

CONFLICT TRENDS (NO. 12):

REAL-TIME ANALYSIS OF AFRICAN POLITICAL VIOLENCE, MARCH 2013

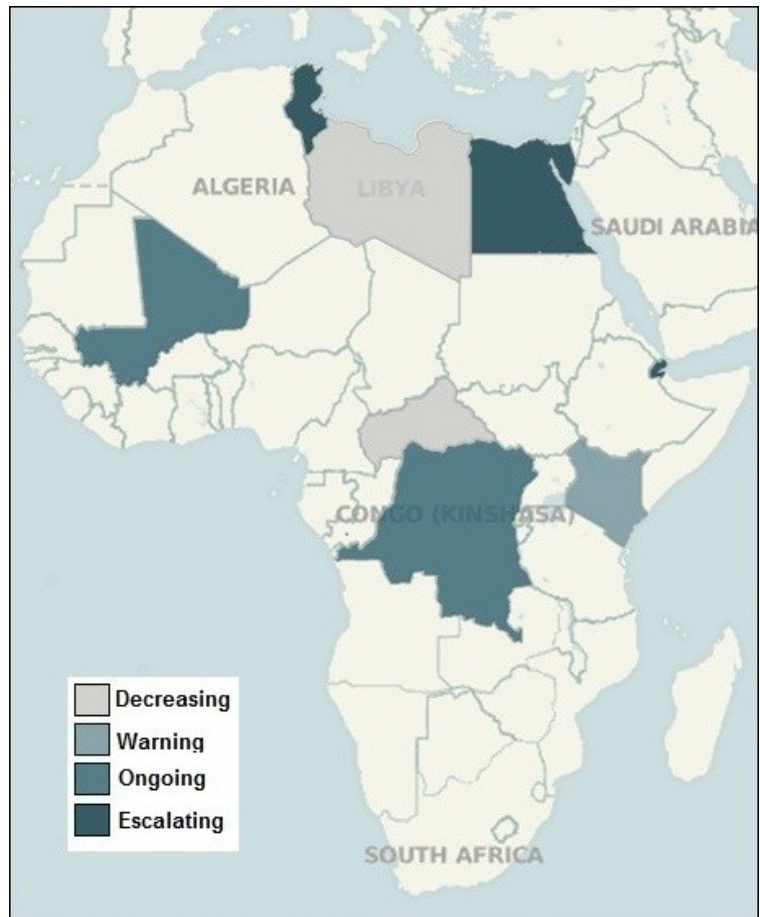
This month's *Conflict Trends* report is the latest in series of ACLED reports which provide an overview and analysis of real-time conflict in Africa.

February witnessed the run-up to the much-anticipated elections in **Kenya**, for which ACLED produced detailed, real-time and daily coverage and analysis at [kenya.acleddata.com](http://kenya.acleddata.com). This month's report provides an overview of this content. At the time of writing, election results had not yet been announced, and the outcome - for Kenya and its political future - was far from certain.

In addition, this report also profiles conflict patterns in **Djibouti**, **Egypt** and **Tunisia**, where conflict escalated in the past month as political crises of various kinds deepened across North Africa and the Horn. Our special feature focuses on the theme of **urban violence**.

Elsewhere on the continent, conflict levels and reported fatalities continued to drop in **Libya**, while stability is being re-established in the **Central African Republic** after a tumultuous start to the year.

All analysis is based on ACLED real-time and historical data, available online via the [Climate Change and African Political Stability \(CCAPS\)](http://www.acleddata.com) project, and at ACLED's updated website, [acled-data.com](http://acled-data.com) along with trends analysis, maps and previous issues of *Conflict Trends*.



Conflict trajectory, February 2013

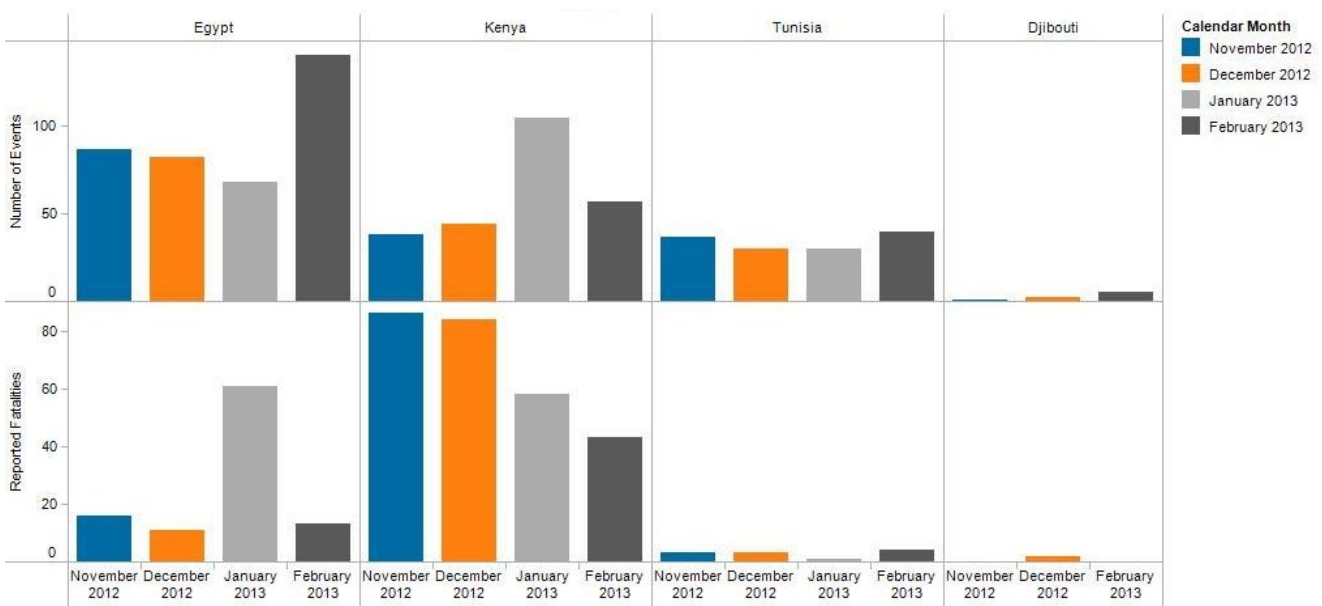


Figure 1: Conflict Events and Reported Fatalities, November 2012 - February 2013.

Djibouti

It was a case of the more things change, the more they stay the same in Djibouti this month. With all eyes on the Kenyan electoral process, scant attention was paid to the trouble brewing further north. Demonstrators took to the streets alleging fraud in President Ismail Omar Guelleh’s party’s victory over the lion’s share of the national assembly seats. Protests gathered steam with the subsequent arrest of opposition leaders, with police charging and tear-gassing crowds, with reports of hundreds of arrests.

While the elections are the first in a decade which have not been boycotted by opposition parties, and through which opposition parties will take seats in the national assembly for the first time since independence, allegations of vote-rigging, arrest of opposition political and religious figures, and the heavy-handedness with which demonstrators were dispersed were all politics as usual in the Horn of Africa state where presidential elections have been known to be won with 100% margins.

Djibouti’s strategic importance is difficult to overstate: it plays host to both US and French military bases, is politi-

cally important *vis a vis* the volatile Horn of Africa region, and commercially crucial to the stability of global shipping and the fight against piracy (*AfCon*, 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011). These features largely shelter it from criticism of its domestic politics or treatment of opposition.

