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ARES & ATHENA 5

JUNE 2016

Is Britain braced for a return to peacekeeping ops?

5 UNITED NATIONS

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Maj R Bailey, *Defence Engagement*
Maj John Bailey, *SO2 Defence Engagement*
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Col Martin Todd, *CHACR*
Brig Walker, *Hd Strat*
Col Max Walker, *DA ROI*
Mr Alan Ward, *RMAS*

CHACR

Published by: Centre for Historical Analysis and Conflict Research, Robertson House, Slim Road, Camberley, Surrey GU15 4NP.
Tel: 94261 2644 / 01276 412644

CHACR business partner: NSC, Norwich House, Knoll Road, Camberley, Surrey GU15 3SY.
Tel: 01276 678867

Is Britain braced for a return to peacekeeping ops?

The CHACR workshop held in April 2016 concentrated on the British Army's renewed interest in the military contribution to United Nations (UN) operations.

With the notable exception of the long-standing contribution to the UN operation in Cyprus, the UK's military commitment to the UN in recent years has been relatively modest, perhaps as a result of the UNPROFOR experience in the 1990s that left the UK cautious of large-scale UN military commitment. But the UK retains a pivotal role in the UN, with permanent membership of the Security Council, in a way that provides considerable strategic benefit.

This role and level of influence is under increased scrutiny as the world order evolves. Britain is quick to point to its considerable financial contribution to the UN as a measure of its commitment, but critics may see this as a substitute for the more 'genuine commitment' that is represented by the provision of military or policing support at scale.

Army 2020, and its successor, see a vital cornerstone of the strategy for the Army being its increased engagement abroad. There is little doubt that a re-examination, both diplomatic and military, of Britain's contribution to UN operations is a vital aspect of that strategic vision and its subsequent implementation.

This collection of papers is a product of the UN workshop. It is published on a 'Chatham House' basis and as such is not attributable to any one individual but is offered as a collection of 'individual views'. Should authors subsequently wish to use their own papers, attributable to themselves, they are of course free to do so.

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THE VIEW FROM JUBA

Words: Tim Morris, Her Majesty's Ambassador
British Embassy, Juba, South Sudan

Our return to United Nations peacekeeping is an important step. It sends a strong signal of intent to our partners around the world, not least in Africa, the continent with the majority of peacekeeping challenges and operations.

British participation in the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS) and in support of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) will demonstrate our resolve to help the region and the continent solve its problems, and will be directly in line with our considerable humanitarian and development programme.

South Sudan, the world's newest country, is in urgent need of political, economic and physical rebuilding as it comes out of an intense civil conflict. The region, Africa, and the international community all recognise the vital need to stabilise the country and ensure its success. UNMISS, the wider United Nations and bilateral donors (among which the United Kingdom plays a leading role) are the major contributors to building this stability, and will be doing so in support of the country's Transitional Government of National Unity. We are all determined to prevent the country slipping backwards into chaos and suffering but rather to help it build its own stability and institutions.

Protective presence: British Army personnel will be a "visible demonstration" of the security afforded to civilian children and adults in Juba's IDP camps © UN Photo/JC McIlwaine

I am proud to be British Ambassador to Juba as the British contingent starts its deployment to South Sudan. The deployment will show our commitment to strengthening and supporting UNMISS, a large mission (more than 12,000 people) with a tough but essential task to protect both the 200,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) already sheltered by the UN, and, as far as possible, many more of the two million displaced by the two-year war. The UK contingent will become an indispensable element of the operation and, I am sure, will contribute highly positively to UN morale and good practice.

The image of British troops returning to South Sudan, this time with blue berets, will be seen as of great significance by the South Sudanese and as a sign that we have not forgotten them. I am confident that the reception will be positive. It will also be a visible demonstration of our mission to ensure that the IDPs are physically protected, and that the effectiveness of the UN operation is enhanced. Put another way, it will help the UN save lives.

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The environment will be a real challenge for the troops. The likely locations for the contingent will be bleak, with minimal comforts and next to large populations who have suffered violence, deprivation and loss. My guess is that many young and experienced soldiers will return from their tour affected by what they have seen and the people they have met, but encouraged by the hope of the South Sudanese people and convinced of the value of the job they have done.

That is certainly our experience in Juba. My team at the Embassy is a bright group of young men and women from across Government, all strongly committed to getting South Sudan back on its feet. They and I all look forward to the arrival of British forces to work with our partners and friends in the UN.

UNITED NATIONS PEACEKEEPING IN BOSNIA 1992-95: SOME LESSONS

Strategic

In 1992 both the UN Secretary General, Boutros Ghali, and the Head of the UN Department for Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), Kofi Annan, argued that as there was no peace to keep in Bosnia, peacekeeping forces should not be deployed. The Security Council ignored their advice and deployed forces with peacekeeping and humanitarian mandates that did not match the circumstances on the ground.

Most of the UN Security Council Resolutions (UNSCRs) passed in New York proved difficult to implement on the ground. The very language of the resolutions often built up exaggerated expectations of what the forces could and would achieve; for example, the name of the force, United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR), suggested it had a protective role when all that 1st Battalion, The Cheshire Regiment – the first British unit deployed to Bosnia – was mandated to protect was humanitarian aid convoys en route to UNHCR warehouses.

The term 'safe area' was interpreted by Bosniacs, the international media and others to be more protected by the UN than the detail of the security council resolutions, and the weak forces deployed to enforce the resolutions allowed for. NATO air-power was assumed by the Security Council to be a force multiplier, but the difficulties and bureaucratic tasking process neutered the effect of these assets considerably.

Until August 1995 there were many failures to apply force to achieve political ends. It seemed that for most of the mission the International Commission did not know what to do, resulting in an expectation gap between the Council, national capitals, UNPROFOR and NATO. So the Security Council, including its UK delegation, had willed the ends but not the means, providing neither capable forces, nor were they willing to risk the use of sufficient force to deter and, if necessary, coerce compliance with its expressed intentions.

Bosnian beat: British soldiers patrol the streets of Vitez in May 1994 © UN Photo/John Isaac

Operational

Add to this persistent misalignment of ends, ways and means, a very complex conflict. Iraq and Afghanistan are, rightly, seen as complex wars and British commanders and staff are rightly proud of the times they have successfully understood and then influenced this complexity. But in retrospect there were many times in Bosnia when this complexity applied at HQ UNPROFOR, the UN Sector HQs, and at battalion level and below. It was a scenario that often went beyond the 'three block war' to the 'n block war'.

Not only were the political forces bearing on the conflict heterogeneous but the UN force itself was extremely heterogeneous, a constellation of contingents of highly-variable military effectiveness, buttressed by national caveats, direction and interference from national capitals as well as differing combat capabilities.

> “Within UNPROFOR, a coalition of the willing, there was effectively a coalition of the competent and capable

Within UNPROFOR, a coalition of the willing, there was effectively a coalition of the competent and capable. In 1994 and 1995 Britain and France were effectively acting as joint lead and framework nations, joined from time-to-time by other national contingents. In the summer of 1995 the UK, France and Holland provided the rapid reaction force for the mission. France took the lead for the Sarajevo sector and British troops distinguished themselves in the Gorazde enclave and elsewhere. By taking the lead for the Sarajevo sector, the French took on the political and military decisive point – and the most dangerous area – and in doing so they suffered twice as many casualties as the UK.

This illustrates that there are important choices about how national land contingents are deployed in peacekeeping operations. They can be allocated geographical sectors as areas of operations, or they can be allocated force or theatre reserve roles. This latter role can increase the national influence on the force but if they are to be so allocated then they require the Rules of Engagement (ROE), niche capabilities, command and control, deployability and logistics required to fulfil the role.

Given these challenges, and the sub-optimal strategic and political direction, the pressures upon the commanders of UNPROFOR and their HQ was immense. This was only made more complex by the concurrent NATO-UN air-land campaign that was executed under a disparate command, neglecting the principle of war for unified command, and one which was also hampered by the Bosnian-Serb air defence network. It is quite remarkable that Generals Rose and Smith achieved what they did. Rose sought to develop a campaign plan which initially had some effect, but all three factions came to understand his plan and so in the second half of his year in command they sought to limit his freedom of manoeuvre. Smith also analysed the situation and sought,

initially, to test the limits of his mandate, military capabilities, external political support and ability to influence the Bosnian Serbs. He sought to understand situation and shape it.

Tactical

Despite the lack of strategic clarity there were times when tactical activity by British, French, and other UN troops was effective, such as when the forces helped the Bosnian Muslims and Croats implement the provisions of the 1994 Washington Agreement; these were classic peacekeeping operations. Impartiality and neutrality was essential, as was opening and sustaining channels of communication with the warring factions.

Throughout the complex and changing conflict, a key role of UN commanders at every level was to decide what level of force to use, how to use it and when to not use it. UN and national ROE allowed force to be used in self defence, but there were occasions when self defence was not enough. There were numerous incidents when courageous UN commanders sought to reduce violence by deliberately deploying themselves and their troops into positions between the warring parties, where they positively invited attack by the factions. The idea was that the factions would rather not attack the UN troops and risk effective return fire. On at least one occasion this tactic allowed British troops to create the space to allow civilians to be evacuated from a village under attack, thus averting ethnic cleansing.

