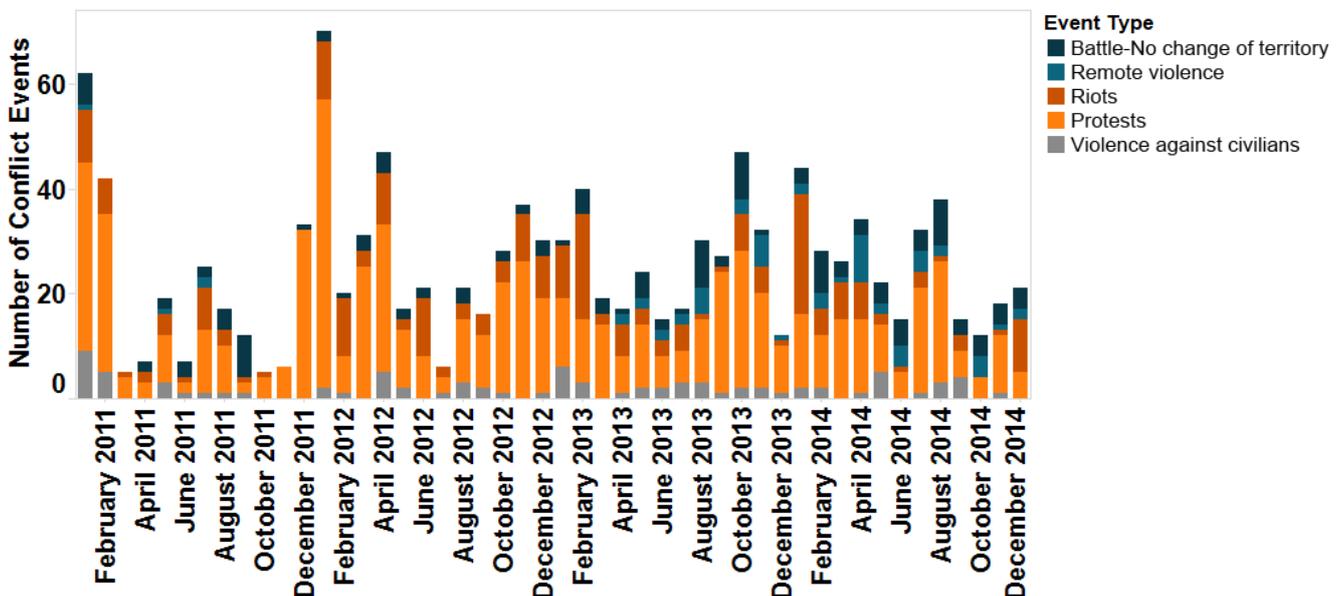


Figure 11: Number of Conflict Events by Type in Tunisia, from January 2011 - December 2014.

Special Focus Topic: Calculating the Risk of Conflict-Related Mortality

A unit of relative risk is helpful in drawing comparisons on the risk of violence or death against civilians from political conflict. A micromort is such a measure, and is often used to determine the ‘riskiness’ of various activities within decision analysis (Howard, 1980). A micromort is the microprobability of death, or a calculation of a unit of risk measuring the one-in-a-million probability of death.

Micromorts can be used to determine the civilian risk from political conflict across a defined space and time period. Below is an example based on conflict across Africa during the first quarter of this year, based on fatality data. The risk calculated is the relative average risk over a population, not the risk to a specific individual, or even the risk to a random person drawn from the population.

Arguably, certain individuals within countries experience a higher or lower risk relative to their peers as a result of region, ethnicity, etc. For example, individuals living in Darfur face a higher risk of lethality from political conflict relative to others within Sudan, as much of the political conflict within Sudan is located in that region. Micromorts can also be determined sub-nationally, but for this exercise countries are compared.

Using real-time conflict data from ACLED on political conflict in January, February, and March of 2015 (i.e., the first 90 days of 2015) across Africa, Figure 12 depicts in what countries fatalities have occurred. The majority of these deaths – or 5,709 conflict-related fatalities – have occurred in Nigeria (largely at the hands of Boko Haram). This is about 5 times as many fatalities as that experienced by the second deadliest country, Sudan (1,275 deaths).