**A case of the more things change, the more they stay the same in Djibouti: while the elections are the first since independence in which the opposition has secured national assembly seats, allegations of fraud, opposition arrests and heavy-handed treatment of demonstrators were all politics as usual.**

The last time Djibouti witnessed significant protests was in 2011, when a wave of demonstrations followed on the back of the Arab Spring further north. Those demonstrations were put down rather swiftly, but protests over the elections continued into March in the country.

Djibouti’s conflict profile is not dominated by any particular type of conflict: battles, riots/protests and violence against civilians all feature in roughly equal measure. It is also not a country which experiences high levels of violence or associated fatalities (see Figure 2).

However, it should be noted that limited coverage in the international media, and tight control over media within the country may artificially suppress the number of events recorded in the ACLED dataset.

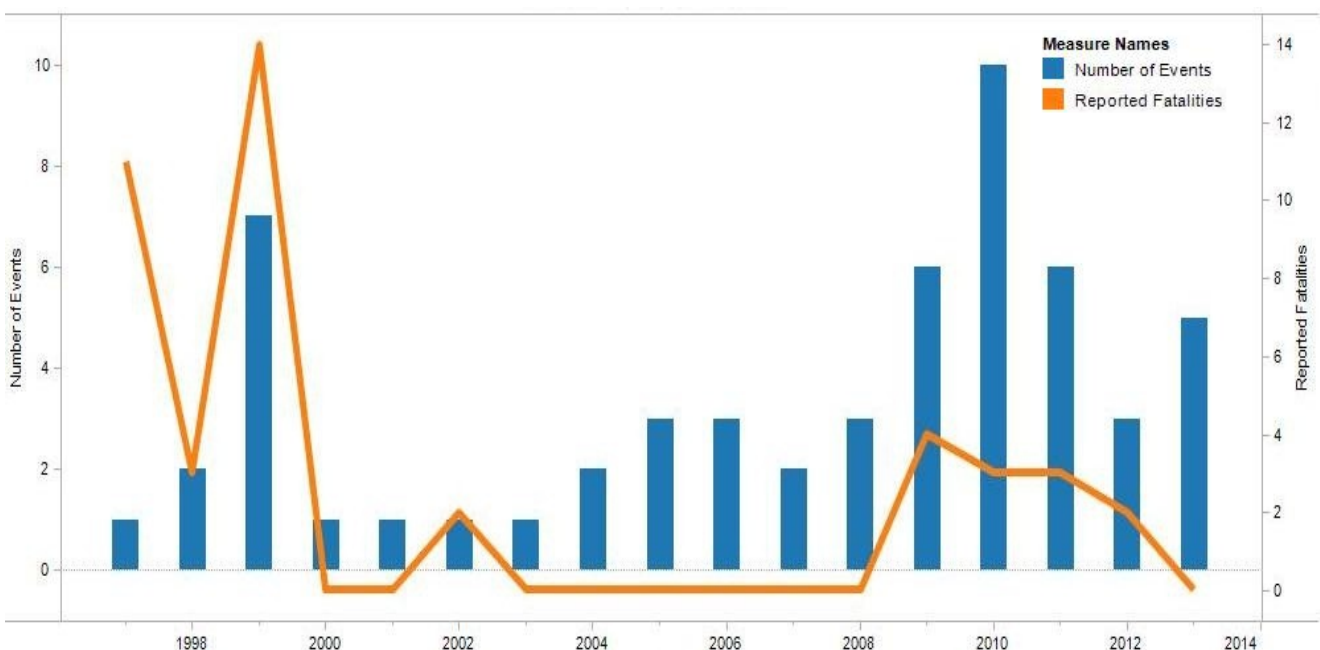


Figure 2: Conflict Events and Reported Fatalities, Djibouti, 1997 - February 2013.

Egypt

February witnessed the highest level of unrest in Egypt since the beginning of the revolution which ousted former President Hosni Mubarak. The intensity of the unrest has, however, dropped from January, which recorded an extremely high number of fatalities associated with clashes throughout the country, but notably in Port Said.

Following a period of relative calm between March 2011 and October 2012, Egypt has been in a state of unrest since the crisis sparked by President Mohamed Morsi's constitutional declaration in November, which critics have seen as an attempt to establish a new authoritarian state system.

The overwhelming majority of events – as has been the case since 2010 – were Riots or Protests, which partly explains the high level of unrest. From relatively centralised and concentrated, coordinated demonstrations at the height of popular unrest in January and February 2011, conditions have now devolved to a larger number of diffuse, uncoordinated and decentralised protests, demonstrations and clashes between rioters and security forces over a growing geographical area.

The diffuse nature of the tactics being employed, and the participants in such demonstrations, reflects a splintering and growing factionalism in Egypt, rather than a polarisation between two opposing camps, as is commonly suggested.

Lower house elections will be a further test of the regime and a decisive moment in establishing Egypt's future course. It is too simplistic to reduce the upcoming elections as a battle between Islamist and non-Islamist leanings: among the Islamists, the relative strength and performance of the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party versus the more hardline Salafist *El Nour* is the more relevant contest.

Meanwhile, secular-oriented opposition is seriously weakened by internal divisions and its seeming inability to cohesively articulate a credible alternative to the Muslim Brotherhood: the National Salvation Front has declared it intends to boycott the elections, though at the time of writing, an Egyptian court was in the process of suspending the scheduled elections in order to review the electoral law opposition members claimed favoured Morsi's party.

**The number of diffuse, decentralised instances of riots and protests has increased, indicative of a growing factionalism in Egypt, as opposed to a binary polarisation, as some analysis has suggested.**

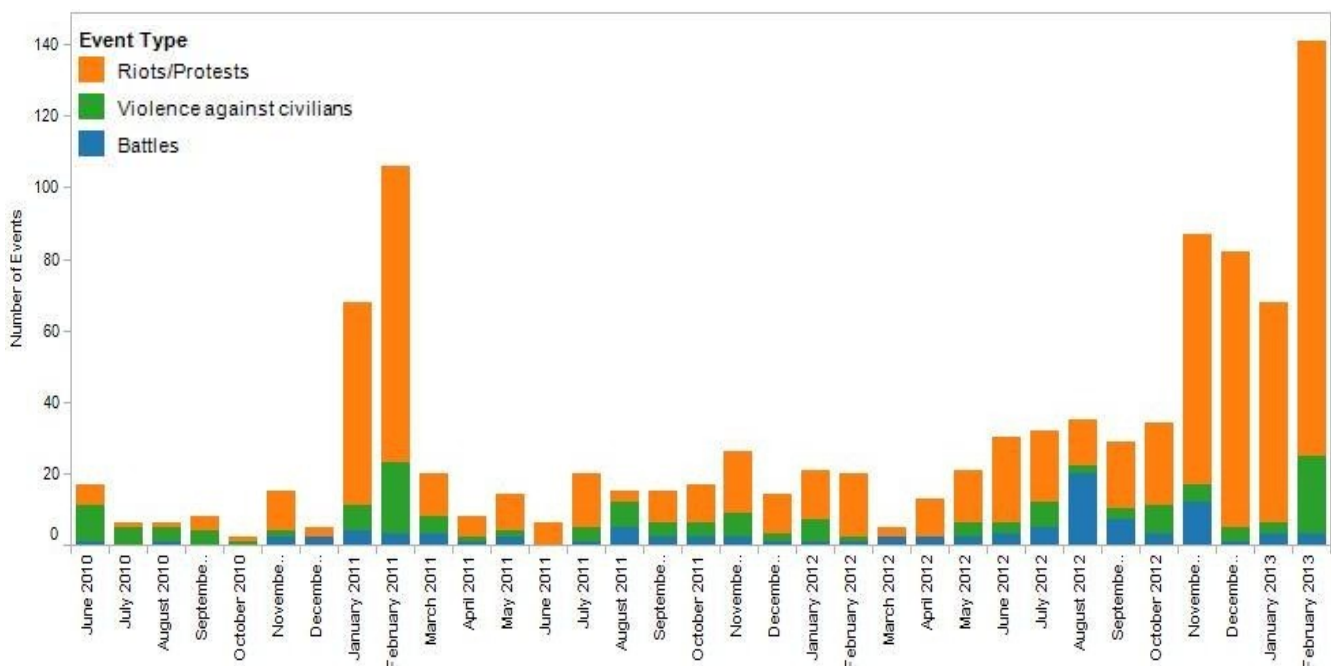


Figure 3: Conflict Events by Type, Egypt, June 2010 - February 2013.