© UN Photo/John Isaac

> Many of the contributing nations to the mission still succeeded in making a big difference to people's lives, often through brave and innovative commanders and soldiers using their initiative

Summary

In summary, the Bosnia conflict of 1992-1995 provides many lessons that the British Army, FCO and Government would do well to learn from. The UN itself has sought to learn from its mistakes with several high-level reviews into UN operations. The UK must take note. Those troops that will soon deploy to Somalia and South Sudan in blue helmets will not be deploying with the same UN that their predecessors did in Bosnia.

Bosnia was blighted by overly ambitious UNSCRs that were not matched with concomitant resources or political will to use force. That said, many of the contributing nations to the mission still succeeded in making a big difference to people's lives, often through brave and innovative commanders and soldiers using their initiative, but also through the forces being able to understand the complexities of the conflict in their area.

Understanding complexity is a skill which, if not lost, was rusty when the UK deployed to Afghanistan and Iraq. The lessons that were hard won in those conflicts, and the ability for complexity to be examined and understood, must come to the fore again.

Balkan blues: UK troops dismount from United Nations armoured personnel carriers (May 1994) © UN Photo/John Isaac

WHAT HAS CHANGED IN UN PEACE OPERATIONS SINCE THE UK LAST ENGAGED?

As the UK prepares to re-engage in UN peace operations it is timely to reflect on the role of peacekeeping in a much-changed global setting. Peacekeeping, or peace operations as it is described in current UN conceptual frameworks, has evolved considerably since the UK redeployed from the Balkans in the mid-90s. The conflicts of today are some of the most intractable ever faced by the member states of the UN. Some, like the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Mali and South Sudan, are facing a second or third wave of conflict. Many of these formerly intrastate conflicts are today regionalised and, in some crisis zones, internationalised. Current conflicts are multidimensional, more prolonged and increasingly dangerous. Academic literature and conflict data indicates that the trend is moving from intrastate conflict and shifting towards internationalised intrastate crisis. There are many examples of the latter to support this analysis – Syria, Ukraine, DRC and Yemen are all characterised by the intervention of neighbouring states, complicated further by the presence of transnational extremist non-state actors such as Al Qaeda and ISIS and their affiliates.

> The protection of civilians has become the central feature of mandates approved by the Security Council and the primary reason to deploy a peacekeeping mission

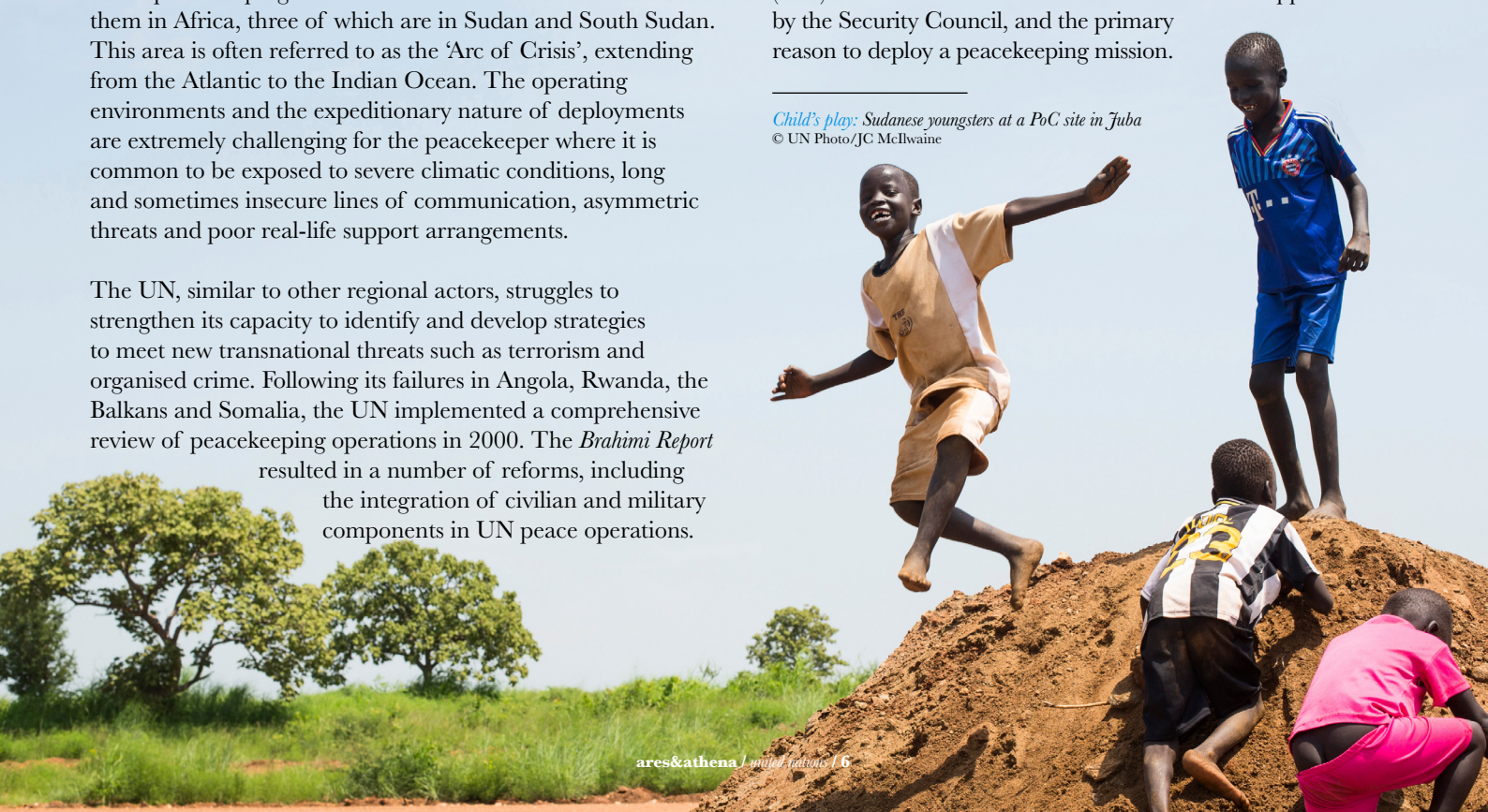
First generation peacekeeping during the period 1948 to the 1990s was marked by the interposition of buffer forces linked to uncomplicated mandates. Some of those missions have become semi-permanent in places like Cyprus, the Golan Heights and Lebanon. Second generation peacekeeping, as evidenced since the end of the Cold War, is dynamic and increasingly complex. The nature and characteristics of conflict have altered as has the landscape. Today there are 16 active peacekeeping missions around the world with most of them in Africa, three of which are in Sudan and South Sudan. This area is often referred to as the 'Arc of Crisis', extending from the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean. The operating environments and the expeditionary nature of deployments are extremely challenging for the peacekeeper where it is common to be exposed to severe climatic conditions, long and sometimes insecure lines of communication, asymmetric threats and poor real-life support arrangements.

The UN, similar to other regional actors, struggles to strengthen its capacity to identify and develop strategies to meet new transnational threats such as terrorism and organised crime. Following its failures in Angola, Rwanda, the Balkans and Somalia, the UN implemented a comprehensive review of peacekeeping operations in 2000. The *Brahimi Report* resulted in a number of reforms, including the integration of civilian and military components in UN peace operations.

In 2014 the UN Secretary-General called for a new review to "make a comprehensive assessment of the state of UN peace operations today, and the emerging needs of the future". A high-level independent panel of experts produced what is widely known as the 'HIPPO Report' in June 2015. The panel considered a broad spectrum of issues facing peace operations including the changing character of conflict, evolving mandates, peace-building challenges, planning, partnerships, human rights and the protection of civilians. For the first time the review encompassed both UN peacekeeping operations as well as special political missions, which are now referred to collectively as UN peace operations.

So what can be considered as the main challenges for peace operations today? One challenge is how to improve communication between the Security Council and the Troop Contributing Countries (TCCs) in the context of greater transparency in the decision-making process around mandates and the deployment of forces. Another challenge is the requirement to better develop integrated missions on the ground and to deal with the issues of robust peacekeeping and mandate proliferation.

The UN Secretary-General, in remarks during an address in June of 2015 to Force Commanders, said that UN peacekeeping missions are forced to operate in situations where there is no peace to keep. Thus, the field personnel are themselves increasingly under threat and forced to counter asymmetric and unconventional attacks while carrying out other complex mandated tasks, in addition to being entrusted with the mandate to protect civilians. The Protection of Civilians (PoC) has become the central feature of mandates approved by the Security Council, and the primary reason to deploy a peacekeeping mission.