A micromort is calculated by dividing the number of conflict-related fatalities by the number of days, then dividing this number by the population of a given unit (country, region, etc.), and finally multiplying this value by one million in order to determine the one-in-a-million risk incurred.

The risk of conflict-related death incurred by Nigerians relative to the Sudanese is conditional on the Nigerian population, which is approximately 5 times the population of Sudan. So, in terms of a statistical output, given that Nigerians experienced 5 times as many fatalities within a population that is 5 times the size of Sudan, the relative risk of mortality as a result of conflict in Nigeria and Sudan is roughly equivalent. In the first quarter of 2015, the average Nigerian and the average Sudanese person share an equally high risk of death from political conflict. Population data come from [Population Pyramid](#).

Figure 13 maps the relative one-in-a-million risk of conflict-related death of individuals in each country in Africa in the first three months of 2015. The average individual in countries with high numbers of fatalities – such as Nigeria and Sudan – exhibit a high risk of mortality from political conflict, but the average citizen in Libya, Somalia and South Sudan are at a higher risk.

Libyan and Somali citizens have the highest micromorts – i.e., the average individual in these countries faced the highest one-in-a-million risk of mortality as a result of political conflict during the first quarter of 2015. Other countries follow closely behind: South Sudan (micromort of 0.67), Cameroon (0.44), and the Central African Republic (0.41) are also high. Libya, Somalia, South Sudan, and Cameroon each reported over 700 fatalities in the first three months of 2015, but CAR’s position is particularly noteworthy. While Libya has a population of approximately 6.3 million, Somalia, South Sudan, and Cameroon have much larger populations (11.1 million, 12.2 million, and 23.4 million, respectively). CAR, however, has a significantly smaller population of approximately only 4.8 mil-

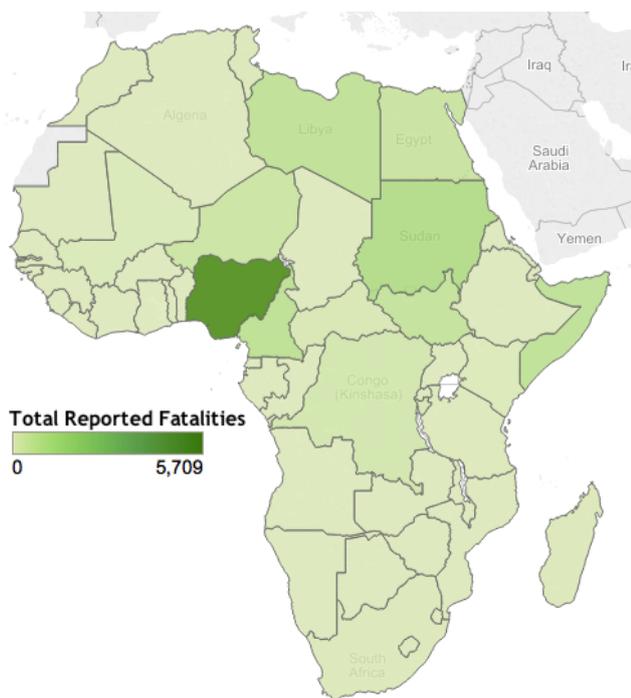


Figure 12: Total Reported Fatalities in Africa, from January - March 2015.

Special Focus Topic: Calculating the Risk of Conflict-Related Mortality

lion, making the 178 deaths reported within the first quarter of 2015 especially alarming. Conflict in CAR is characterized by ongoing violence between the Anti-Balaka and mainly Muslim Ex-Séléka (formerly referred to as Séléka) militias, and has been ongoing since 2013, resulting in thousands of deaths (ACLED, 2015a).

Figure 14 maps the populations of African countries along with the locations of conflict-related fatalities in each country. Micromorts are highest for countries with relatively lower populations and a higher number of reported fatalities, as this implies that the relative individual-level risk of mortality to each citizen within that country is higher.