Kenya

The Kenyan election took place on Monday, March 4<sup>th</sup> and early reports suggested that the voting process was itself peaceful. Small, scattered attacks on the coast were due to Mombasa Revolutionary Council promises to boycott the election and to upset them. Overall, 2013 has seen a high violence rate, in comparison to several previous years (see Figure 4)

Following voting day, the new technology acquired by the Kenyan Elections and Boundaries Commission promised a quick initial presidential result. However, the following week was beset by the failure of voting machines due to a software bug; spoiled ballots- initially some 6% of all ballots cast; an early lead for Kenyatta was countered by claims that the Coast region was undercounted, and that too many votes were coming in from the Central and Rift regions (Kenyatta's Jubilee Coalition strongholds).

At the time of writing, people waited for the initial results, and although tensions are high, violence is not. It is best to keep in mind that voting itself was not the issue in 2007-8, but the doctored results.

The domestic and international communities are worried

because of past history. The most violent regions throughout the past four elections include the Rift, West and increasingly, the East.

When observed by ethnic homeland (see Figure 5), both candidate Kenyatta and his running mate Ruto are from the country's most violent districts (Kikuyu and Kalenjin, respectively).

This is not to claim that the violence in these districts are tied to the candidates or the result of inter-ethnic tension. However, both Ruto and Kenyatta will soon be subject to an international Criminal Court trial for their roles in inciting violence in the past election in their own areas as well as in opponents. During that period, these two were on different sides, with Ruto supporting now Prime Minister Raila Odinga, now trailing in the polls.

The past geography reminds us that supporters of these candidates have used violence in the past, and the candidates themselves are believed to be conspirators in that instability.

However, the other political hotbeds are the governor races. These contests have become critical due to the institutional changes brought about by the new constitu-

**In addition to national elections, contests over governor posts have become critical due to institutional changes brought about by the new constitution. This is a significant change from the previous institutional structure: the fight for regional autonomy is likely not over**

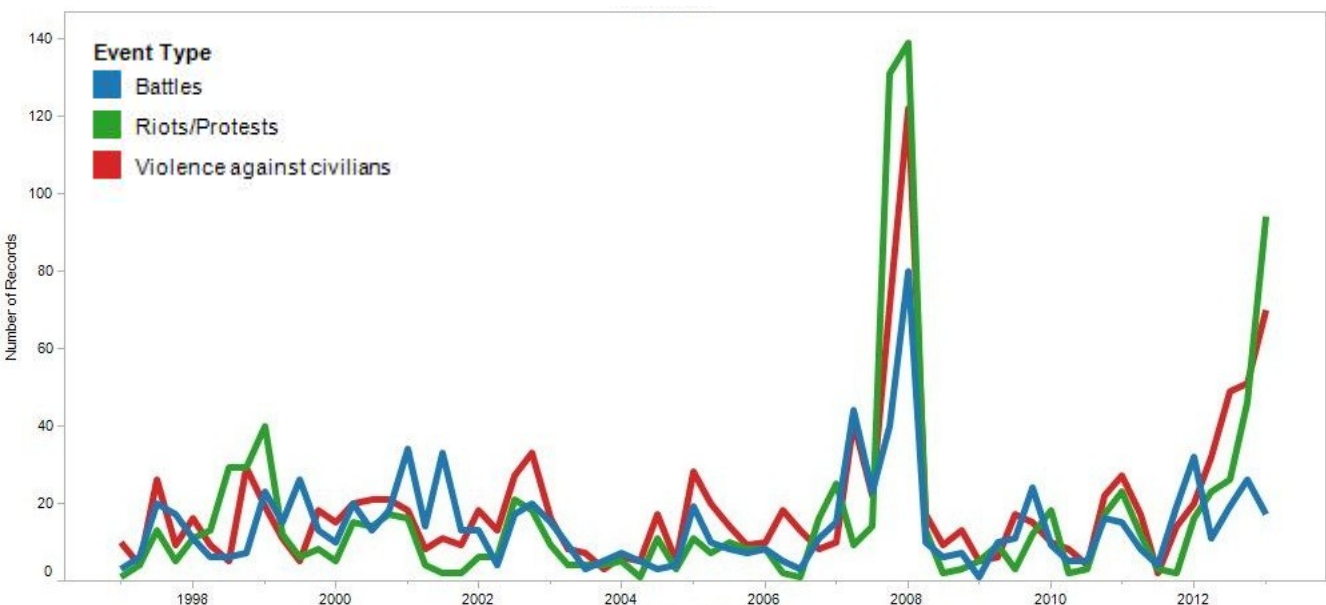


Figure 4: Conflict Events by Type, Kenya, 1998 - February 2013.