Child's play: Sudanese youngsters at a PoC site in Juba
© UN Photo/JC McIlwaine

However, at present, this core objective is seriously challenged by repeated cycles of violence, weak governance and recurring instability, even in countries where peace agreements have been successfully implemented. These are, conceptually, key elements to ensure a mission's success. However, the lack of resources, of effective information gathering, or information analysis, lack of technical enablers, weak or non-functioning states, poor unity of purpose by different TCCs within a mission, law and order problems, and the sometimes inadequately trained or prepared military forces, are all challenges that the Security Council must address. Corrective action is needed to establish the conditions for mission success. Operating in an asymmetric environment is the most radical evolving operational situation faced by contemporary peacekeeping missions that were originally designed as a separation forces to maintain a truce or armistice between symmetric opposing regular forces. At present, an asymmetric environment poses major security and safety issues to peacekeepers who are mandated, as a core objective, to protect civilians. This threat is compounded by the increasing threat of regional terrorism, particularly in Africa, with the use of vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices and suicide attacks, which are increasing the number and severity of casualties of UN personnel. Extremist Islamist groups are driven by an alternative view of world order and they reject compromise based on political concessions. Their objectives are irreconcilable with traditional UN approaches to negotiated solutions.

In spite of its problems and increasingly limited budgets, the UN is likely to remain the most legitimate international organisation which is able to deploy operations across the spectrum of violence, except at the highest end. It is heartening to see that a number of European countries are considering, or are already, increasing their contributions to UN operations, such as Sweden, Norway and the Netherlands, which increases the capability envelope in a significant manner, and the UK which is now moving through a process targeted at how best to re-energise and re-engage with UN operations. The bottom line up front is that the challenge today is very different to the last time the UK engaged, particularly the threat presented by an enemy rooted in a complicated theology and ideology and who does not ever 'play by the rules'.

IMPEDIMENTS TO DOING MORE

The single biggest constraint for any Troop Contributing Country (TCC) with a developed military, when considering the deployment of a contingent to a UN mission to undertake an active peacekeeping role, is the provision of casualty evacuation (CASEVAC) with what is considered, by them, to be acceptable in terms of responsiveness and capability. The UN has failed to attract military CASEVAC capabilities from TCCs, understandably, perhaps, given the cost, logistic footprint and support requirements of such a capability, not to mention its scarcity even within NATO militaries. Instead, CASEVAC helicopters are invariably contracted by the UN from the civil market place.

The 'user requirement' set by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) for CASEVAC will invariably require an aviation-based package, with the necessary on-board equipment, paramedics/nurses (but not usually doctors, surgeons or anaesthetist) at mandated levels of readiness. However, in reality, the fielded capability is of variable quality and responsiveness, often heavily constrained in terms of the conditions in which the aircraft will operate. For example: the aircraft may lack night-vision yet still assert that it represents a credible night capability; it may be fitted with a door winch, yet have no crew current or competent in its operation; it will never fly near or into high-threat areas, making extraction of wounded from an on-going contact impossible even on humanitarian or emergency life-saving grounds. The provision of a highly-capable CASEVAC that delivers aggressive life-saving and patient stabilising capacities aboard is now an expectation of soldiers and commanders when deployed in harm's way; it is increasingly an area in which national parliaments are also showing great interest too. Without an acceptable CASEVAC capability in-mission, the UK (and near-peer allies) are faced with limited choices:

- **Confine troop deployments to strictly low-risk tasks. This may have reputational and tactical consequences, especially when the UK lobbies the Security Council for the repatriation of under-performing contingents from other TCCs in more active roles or questions other nations over risk-aversion.**

- Come together to develop a fully capable force package in order to burden share. The UK may consider close partnership with Joint Expeditionary Force nations, for instance, to create a bespoke battalion group, with one nation providing the CASEVAC as their significant contribution, whilst another the troops, and another the balance of critical enabling capabilities. This could be enduring or rotational, allowing efficient use of scarce and high-cost CASEVAC capabilities which could have utility across an entire peacekeeping force, thereby enabling all contingents to mitigate more tactical risk against its assured provision.

- **Deploy an entirely national CASEVAC capability to support a manoeuvre unit or national peacekeeping contingent during periods of higher threat/risk, accepting that this is not operationally agile.**

- Redeploy national capabilities from nearby or regional Joint Operations Areas – such as the Combined Joint Task Force Horn of Africa or British Army Training Unit Kenya aviation to provide, in-extremis, support to UN peacekeeping missions in North/North-eastern Africa, accepting that this will likely be unresponsive.

Meanwhile, the UK (and similarly-equipped NATO nations) must continue to press for reform in peacekeeping. Indeed, the UN, in its 2015 *High Level Panel on Peacekeeping Operations* report acknowledges that capable CASEVAC is an area that needs much further work but DPKO may not yet realise the degree to which it inhibits the pledging of troops trained and equipped to the degree necessary to displace the many under-performing contingents already deployed in the majority of missions.

THE SUDAN CONFLICT – AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

In common with many other conflicts in the region and beyond, today's conflict in Sudan owes much to its imperial legacy. From the late 19th Century, Sudan, although recognised as an Egyptian possession, was effectively administered by the British from 1899 under an Anglo-Egyptian agreement. As Sirdar of Egyptian forces, General Kitchener had led an Anglo-Egyptian campaign (1896-1899) that resulted in joint Egyptian and British control in Sudan. The Anglo-Egyptian Condominium was an agreement whereby Sudan was placed officially under Egyptian control, with a Governor General appointed (but approved by the British) by the Khedive running the territory. The reality was that Sudan was effectively run as a British imperial possession, much to the irritation of both Egyptian and Sudanese nationalists. Muhammad Ali, the Albanian founder of modern Egypt, had previously sought to unite the whole of the Nile Valley under his leadership, which caused concern amongst the European imperial powers. In response, Britain pursued a policy of divide and rule in order to prevent unification of the two countries. Sudan was effectively run as two separate countries; the Arab North and the 'black' South. Mixing between the two parts was rare, which is still largely reflected in the ethnic distribution of modern Sudan[1], as shown by the table opposite.

Ethnic distribution of Sudan and South Sudan

Arab	48%
Other mixed	10%
Northern Sudan	
Nubian	8%
Beja	6%
Fur	2%
Zaghawa	1%
Southern Sudan	
Dinka	11%
Nuer	5%
Azande	3%
Bara	3%
Shilluk/Anwak	3%

In 1947, in preparation for future independence, a legislative council was established in Khartoum. While southerners could participate, generally they lacked the educational and administrative skills that were required and so were largely unprepared for the responsibility of running the administration.

Prior to independence, the North sought to impose its will on the South and consolidate its rule throughout the land. To this end they set up the Sudanisation Commission, a programme intended to extend the writ of the civil service into the South and so cement a unitary state. Northern officials were appointed to almost all senior positions, which exacerbated societal frictions and caused the South to resist its implementation. At independence more than 83 per cent of both public and private investment was in the North, particularly in Khartoum and the Blue Nile region; southerners held just six out of 800 civil service posts. In 1955, soldiers from the Equatorial Corps (almost entirely comprising southern troops) mutinied, fearing that they were about to be disbanded. Northern officers, merchants and administrators were killed and the mutiny signified the start of southern resistance against northern oppression. The mutineers failed to capitalise on the broad social discontent throughout the South and so the uprising was rapidly suppressed. Some mutineers were killed but many escaped. The precariousness of the British position in Sudan was self-evident; the move to independence accelerated and Sudan became an independent nation-state in 1956. A temporary constitution was established but disagreement remained over whether the Sudanese state should be federal or unitary, secular or Islamic. Southerners favoured federalism to prevent domination by the North, while the latter feared it as the first move towards secession.

> The Sudanese Army took over the government in a coup in 1958 and instantly instigated repressive policies. This included invigorating an existing campaign of burning villages and repression

The Sudanese Army took over the government in a coup in 1958 and instantly instigated repressive policies. This included invigorating an existing campaign of burning villages and repression, nominally targeting the mutineers of 1955, but was as much aimed at eradicating southern elites and intelligentsia. Eventually, in the early 1960s, many political figures and students escaped into the bush and, along with the mutineers, formed the Sudan African Nationalist Union (SANU); the civil war had truly begun. SANU was reformed into what would later be called the Southern Sudan Liberation Movement /Army (SSLM/A), which was dominated by military commanders rather than politicians.

In 1969 there was a change of government and the new leader, Nimeiri, sought to solve the southern issue through politics rather than conflict. A plan for a regional self-government was outlined and the Addis Ababa Agreement was signed in 1972 bringing the first Sudanese civil war to an end. The South was granted a significant degree of autonomy and exempted from Sharia law. In 1983 conflict erupted once again when the same president introduced Sharia law across the land, reneging on the 1972 agreement. Thus Nimeiri had the dubious honour of both ending the first civil war and starting the second. The SPLM/A led the fighting through the second civil war, which is estimated to have cost more than 2.5 million lives and displaced more than four million people. An agreement was eventually reached in Addis Ababa in 1989,

[1] *Ethnic distribution of Sudan and South Sudan, www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-12115013*

but shortly afterwards the military seized power in another coup in Khartoum under General Al-Bashir. Al-Bashir was firmly Islamist and rejected all facets of the agreement, leading to an immediate resumption of conflict. This conflict was finally brought to an end in 2005 with the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), which brought a permanent ceasefire, autonomy for South Sudan and agreement to hold a referendum on independence. The referendum was held in January 2011, which led to the formal secession of the South in July 2011. However, the birth of South Sudan as an independent state has been riven by renewed conflict and by the same weaknesses that bedeviled it within a united Sudanese state.