A number of country-pairings are examined in further detail below. The starkest difference in micromorts between two similarly sized states is Libya and Sierra Leone. The average Libyan faced a micromort of 1.502 in the first three months of 2015; this was the highest micromort reported thus far this year across Africa, suggesting that the average Libyan is at the highest risk of mortality from political conflict during January to March relative to individuals across the African continent. Conflict in Libya has largely been driven by competition for national control, fought through a series of local proxy contests (ACLED, 2015b). Meanwhile, a Sierra Leonean has a micromort of 0 (one of the lowest micromorts across Africa) as no conflict-related fatalities were reported in the country during the first quarter of this year.

Somalia, Tunisia, and Benin all have similar population sizes, though the relative risk of death from conflict to individuals in each state varies greatly across the countries. Micromorts for the three countries are 0.873, 0.042, and 0.001, respectively. Somalians faced a risk that is 20 times higher than that of a Tunisian, and 873 times the risk relative to those in Benin during the first quarter of the year. Conflict in Somalia is largely a result of continued fighting between Al Shabaab and government forces – as well as violence carried out by unidentified armed groups, arguably on behalf of these larger groups (ACLED, 9 April 2015).

South Sudan and Guinea have similar populations, though the relative risk of death by conflict to individuals in South Sudan has been 224 times higher than the risk to Guineans during the first quarter of this year, making South Sudan the country with the third highest micromort (behind Libya and Somalia) across Africa. Conflict in South Sudan can be attributed to continued violence stemming from

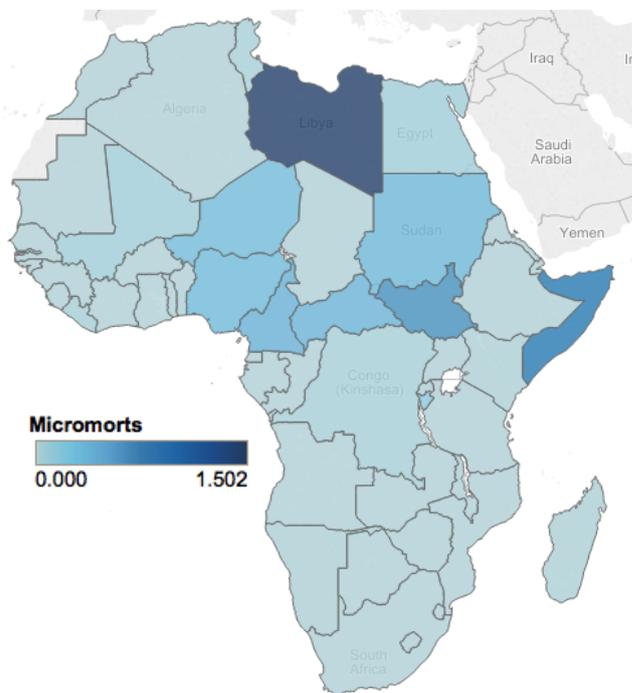


Figure 13: Micromorts, Africa, from January - March 2015.

the civil war that began in late 2013 between forces loyal to President Salva Kiir and the SPLA/M-IO led by former Vice President Machar (ACLED, 2015b).

Madagascar and Cameroon are another pair of countries with similar populations between 23-24 million yet exhibit very different risks of mortality to their citizens. Cameroon reports a micromort of 0.445, which is over 26 times Madagascar’s micromort of 0.017, suggesting how much more dangerous (due to a heightened risk of death) it has been for citizens of Cameroon relative to Madagascar during the first quarter of 2015. Cameroon, in close proximity to Nigeria, has seen the spillover effects of violence involving Boko Haram (ACLED, 2015a); the majority of battles, as well as instances of civilian targeting and remote violence, experienced during the first three months of 2015 can be attributed to the militant group.

Lastly, despite differences in landmass, Sudan and Uganda have roughly similar populations of approximately 39 million. The relative risk of mortality faced by individuals in Sudan during the first quarter of 2015, however, has been over 181 times higher than that faced by Ugandans (micromorts of 0.363 and 0.002, respectively). 1,295 reported conflict-related fatalities occurred in Sudan be-

Special Focus Topic: Calculating the Risk of Conflict-Related Mortality

tween January 1 and March 31 of this year – primarily in the Darfur region, in which pro-government as well as other political militias are exhibiting heightened violent

activity (ACLED, 2015c) – while only 6 conflict-related deaths have been reported in Uganda during the same period.