Kenya

### Ethnic Regions and Political Violence in Kenya

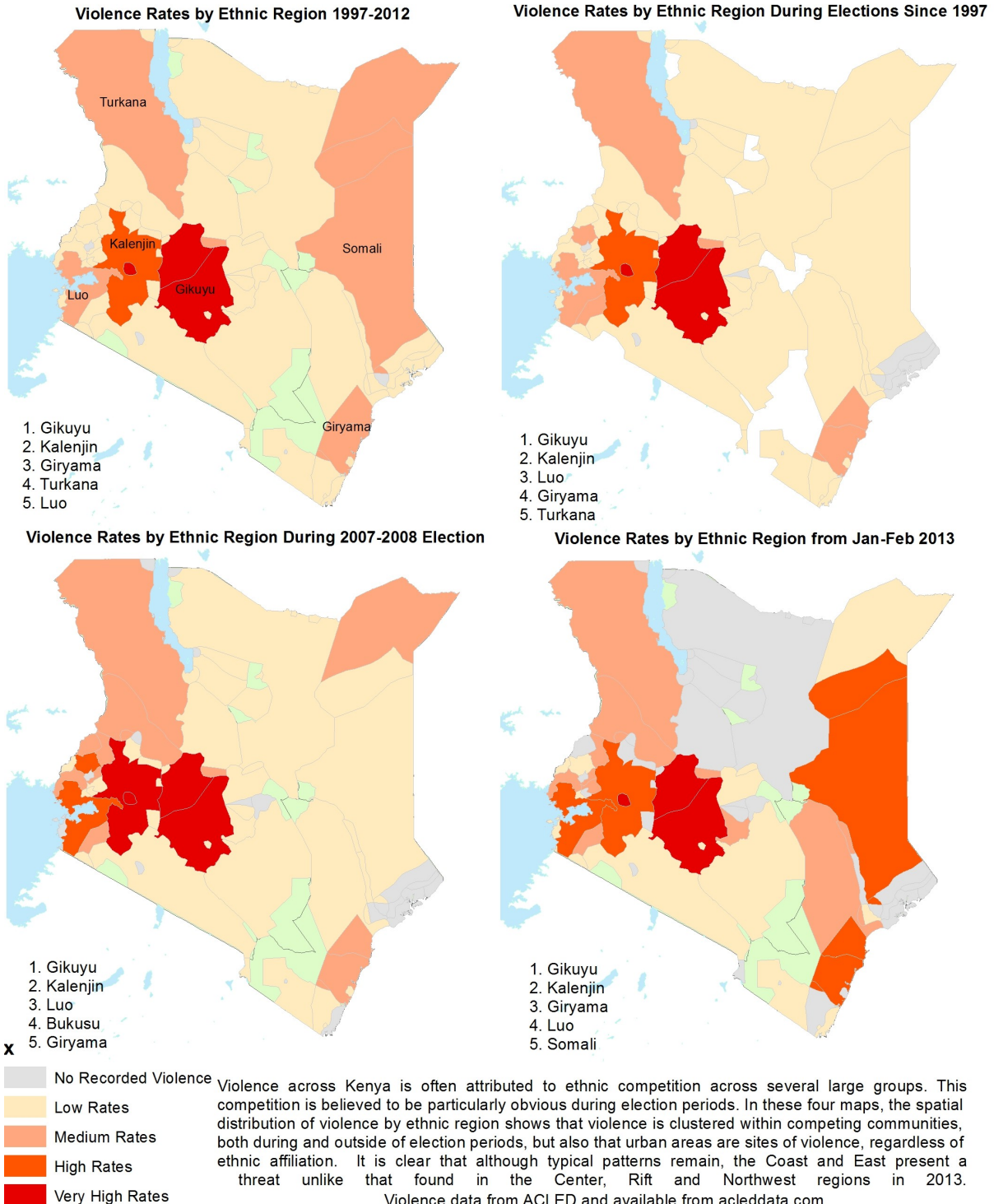
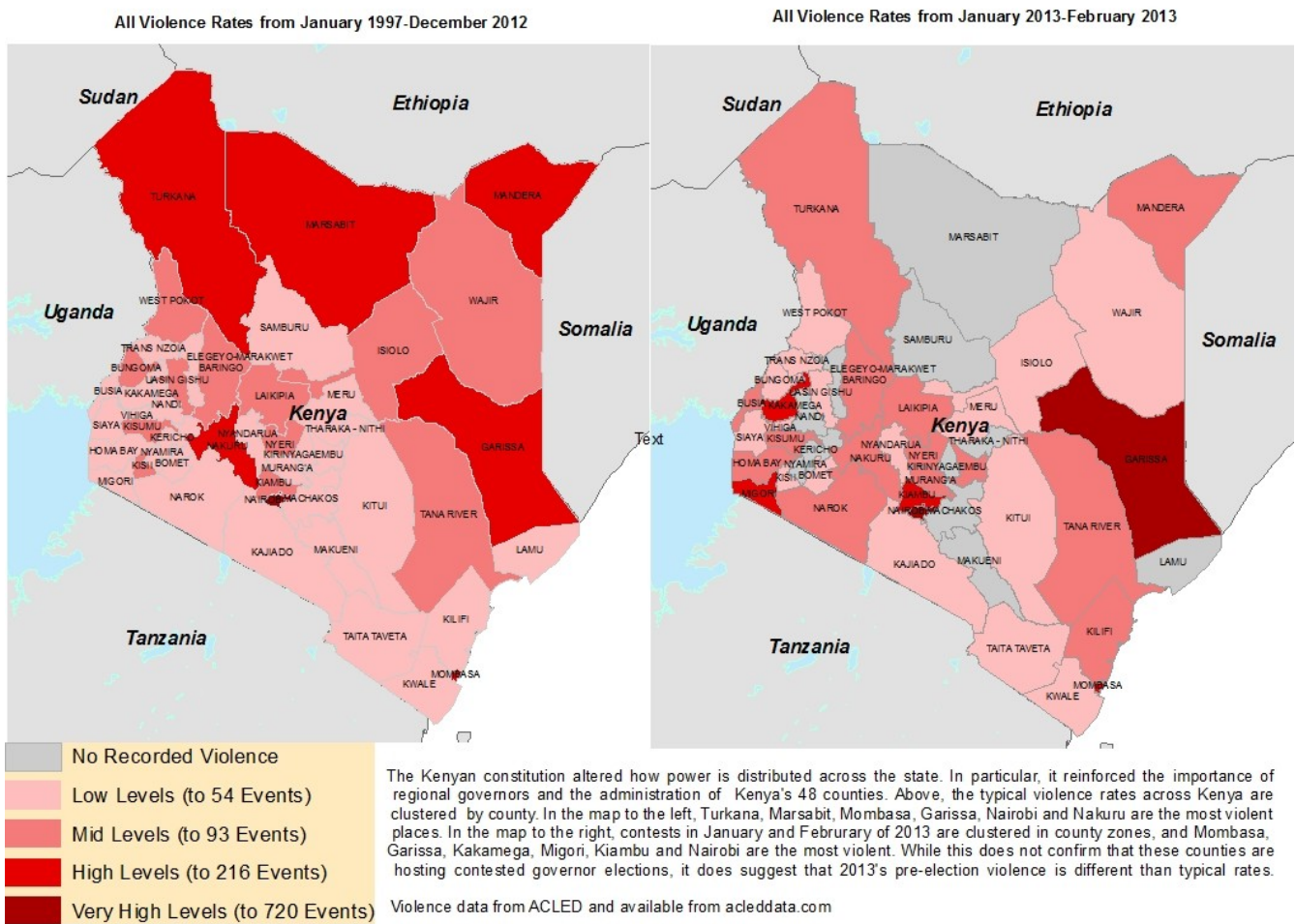


Figure 5: Ethnic Regions and Political Violence, Kenya, 1997 - February 2013.

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**Kenya**

**Counties and Competition in Kenya**



**Figure 6: Counties and Competition, Kenya, 1997 - February 2013.**

tion. In it, regional governors are now the branches of local government, voted for directly by Kenyan citizens and likely to have considerable hold over the national budget, which will be disseminate to them.

This is a significant change from the previous institutional structure whereby these provincial and district commissions were directed by the executive branch. Indeed, the fight over regional autonomy is likely not over. Nevertheless, the power of this new office has brought out fierce competition in localities. For a review of which counties were the most violent in the weeks preceding weeks the election (see Figure 6).

**Regional governors are now the branches of local government, voted for directly by Kenyan citizens and likely to have considerably hold over the national budget. The power of the new governors' offices has brought out fierce competition in localities.**

Tunisia

Tunisia’s political crisis deepened in February, when secular opposition leader Chokri Belaïd was assassinated by as yet unknown gunmen, and *Ennahda* Prime Minister Hamadi Jebali stepped down following his failure to establish a non-partisan, technocratic cabinet. Tunisia’s *Ennahda* party perhaps best gives lie to attempts by analysts and commentators to view the post-Arab Spring states through the binary lens of ‘Islamists’ versus ‘non-Islamists.’ The Islamist *Ennahda* is deeply divided internally, shaped by factions led by those who were exiled during the Ben Ali regime, and those who remained under authoritarian rule, which has in turn affected individual figures’ international connections and the diversity of their supporters domestically (*AfCon*, 1 March 2013).