False dawn?: An officer of the Republic of South Sudan holds the new nation's flag during the historic independence ceremony in 2011 © UN Photo/Paul Banks

Summary

The structure of Sudan under Anglo-Egyptian rule was effectively two separate states divided along ethno-religious lines. After independence almost all investment in building societal structures went into the Arab North, while the South was largely untouched, meaning that it was unprepared for equitable participation in the newly independent state. The Arab North retained the elitist and divisive colonial power structures, while violent repression caused the elite and educated southerners to flee and set up a politico-military resistance movement along with the fugitive mutineers of 1955. Civil war was ended for a period but the strengthening hard-line Islamists in the North forced the introduction of Sharia law across the entire country. Attempts at reconciliation in 1989 were brief and scuppered by the military coup headed by the Islamist Al-Bashir. Thus the divisions established under British rule had changed little by 1989 and remain a source of division and conflict today.

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The birth of South Sudan as an independent state has been riven by renewed conflict and by the same weaknesses that bedeviled it within a united Sudanese state

The intra-South Sudan conflict – a short history

In 1991 the SPLM/A split largely along ethnic lines. A breakaway group led by Machar (a Nuer) tried to seize control of the organisation from its leader, Garang, though some Nuer continued to fight with the SPLM/A. Machar's group, which become known as the South Sudan Independence Movement (SSIM), failed and Garang retained his grip on power. The SSIM then allied themselves with the Government of (North) Sudan (GoS) who supported them as a proxy group in the South. The South-South conflict would subsequently prove to be even more brutal than the North-South conflict. The SSIM became warlords; rape, pillage, plunder and slave raids (for export to the North) were common and carried out with the full knowledge of the GoS. Garang and his military framed themselves as Christians resisting Islamification, but they too acted like an army of occupation and perpetrated many war crimes.

In the late 1990s the conflict started to receive more international attention, particularly from the US. Special interest groups, including the Congressional Black Caucus and the Christian Right, pressured Congress to act in Sudan. In 1997 the US imposed economic sanctions on Khartoum; Sudan had harboured elements of Al Qaeda, including bin Laden, and missile strikes were carried out in retaliation for terrorist attacks. After the 9/11 attacks in the US, al-Bashir sidelined the hard-line Islamists in government and sought a more conciliatory approach with the US. At this stage both sides were almost in a stalemate with battle lines moving back and forth with the changing seasons; the pressure increased for the GoS to come to terms with the SPLM/A.

The discovery of oil in 1999 further motivated the GoS to pursue peace to enable exploitation of the resource. About 75 per cent of the proven oil reserves lie in South Sudan but the export pipelines run through North. Oil became a key source of income for both states, accounting for 98 per cent of GDP for the South and 60 per cent of GDP for the North at secession. China accounts for about 60 per cent of oil exports and so held, and continues to hold, economic leverage.

US interests were focused mainly on stopping the spread of Islamist extremists and protecting allies in the region and so Sudan was firmly in the US security sphere of interest. The GoS sought positive incentives, such as debt relief and lifting of sanctions, in return for their participation in the peace process. Though the US administration wished to comply, they were limited by domestic politics that pressured for an increase in sanctions. This pressure escalated as the conflict in Darfur unfolded. Ultimately the US could only provide some minor security cooperation but no meaningful economic incentives, only restrictions, and so US leverage evaporated quickly.

The intra-South conflict – summary

The South Sudan military movement split in the 1990s, largely along ethnic lines. The North took advantage of the situation and used the breakaway group to fight a proxy war on its behalf. The brutality of it all was brought to the attention of the international community and pressure was applied to do something. Oil focused the minds of the GoS; the potential rewards made peace look more palatable and war looked more costly; the price of peace eventually exceeded the cost of conflict. Oil also brought China into the equation on two counts: first as a friend of Sudan in the UN and second as an international player with leverage over the GoS.

SOUTH SUDAN CONTEXT AND ACTORS

Context and factions prior to the 2013 Civil War

Between 1989 and 2005 the second Sudanese civil war pitted a coalition of Sudanese armed, paramilitary and other non-state forces against the rebel SPLM/A (Sudanese People Liberation Movement/Army). Both sides relied on southern tribal and communal militias, supplying them with weaponry and ammunition. Groupings, however, were extremely volatile. The SPLM/A split several times, its loosely allied factions either returning to support the government or, just as often, continuing as independent rebel factions.

> [The SPLM's] rigid structure did not allow for external competition, which only intensified an internal struggle for power amongst the party's ruling elites

An example is Riek Machar (pictured below), an ethnic Nuer and senior SPLA commander who defected and allied himself with the Sudanese forces against the SPLM/A, which was then centralised under the command of John Garang, a Dinka. His allies drew support primarily from ethnic Nuer and Shilluk communities, which contributed to communal violence, particularly in the Greater Upper Nile area (now north of Jonglei, Unity and Upper Nile states). In the early 2000s, however, the faction reconciled with SPLM/A and in 2005, upon Garang's death, Machar assumed the position of deputy to the movement's leader, Salva Kiir (pictured far right).

In the last phases of the North-South war, fighting assumed an intra-southern dimension. Various rebel groups and militias organised as the South Sudan Defence Forces (SSDF) acted as proxies for the Sudanese government. These were subsequently absorbed into SPLM/A, following the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) between the Sudanese government and SPLM/A. However, the coalition remained vulnerable as rebellions perpetrated by former SSDF commanders continued to destabilise the Upper Nile region in bouts of ethnic and communal violence.

Amongst other rebel forces, the SSDM (South Sudan Democratic Movement) emerged in 2010, after SPLA General George Athor failed to win the governorship of Jonglei state. Allegedly supported by the Sudanese government, SSDM and its regional divisions failed to reach an agreement with SPLA and in 2011 fighting resumed. Comprising mostly Murle ethnic groups, the Yau Yau rebel forces from Pibor region, led by David Yau Yau, were a spin-off of SSDM. They played a major part in perpetuating instability in Jonglei and Upper Nile areas. Despite signing a ceasefire agreement in 2014 with South Sudan's pro-government SPLM/A, it is believed David Yau Yau entered a coalition to support Machar's rebel forces known as the SPLA-IO (In Opposition).

Main factions during the South Sudan Civil War – 2013 onwards

The civil war that ignited in 2013 has been attributed to internal divisions within SPLM. Acting as the champion of liberation, SPLM led the battle for South Sudan's independence for more than two decades, a liberation movement turned into a monopolistic political party. The series of agreements between the Sudanese government and SPLM, culminating in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of 2005, hailed a six-year period of transition and SPLM's relative dominance, though rebellions in the Greater Upper Nile area continued unabated. South Sudan gained formal independence in July 2011, bringing decades of civil war to an end or, at least, so it seemed.

Although the SPLM became the main political body, internal fractures within the movement persisted, especially over power-sharing and political-military leadership. The rigid structure did not allow for external competition, which only intensified an internal struggle for power amongst the party's ruling elites. Another shortcoming was SPLA's (the armed branch of SPLM) inability to transition from a guerrilla type of army to a professional one. Although local militias (primarily from the Upper Nile region) were nominally absorbed into SPLA, which became the official national army, most of these factions remained loyal to local warlords, fragmented along ethnic, communal and political lines. Attempts to address inter and intra-group tensions, political representation, or control of resources have been largely unsuccessful and this helped to pave the way to renewed violence.

There are numerous minor factions engaged in the South Sudan Civil War, but the power contest within the SPLM revolves around three principal factions and their armed affiliates:

© UN Photo/Rick Bajornas

- **Core SPLM/A. The primary SPLM/A faction includes President Salva Kiir (pictured right) and a number**

of SPLM senior leaders. The SPLA, loyal to the current regime is drawn from the Dinka ethnic majority, while the rebels in opposition are mostly Nuer in ethnicity.

● SPLM-IO. Also known as the Nasir faction, SPLM-IO continues to be led by Machar. In 2013, civil war erupted as President Salva Kiir accused his then-Vice President of plotting a coup. At this stage, former militias which had been absorbed by the army defected. From 2014 onwards, the SPLM-IO established itself as the dominant rebel faction. Many of the commanders had been part of the SSDF (South Sudan Defence Forces), the Khartoum allied rebel forces, and had been marginalised by the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of 2005. Most of the rebel groups and militias supporting Machar's opposition were Nuer and were concentrated in the Upper Nile region, with a few from Equatoria and Bahr-al Gazal. The crisis may have had political or institutional roots, but the civil war rapidly assumed an ethnic dimension.