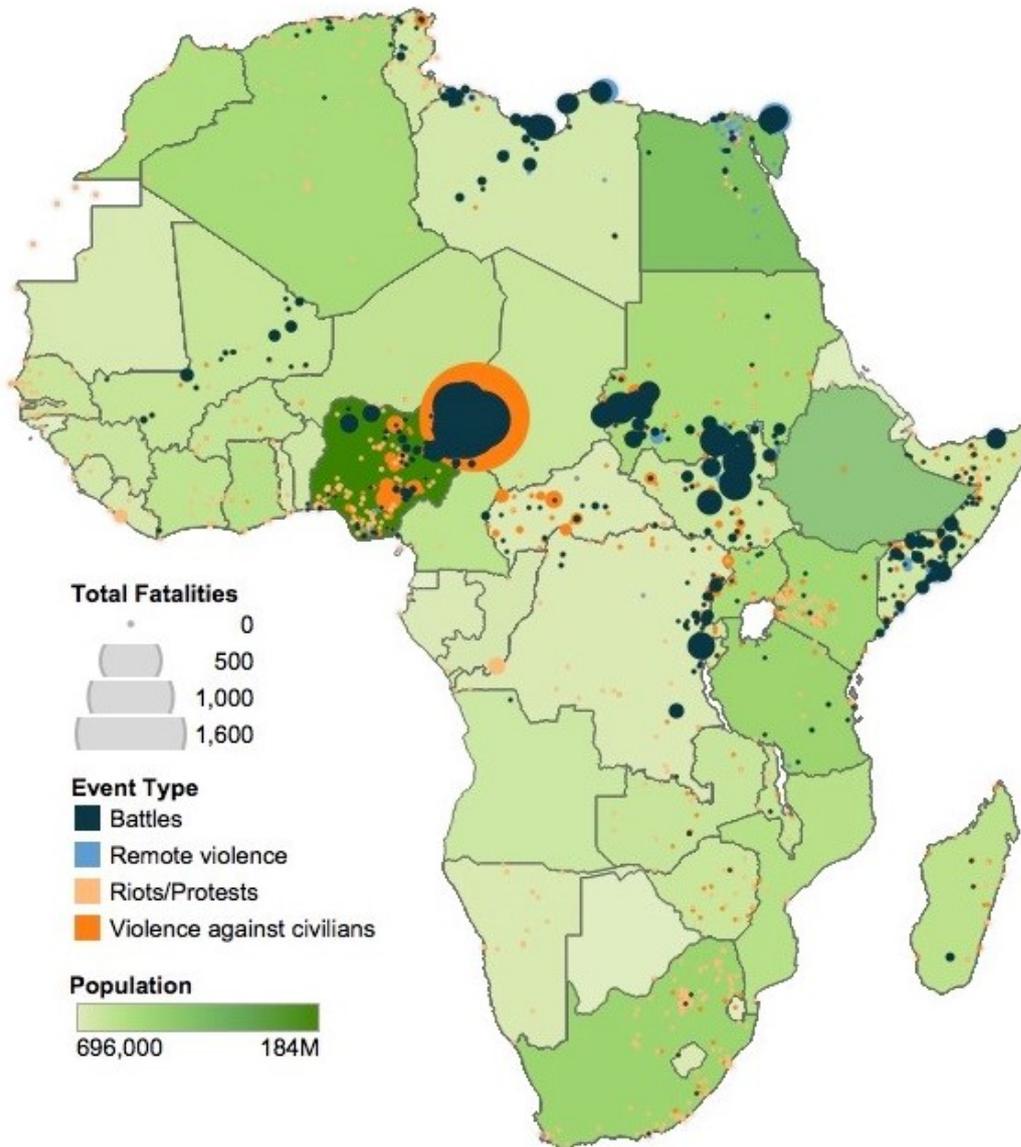


Figure 14: Populations and Conflict-Related Fatalities in Africa, from January - March 2015.

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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 on the ACLED website.