Since the ousting of Ben Ali, instances of militia violence against civilians have increased significantly: most instances involve suspected hardline Islamist elements, tar-

geting opposition party members, journalists, human rights activists, and businesses and vendors selling alcohol. Social unrest in the form of riots and protests, meanwhile, has also persisted, centring around living standards, economic development and job creation. Social unrest also remains geographically widespread (*see* Figure 7): while pre-Arab Spring patterns of riots and protests were predictably concentrated in select urban areas, the recovery period has seen persistent demonstrations throughout the country and in rural areas, in line with the renewed expectations of a recently mobilised population.

In spite of all these developments, however, fatality levels have been generally low, in spite of isolated attacks and clashes between militants and security forces. Tunisia’s security situation is a growing concern, but it remains considerably less insecure than other post-Spring states.

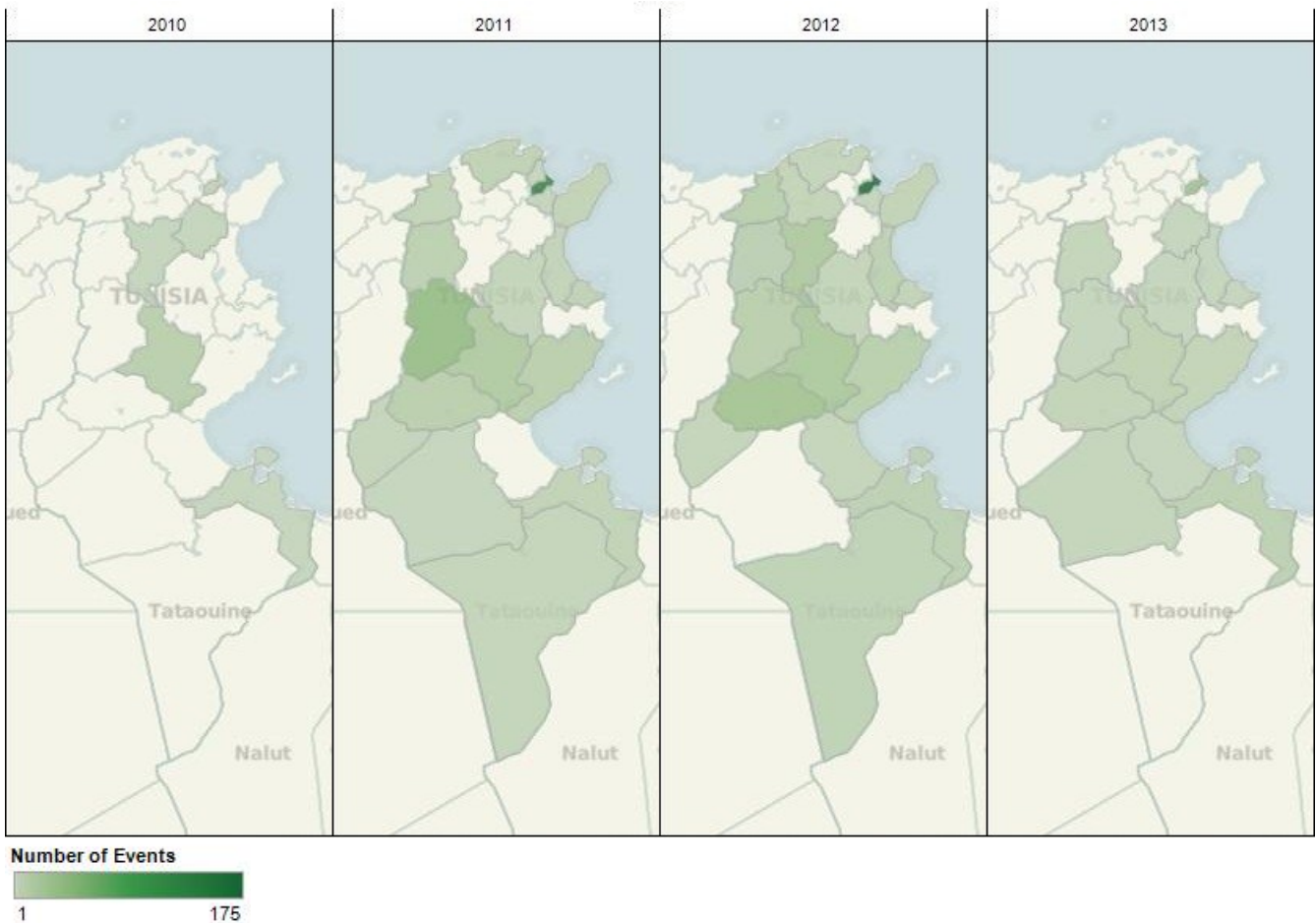


Figure 7: Riot Protest Events by District, Tunisia, 2010 - February 2013.

Special Focus: The Urbanization of Violence\*

This month’s special brief focuses on the urbanization of violence. In addition to describing the most violent cities for African citizens, it considers how the shift from rural-based campaigns to urban-based movements has led to the dominance of new actors, patterns and forms of violence. The brief concludes with a discussion of why the proportion and frequency of conflict has increased across African urban areas, and concentrates on three separate, yet inter-related, mechanisms. These include whether demographic concentration and urbanization has led to a shift in where conflict happens, but not in the overall rate of violence; or if the poor conditions of African life has led to an increase in grievance-based violence from urban dwellers; finally, has environmental scarcities and vulnerabilities led to an increase in contests between urban dwellers for land and resources?

Where are the most violent cities?

Across the time period of 1997-2012, the most violent cities (by event count) for a civilian to reside in were Harare and Chitungwiza in Zimbabwe, Mogadishu in Somalia, Abidjan in Ivory Coast, and Bujumbura in Burundi (see Figure 8). Three of these locations (Harare, Mogadishu

and Abidjan) overlapped for most violence by a government force (including police and military forces) during the same time period, but this sample’s top five also included Malanje in Angola and Hodan in Somalia (see Figure 6). The top five cities for rebel actions include Mogadishu, Malanje, Bujumbura, Kitgum and Gulu; while rioting and protesting is most frequent in Harare, Lusaka, Nairobi, Johannesburg and Abidjan (see Figure 6).

From these samples it is clear that the most violent cities are typically capitals, and high rates in one category can explain the presence of the city in another (e.g. high rates of rebel, government and violence against civilian activity tend to coincide). However, some surprising locations suggest that conflict has changed, and the new objectives for violence include attacks on civilians or opposition supporters (e.g. Harare’s and Abidjan’s consistent presence on these lists). These general patterns also change drastically from year to year: the most violent cities in 2012 by government force included Heliwa and Afgooye in Somalia, Maiduguri in Nigeria, Tunis in Tunisia and Khartoum, Sudan. Suppression of both rebel and militia forces explains the actions in Somalia and Nigeria, but suppression of civilians explains the latter.