● **Garang Boys. The third opposition faction resembles more of a loose alliance, and is also known as the 'Garang boys' (after SPLM's former Dinka leader). Most of its members, who are from within SPLM's key political ranks, were imprisoned as hostilities broke out. Lacking President Kiir's or Machar's military capabilities, the movement remains considerably weaker than its counterparts.**

Despite the highly unstable, shifting alliances that comprise political, ethnic and communal militias, rebel forces and regional actors, the two main belligerents in the post-2013 South Sudanese civil war remain the pro-Kiir regime, Dinka dominated SPLM/A government (GRSS – Government of the Republic of South Sudan) and the rebel SPLM/A-IO.

Regional actors

● **Uganda's military forces (Ugandan People's Defence Forces) intervened in the civil war in support of the Juba government, providing military support to the pro-Kiir SPLA. Uganda's intervention has been attributed to economic, political and security interests. Security, however, is presumed to be the driving factor behind President Museveni's calculations. Widespread instability in the war-torn South Sudan and Central African Republic are feared to enable a potential resurgence of the LRA (Lord's Resistance Army) in Uganda. Despite the group's reduced operations, rumours of an LRA revival helped justify Uganda's militarised role in South Sudan's civil war. At a political level, the Ugandan regime may also perceive Riek Machar's previous collaboration with Sudanese forces and the LRA as a threat to its own internal stability and to Uganda's strategic aspirations in the region.**

● Sudan. The protracted mistrust between Khartoum and Juba long pre-dates the current crisis. The South Sudanese government publicly accused Sudan of supplying rebels with materiel, which Karthoum has denied. In return, Sudan has accused the Juba pro-Kiir regime of supporting the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) and the SPLA-North (SPLA-N) rebels, who are still active in the oil-rich Kordofan and Blue Nile areas. Oil remains a major stake in the conflict as well as a common security interest, since most oilfields are in South Sudan's possession, whilst export infrastructures are controlled by Sudan.

> "The UN's role through UNMISS has had a limited impact in resolving the crisis. Both warring factions accused UNMISS of siding with the other

● **Other key regional actors include the IGAD (Intergovernmental Authority on Development) member-states, participating in the peace process (Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda and Sudan). Although Uganda displayed a militarised role in the crisis, Ethiopia tended to act more as a political broker. These tendencies of active involvement and rapid response to the unfolding crisis may indicate the neighbouring powers' regional aspirations. The African Union played a significant role in mediation, through the Inquiry Commission, however its peace-keeping mission had a limited impact on overall stability.**

International actors

● The UN's role through UNMISS has had a limited impact in resolving the crisis. Both warring factions accused UNMISS of siding with the other. Moreover, some believe UNMISS failed to protect civilian populations in Internally Displaced Persons zones in the face of repeated attacks. The UN Troika (US, Norway and UK), formed during the 2005 CPA and tasked with financial and technical issues, was reactivated to assist warring parties reach a settlement.

● **Other international actors include: US (a major donor, having supported South Sudanese independence); China, Russia (both believed to supply rebel forces with materiel); and limited EU expert missions.**

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TRYING TO RESOLVE THE CONFLICT IN SUDAN

Numerous peace processes took place over the years and though several agreements were signed with multiple rebel groups, all failed to achieve anything of lasting significance. The fact that the South's right to self-determination was acknowledged in some agreements was critical, and this was enshrined into the constitution in Khartoum in 1998. The peace that finally held until South Sudan seceded was negotiated through the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD). The IGAD was established as a permanent secretariat in 1999, having previously been a temporary feature.

The power of individuals

Although both sides had negotiating teams, the talks quickly centred around two individuals; Garang representing the SPLM/A, Osman representing the GoS. Garang was the strong man in the southern coalition who was able to hold together a diverse coalition. His vision was for a united, secular and democratic (or so he declared) country based on equality, freedom and economic and social justice. The international interlocutors[2] saw negotiating with the two individuals as a way of easing the talks process though minimising the number of interfaces, and both men were expected to play key roles in whatever governmental mechanism would eventually be put in place.

© UN Photo/Evan Schneider

Garang was the strong man in the southern coalition who was able to hold together a diverse coalition. His vision was for a united, secular and democratic (or so he declared) country based on equality, freedom and economic and social justice

Civil society groups lobbied both the GoS and the SPLM/A for inclusion in the negotiations but this was strongly resisted with tacit approval from the Quartet. Broadening the negotiations would have complicated matters and reduced the likelihood of agreement, as happened with talks elsewhere. The result was an entirely top-down process with little consideration given to grass-roots issues. The narrowing of the talks to two parties also benefited both belligerents. The SPLM/A feared that northern opponents of the National Congress Party (NCP) would team-up to oppose the SPLM/A. The NCP feared that the South Sudan Defence Force (SSDF) and the SPLM/A might make common cause with each other, while the SPLM/A feared that the SSDF would disprove the SPLM/A claim to control the South militarily. Every organisation distrusted the other and so the key power brokers sought to exclude them as they too distrusted them.

The SSLM/A and the GoS's ruling NCP entered into negotiations in 2002 and built upon previous agreements. The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was finally signed in January 2005. A six-year interim period was established which provided a number of provisions, including testing the viability of a unified Sudan. Several early stumbling points, which still remain, were the future status of the Abyei, Southern Blue Nile and Nuba Mountain regions. All were linked to the North though they had significant populations of southern loyalists, many of whom had fought with the SPLM/A. Garang relented on their inclusion when he realised that they would potentially cause the breakdown in the negotiations[3].

The agreement had stated that other armed groups in the South must be disbanded within a year of signing the agreement. This effectively meant disarming the SSDF. This was unachievable and caused further conflict within the South. Garang opposed their integration into the SPLM/A. It is thought that he intended to retain a minor insurgency in the South in order to maintain a securitised state, which would benefit him. Garang's death, shortly after signing the CPA in 2005, did enable the integration of the SSDF as Kiir, Garang's successor, was more conciliatory towards them. On 8 January 2006 the Juba Declaration on Unity and Integration between the Sudan People's Liberation Army and the South Sudan Defence Forces was signed.

Machar remained as vice-president; his presence was vital to unify the main Nuer and Dinka elements. Both sides remained suspicious of each other's commitment to the peace process and so progress was slow. Khartoum continued to support anti-SPLM/A rebels in the South, including elements of the SSDF and the SPLM/A-supported rebels in Darfur. Garang's successors were unable to check the military excesses of Khartoum and its proxies. Internal tensions plagued the government. Kiir saw Machar as gaining too much power and sacked him from government, accusing him of plotting a coup. Machar has, since mid 2013, led a breakaway element fighting the RoSS forces; the conflict is split along ethnic lines.

Incentives for war

The exclusive nature of the deal meant that other groups such as the Fur in the West and the Beja in the East were incentivised to engage in conflict; violence appeared to work for the SPLM/A who were awarded an equitable share of oil revenues[4]. The Darfur rebellion erupted in 2002. The government responded with brutal repression and armed the Janjaweed to act as proxy forces. An estimated 200,000 people died and four million were displaced. Al-Bashir initially refused to allow the UN to intervene in the region

[2] *The international interlocutors were principally the Quartet: the US, UK, Norwegian and the Italian delegations.*

[3] *The negotiations on the status of the regions was part of the Machakos Protocol which would determine a framework agreement which outlined what would be considered within the negotiations.*

[4] *The oil producing region was awarded 2% of the revenue with the rest being split 50:50 between the GoS and the SPLM/A.*

Trouble spot: Violence erupted in Darfur in 2002 and the region remains a focus of international concern. Pictured are some of the thousands of displaced persons seeking shelter outside the UNAMID base in Um Baru, North Darfur last year © UN Photo/Hamid Abdulsalam

but eventually relented under pressure from the Chinese, demonstrating the politico-economic leverage that they held over the GoS. The conflict in Darfur increased Sudan's isolation and removed any carrots that the West may have been able to use in negotiations. US domestic pressure to do something increased through the 'Save Darfur' campaign.

The exclusivity of the process meant that the Sudanese people, North and South, did not feel part of the process. The IGAD process was imposed upon them in a top-down fashion that lacked legitimacy and transparency. This helped give rise to conflicts in some areas such as the Abyei, Southern Blue Nile and Nuba Mountains regions. The SPLM/A wanted to achieve a hegemonic position in the South and the process enabled them to do so by concentrating only on the North-South conflict while ignoring the intra-South one. The intra-South conflict continued after independence and intermittent interstate conflict took place over contested areas, particularly around the oil fields.

> [Garang's] centrality to the negotiations were its Achilles heel

IGAD Summary

When Garang died, the weakness of pursuing such a narrow approach to the negotiations became apparent; his centrality to the negotiations were its Achilles heel. The negotiators who took over in the aftermath of his death[5] were unable to reach agreement on basic issues such as power sharing, and so they reverted to supporting efforts to keep civil society initiatives and local parties out of the process.