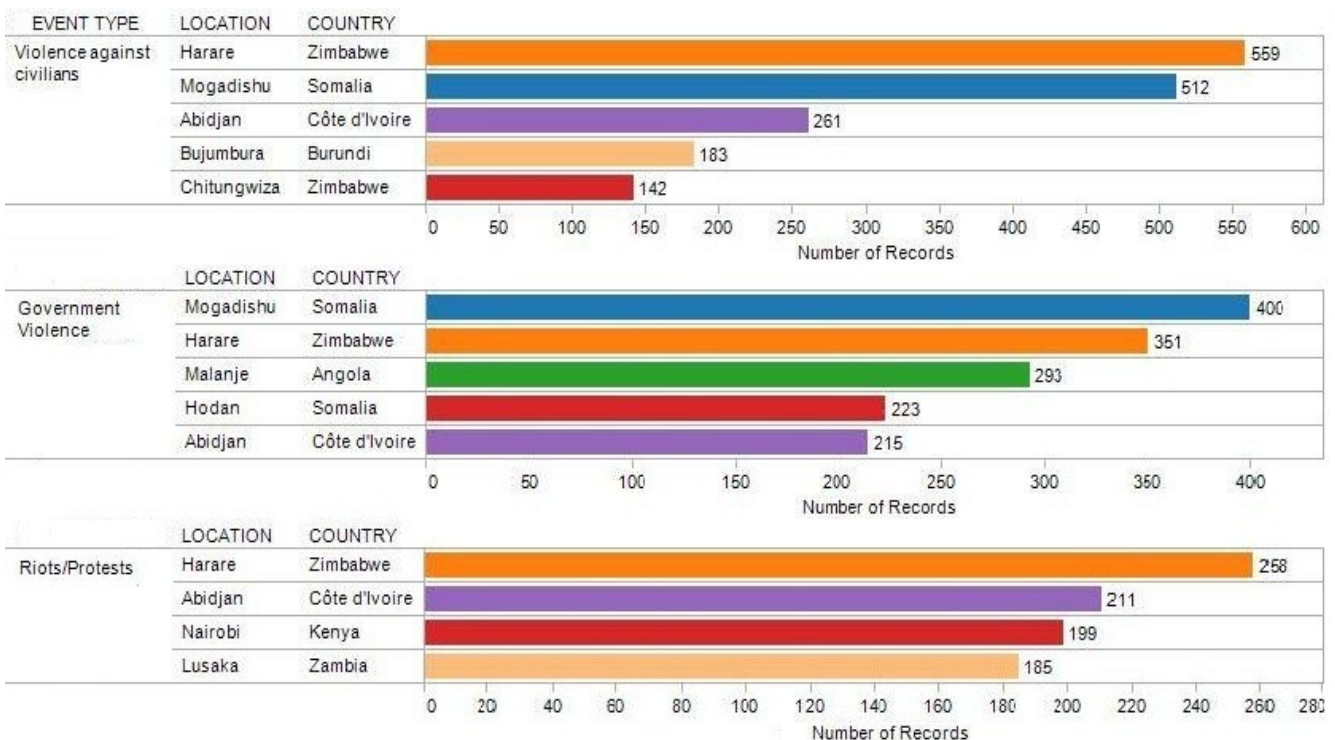


Figure 8: Violent Events by Type and Interaction, by Urban Location, all years.

\*This material is based upon work supported by, or in part by, the U.S. Army Research Office contract/grant number W911NF-09-1-007 under the Minerva Initiative of the U.S. Department of Defense.



Special Focus: The Urbanization of Violence\*

**Is African Conflict Clustering in Urban Locations?**

Studying the location of conflict tells us if there are different and new risks emerging across space that can elucidate the causes and mechanisms for violence. This is especially apparent in comparing urban and rural contexts. But the overall trends in where conflict occurs remains unclear: is violence *declining* in rural areas, in line with fewer civil wars, while the remaining violence within urban locations stays stable? This suggests an overall decline rate, and stability in urban areas. Or is violence *shifting* from rural to urban spaces and a higher proportion of violence occurring therein?

This implies a nationally consistent rate of violence but a move of typically rural actors and forms into urban spaces. The third possibility is violence is *growing* in urban areas due to more activity from specifically urban-based conflict actors and civil society. If violence is truly urbanizing, not only should we see an increase in these conflict rates regardless of the activity in rural areas, but also changes in who is responsible: civil society members, alternative security

providers, spontaneously organized riots and protests should be increasing and clustering, creating new urban violence spaces in response to urban motivations.

The rates of violence across Africa have generally increased from 1997-2012, with sharp increases from 2010 onwards. The rates of violence overall have also shifted into some, but not all, urban spaces. When subnational

**Rates of violence overall have shifted into some, but not all, urban spaces. Population areas with 1000 people or more per km, or 2000 people or more, had the strongest increase in violence.**

population rates and conflicts are aggregated over 1997-2012, the following patterns are clear: population areas with 100 people per sq. km (100 p/km) had a statistically significant increase in violence during the past sixteen years, and larger cities (those with 1000 people or more per km, or 2000 people or more) had the strongest increase in violence. Smaller cities and towns—those with 50 people per km, did not have a statistically significant increase, although areas with at least that density

of people experience up to 60% of all violence (see Figure 9).

People living in smaller urban areas of 50 people per km do experience the highest rates of government, rioting,

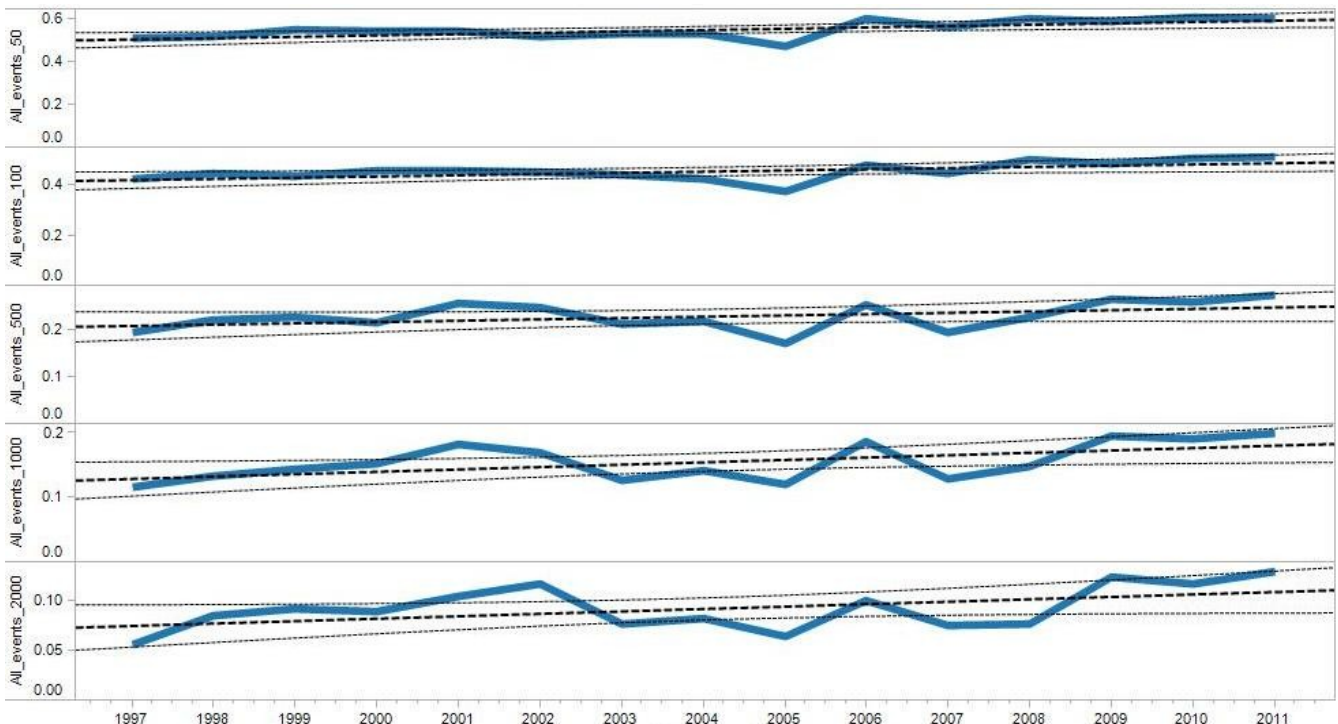


Figure 9: All Violent Conflict Events Over Time by Population Density per km, 1997 - 2011.