For the NCP the peace process offered the opportunity to stabilise Sudan to an extent and consolidate power, although conflicts with other parties remained. The SPLM/A thought that they had the opportunity to achieve autonomy or even independence. International support often ended up simply reinforcing the power of favoured elites. Each sought their sovereignty with external recognition rather than building sovereignty from the ground within their nations.

The centrality of the Sudanese state to sustainable peace was ignored by the Quartet and they endeavoured to separately resolve the multiple conflicts assuming that there were no central origins[6]. The primary focus was the North-South conflict; the intra-South conflict was largely ignored and points of contention were put aside in pursuit of some agreement, any agreement. The conflicts in the Southern Blue Nile and Nuba Mountains were separated out of the negotiations, effectively freezing these conflicts, not resolving them, and so enabling them to explode again some years later.

[5] *When Kiir took over he adopted a more traditional approach to negotiation and made full use of his negotiation teams. However, they had at this stage been undermined and now lacked experience.*

[6] *Separate deals were reached to deal with the Eastern conflict (Eastern Sudan Peace Agreement 2006) and another attempted to bring peace to Darfur (Darfur Peace Agreement 2006), which quickly collapsed. A separate Cairo Peace Agreement attempted to reach agreement between the Northern opposition, known as the National Democratic Alliance (NDA).*

FAILURES OF PEACE BUILDING IN SOUTH SUDAN

The starting point for peace-making and peace-building is, according to Boutros Boutros Ghali (UN Secretary General 1992-1996), "to bring hostile parties to agreement, through peaceful means as outlined in Chapter VI of the Charter of the United Nations". The aim of peace-making is to use diplomacy to move from violent conflict to non-violent dialogue to get to a place where disputes are settled through political institutions that are representative of the people. Peace-building has undergone an evolution of phases. In the (Western) triumphalist post-Cold War period, initiatives for peace building proliferated. The 1992 UN Agenda for Peace: Preventative Diplomacy, Peace-Making and Peace Keeping, effectively sought to justify interventions based on a decline in the status accorded to state sovereignty. In 2001 the UN Security Council (UNSC) called for focus on fostering sustainable development, the eradication of poverty and inequality, transparent and accountable governance, promotion of democracy, respect for human rights and rule of law, and the promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence. All of these are a far cry from the traditional inter-state peacekeeping.

The Williamson hierarchy of institution building is shown below; fostering peace requires strong civil institutions but the process of institution building takes time. In South Sudan, financial resources were devoted to creating institutions, which included delivering services and equipping and training the armed forces. These efforts were unsuccessful and only created weak institutions. Social goods, such as health, education and social services were, more often than not, provided by the international aid community rather than the state and this in itself caused a problem as the government saw little need to establish and pay for such services.

Human motivations	Evolve over millennia, only partially adapted to modern society. Not really an institution but important in determining institutional structures and the effectiveness of institutions.
↓	
Social structure	Evolves over centuries. Medieval social structures in Italy, for example, are closely related to modern social structures and economic performance.
↓	
Political institutions	Take decades to coalesce. Democracies laid the foundations of property rights that protected citizens from the state.
↓	
Legal institutions	Take years to be legislated. Establishing the rule of law (including its effective enforcement) can take longer. The impact of democracy on corruption is much clearer in stable democracies that have been democratic for several decades.
↓	
Private institutions	Contracts are an example of a private institution.
↓	
Resource allocation, economic activity and welfare	

Figure 1: The Williamson hierarchy of building institutions (World Bank, 2011, 203)

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The starting point for peace-making and peace-building is, according to Boutros Boutros Ghali, 'to bring hostile parties to agreement, through peaceful means'

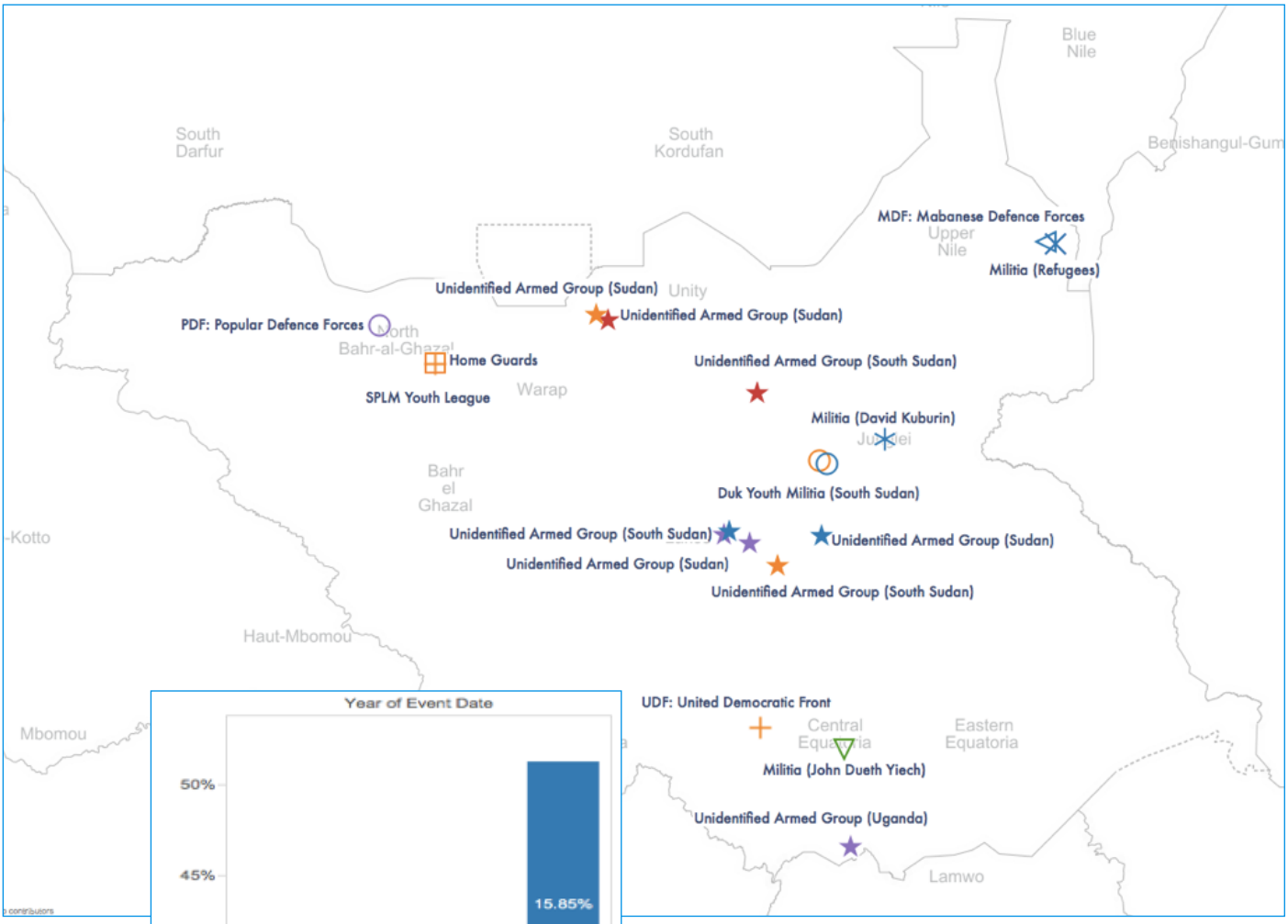
Peace-building in failed or failing states received much attention in the 1990s as such states were viewed as threats to regional or even international security. These concerns were partly used in justifying US involvement in the peace process in Sudan before the involvement of pressure groups. Sudan was defined as a dysfunctional state and the solution was thought to be Western liberal market orientated reforms, in line with the Washington Consensus. The NCP in the North of the country was strong enough to resist international pressures, aided in later years by oil revenues and shielded by the Chinese state, which holds a permanent seat on the UNSC.