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political militia, communal and rebel violence. While the rates of government, rioting and militia activity rises past 50% in the time period, both rebel activity and communal violence is taking place mainly in areas below 50 people per km (see Figure 10)

However, the risk of living in a place with 100 people per km versus 500 people per km doubles a person’s relative risk of all forms of conflict, and triples the risk of a communal violence occurrence. These relative risks hide the absolute risk to a person based on where they live: the mean rate of violence in areas of 50p/km is largely consistent with their rate of occurrence compared to all other areas of population: these small cities and towns have an overall proportional conflict rate of 55% (i.e. 55% of all violence occurring in the state takes place in regions with at least 50p/km), and they are approximately 56% of the total demographic profile of a state (i.e. 56% of the average African state has at least 50p/km).

The conflict and population ranges are also similar, and both conflict and the rate of 50p/km areas have increased at the same pace. There is slightly less proportional conflict in areas of 100 p/km. 45% of the country’s violent event occurrence happens in areas of at least 100 p/km, but these areas are approximately 50% of the overall demographic distribution. This is the same for areas of 500 p/km. The areas with more conflict than expected for

their frequency in state demographic profiles include areas of 1000 p/km and 2000 p/km. In both cases, the risk of conflict is double the proportional rate of occurrence of these two densely populated areas. Hence, there are additional risks for living in densely populated areas, as the risk of violence is higher (almost double) compared to less densely populated areas (see Figure 10).

The risk for all types of violence is not rising at the same rate across different urban areas. Indeed, civil war violence has not increased in any urban area designation from 1997-2012. Communal militia activity is mainly still a rural phenomenon, although it has doubled in frequency in areas of 1000 p/km and quadrupled in frequency in areas of 2000 p/km. The most significant increase has been in both political militia activity and in rioting/protesting. These forms of collective action are distinguished by their participants (political militia activity is primarily orchestrated by political elites and those seeking to gain local or regional power), and rioting/protesting are considered to be spontaneous civilians acts of collective action. In both cases, there is a strong presence in very densely populated areas, far above the expected proportion to occur therein (see Figures 11 and 12).

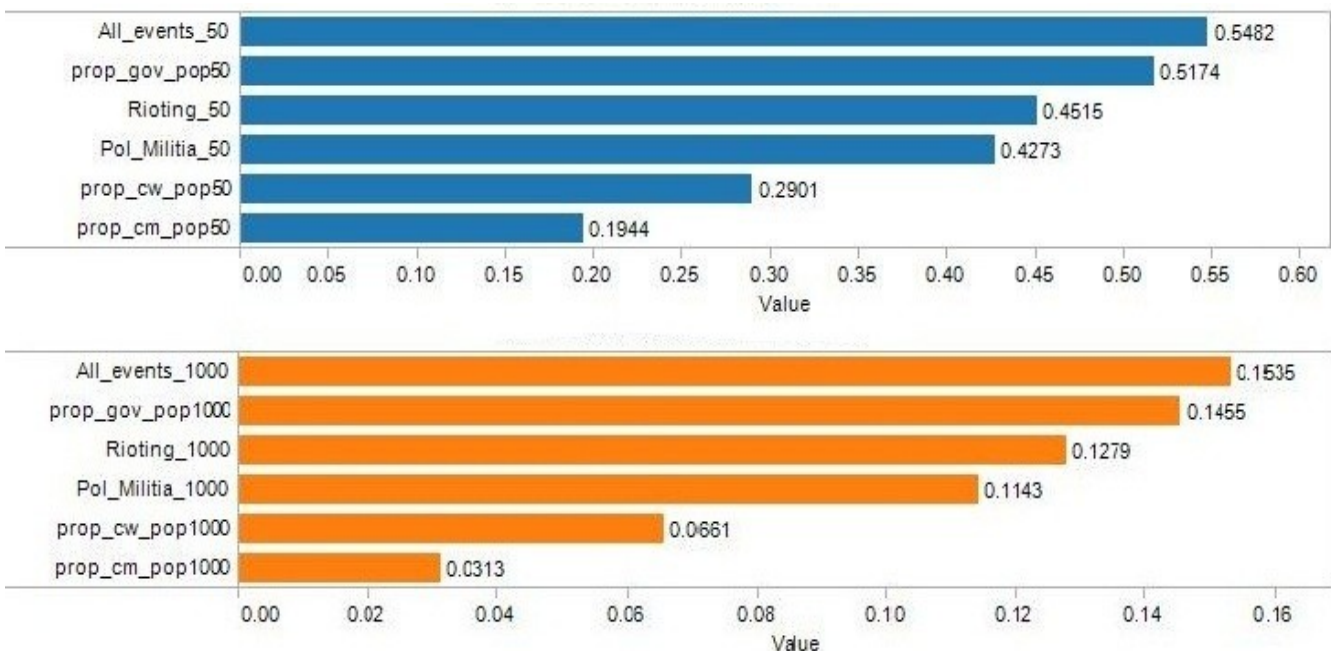
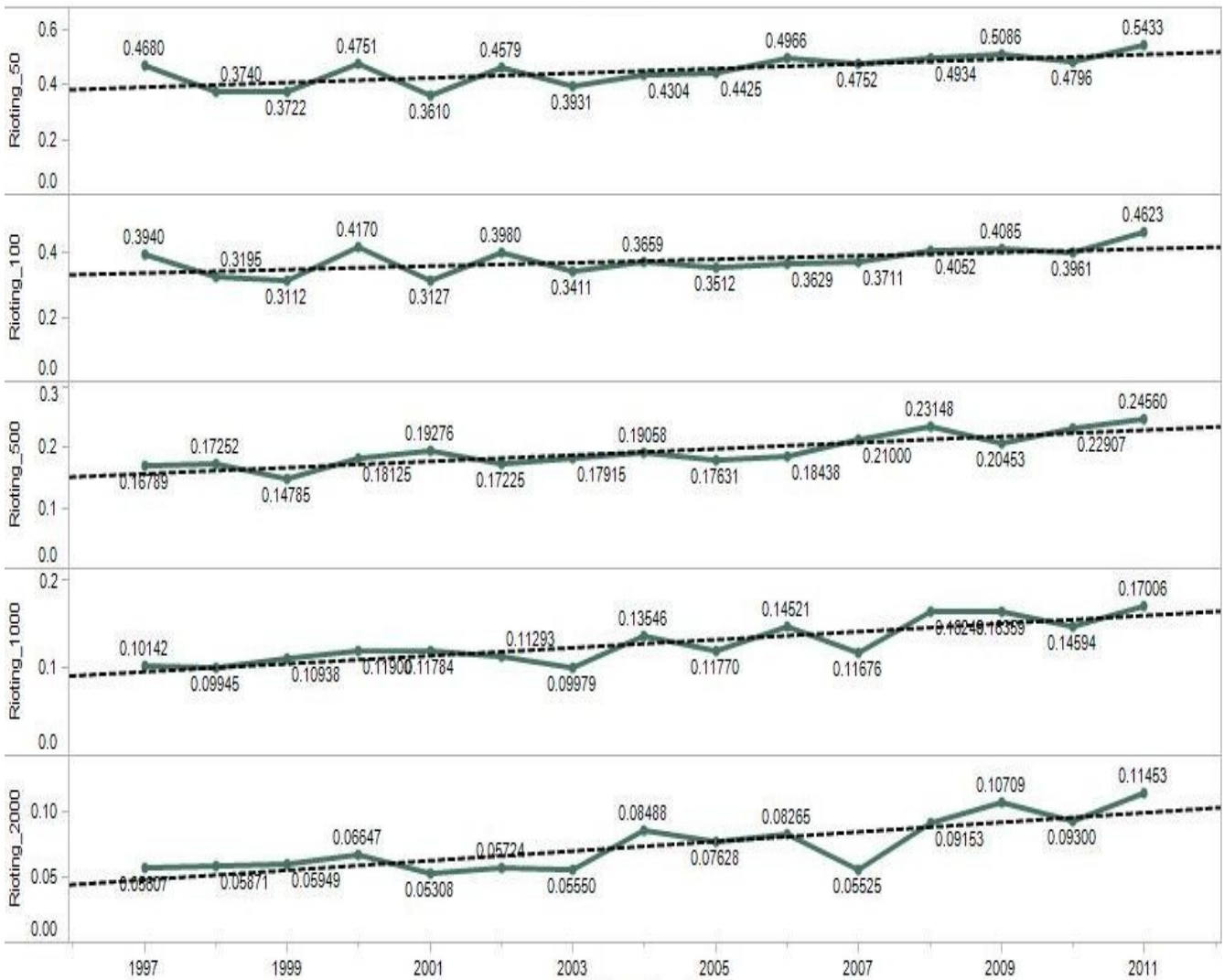


Figure 10: All Violent Conflict Events by Population Density per km, all years.

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**Figure 11: All Riot and Protest Events by Population Density per km, 1997 - 2011.**

**Explanations**

The same time period of 1997-2012 has experienced quite drastic changes in the demographic, economic, political and environmental profile of African states. Urbanization in Africa will set to be the most significant rural to urban shift in the contemporary world (UN Habitat, 2008). This is, in part, due to the presently low ‘urban’ population (approximately 35%), compared to other world regions. African urban areas are of great concern as they are urbanizing without concurrent development, leading some to speculate that African urban dwellers are, on average, poorer than rural residents. There are ongoing claims that

public services, including security, are not adequately provided for within African urban areas, and indeed claims of a ‘rural bias’ in how politicians dismiss the concern of urban voters since cities contain a smaller pool of potential voters compared to rural areas.

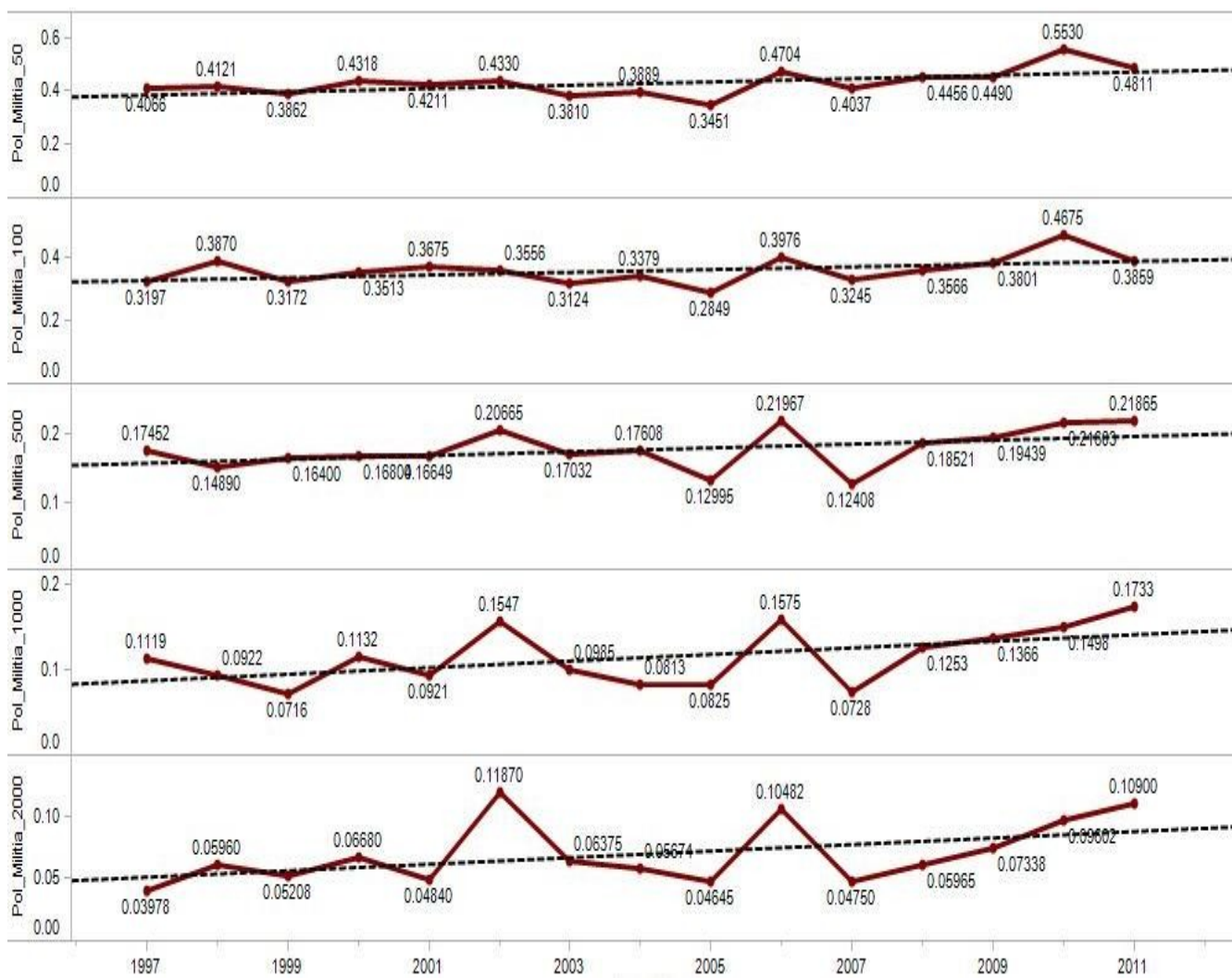
Finally, the effects of climate change are creating serious urban vulnerabilities due to the compounded direct and indirect effects of environmental changes in densely populated areas.

Each of these potential explanations is compelling, although existing data on specific urban locations is not adequate to undertake cross-country tests. What is

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**Figure 12: All Political Militia Events by Population Density per km, 1997 - 2011.**

evident is that population growth and concentration is not a conflict generating process.

Additional stresses- poverty, unemployment, resource scarcities and limited public goods access - create tensions within African urban areas. These issues can be ameliorated by directing policy towards encouraging stable and safe growth within Africa's smaller cities and towns, where the risk of violence is relatively stable and less than densely populated larger cities.

**About the Armed Conflict Location & Event Dataset**

ACLED collects real-time data on a monthly basis for select high-risk states in Africa. Citations refer to African Confidential (*AfCon*); Agence France Presse (*AFP*); Reuters News Service; BBC News; *African Arguments*; and various national news media outlets. Further information on sources of data, coding practices and archived data from ACLED Versions 2 (1997 - 2011) and 1 (1997 - 2009/2010) can be found online at [www.acleddata.com/data](http://www.acleddata.com/data).

Back-dated issues of *Conflict Trends*, in addition to ACLED working papers, and academic research can be found at <http://www.acleddata.com/research-and-publications/>.