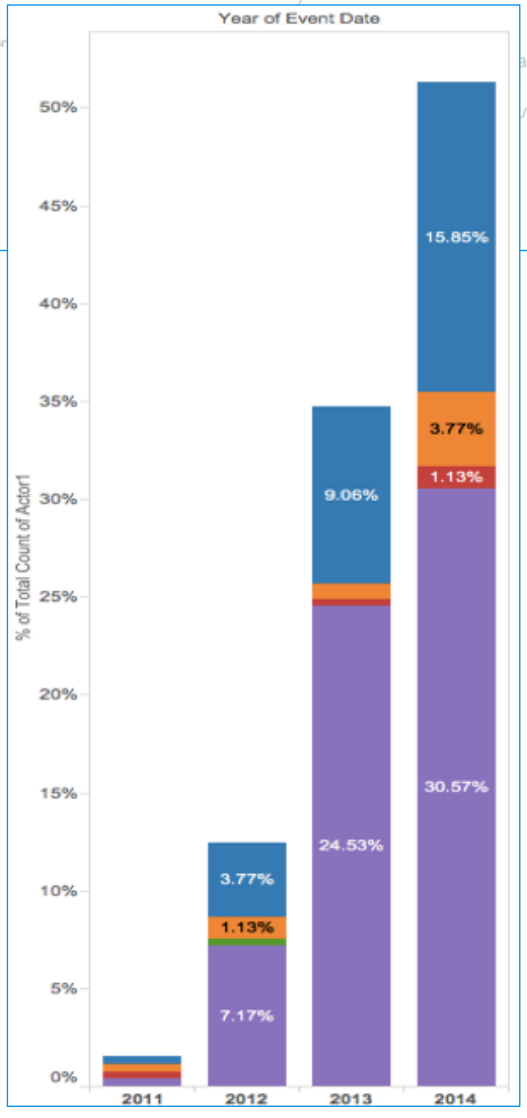
Northern Sudan has an active civil society movement, although it is increasingly dependent on foreign funding. In the South most of civil society was created by the international community and so was not deeply entrenched in society. It is weak and the international community failed to sufficiently strengthen it. Towards the end of negotiations the key belligerents recognised that any settlement would have to have the support of the wider public throughout Sudan and so sought to reach out to civil society. The failure of the SPLM/A to listen to their supporters in the Nuba Mountains and Southern Blue Nile area made it easier for them initially, but stored up trouble for the future.

The South inherited a weak state under an authoritarian ruling party. The North was still a weak state but it had now lost the South and continued to lack the ability to control many areas in the North. The South lacked the capacity to build strong institutions and attempts by the international community to provide social goods enabled the government to abdicate their responsibilities. The vast underdevelopment of the country and society meant that building these institutions was more difficult than initially envisioned, which resulted in only weak institutions being established which were not strong enough to institutionalise peace in the new country.

ACTORS IN THE SOUTH SUDAN CONFLICT

Political/ethnic militias conflict activity by event-type – 2011-2014





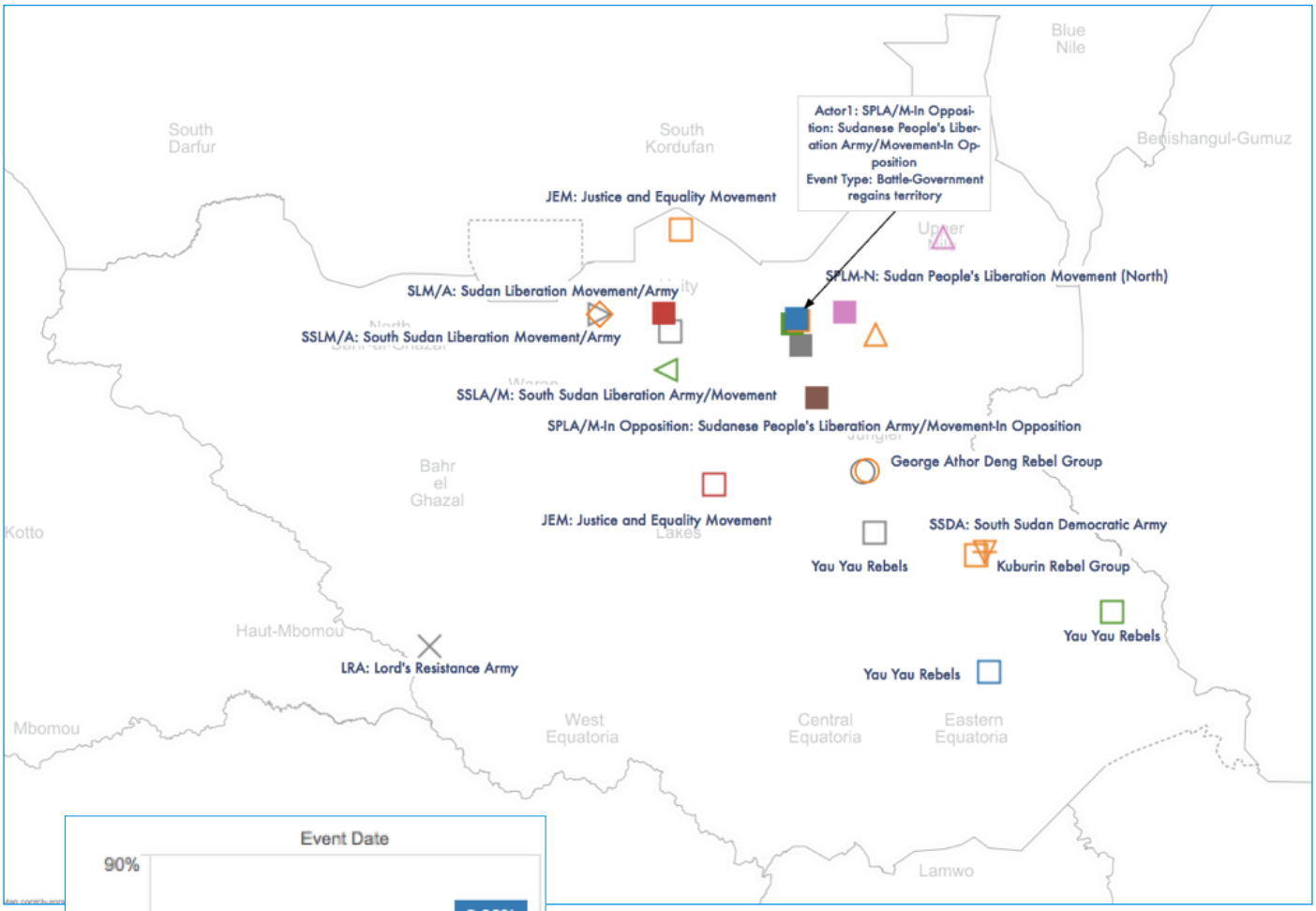
Event type

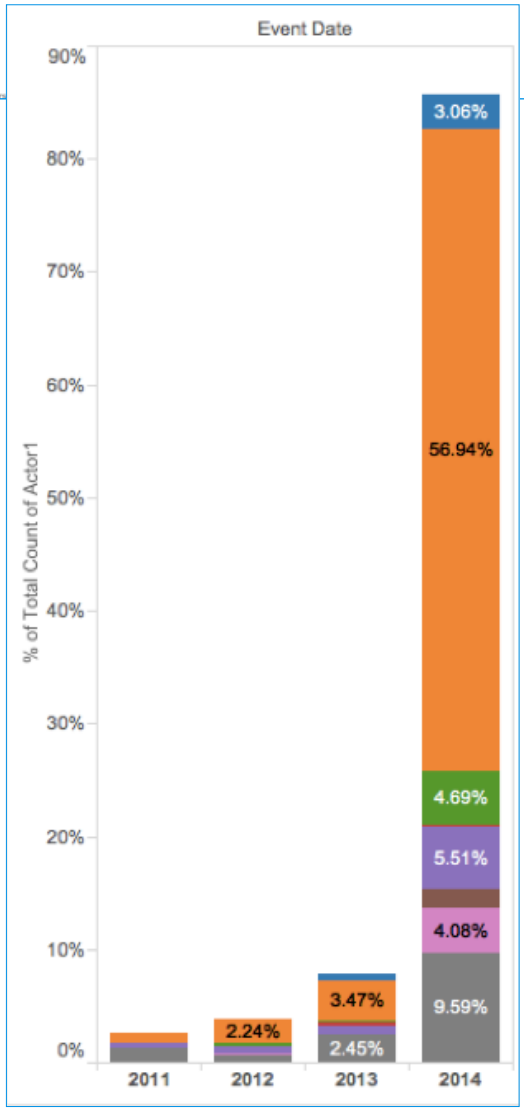
- Battle-No change of territory
- Non-violent activity by a conflict actor
- Non-violent transfer of territory
- Remote violence
- Violence against civilians

Main political militias

- Duk Youth Militia (South Sudan)
- Home Guards
- MDF: Mabanese Defence Forces
- Militia (David Kuburin)
- Militia (John Dueth Yiech)
- Militia (Refugees)
- PDF: Popular Defence Forces
- SPLM Youth League
- UDF: United Democratic Front
- Unidentified Armed Group (South Sudan)
- Unidentified Armed Group (Sudan)
- Unidentified Armed Group (Uganda)

Rebel forces conflict activity by event type – 2011-2014





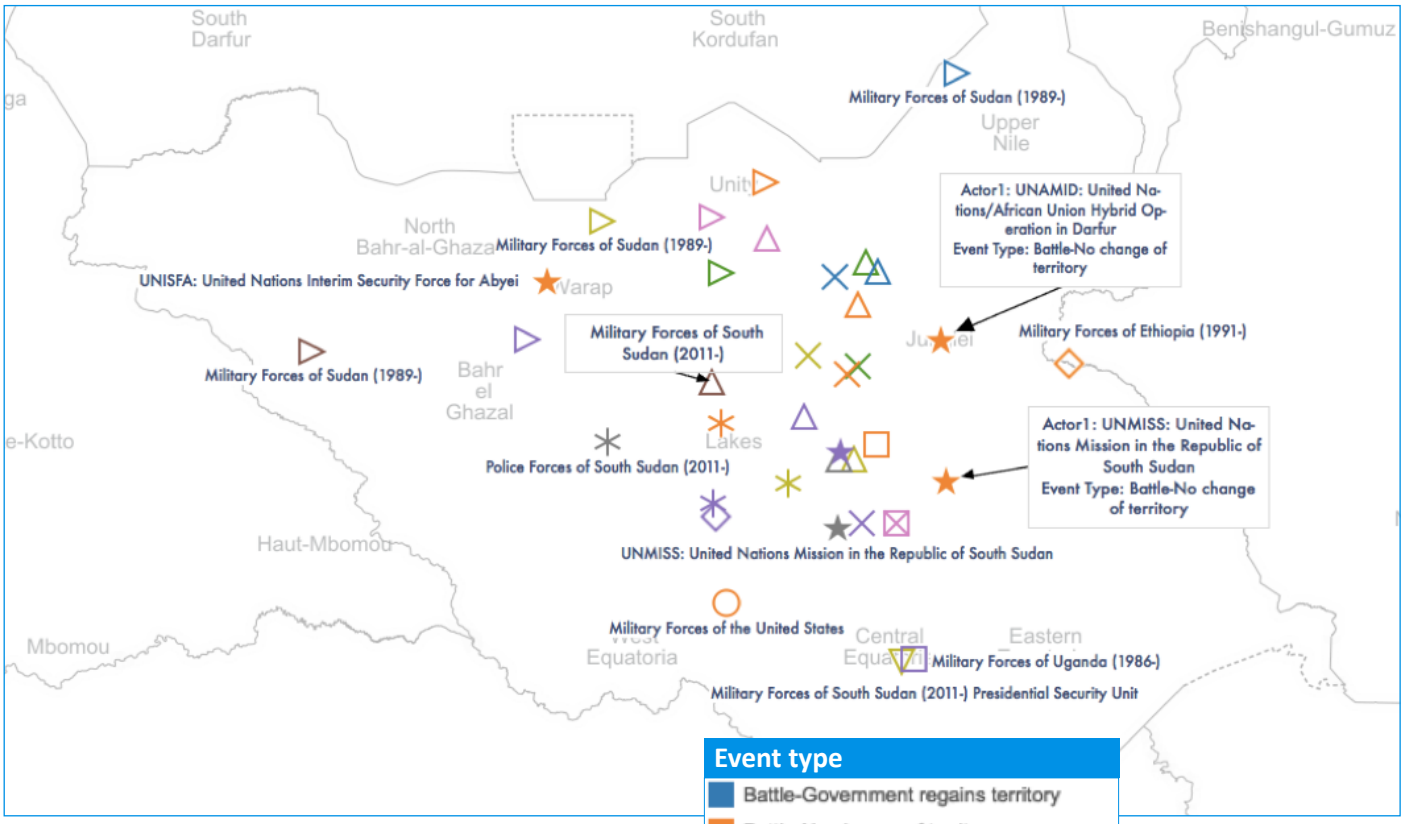
Event type

- Battle-Government regains territory
- Battle-No change of territory
- Battle-Non-state actor overtakes territory
- Headquarters or base established
- Remote violence
- Violence against civilians

Rebel forces

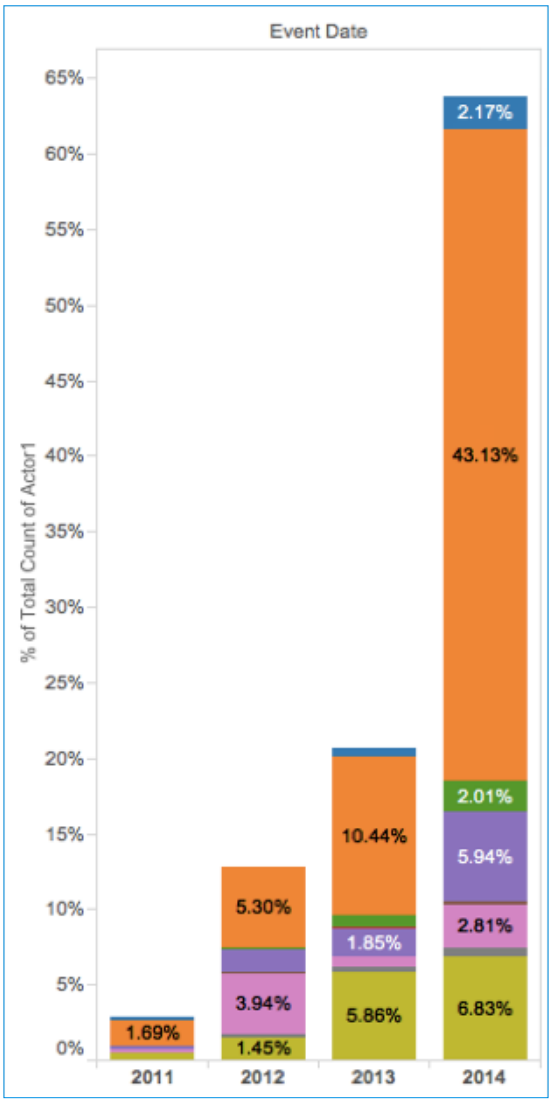
- George Athor Deng Rebel Group
- JEM: Justice and Equality Movement
- Kuburin Rebel Group
- LRA: Lord's Resistance Army
- SLM/A: Sudan Liberation Movement/Army
- SPLA/M-In Opposition: Sudanese People's Lib..
- SPLM-N: Sudan People's Liberation Movemen..
- SSDA: South Sudan Democratic Army
- SSLA/M: South Sudan Liberation Army/Move..
- SSLM/A: South Sudan Liberation Movement/A..
- Yau Yau Rebels

State & inter-governmental forces conflict activity by event type – 2011-2014



Event type

- Battle-Government regains territory
- Battle-No change of territory
- Battle-Non-state actor overtakes territory
- Headquarters or base established
- Non-violent activity by a conflict actor
- Non-violent transfer of territory
- Remote violence
- Riots/Protests
- Violence against civilians



Actor

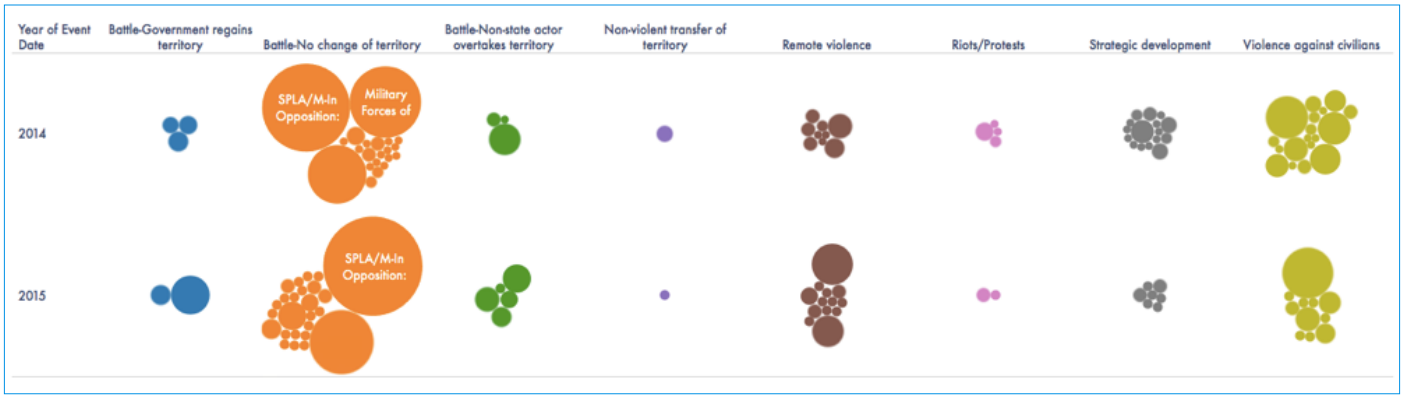
- Military Forces of Ethiopia (1991-)
- Military Forces of South Sudan (2011-)
- Military Forces of South Sudan (2011-) Presidential S..
- Military Forces of Sudan (1989-)
- Military Forces of the United States
- Military Forces of Uganda (1986-)
- Mutiny of Military Forces of South Sudan (2011-)
- Police Forces of South Sudan (2011-)
- Police Forces of South Sudan (2011-) National Secur..
- UNAMID: United Nations/African Union Hybrid Opera..
- UNISFA: United Nations Interim Security Force for A..
- UNMISS: United Nations Mission in the Republic of S..

Notes: *Compiled using ACLED data (Armed Conflict Location and Event Datasets), the maps show patterns and geographies of conflict across South Sudan, between 2011 and 2014, also covering recent dynamics (2015-2016). Far from exhaustive, these analyses generically indicate types of actors and conflict related events by geographical locations. The conflict has been characterised by a high number of participants, morphed into volatile coalitions that changed allegiances and engaged in different types of conflict activities. This may be particularly helpful when thinking about the different actors' objectives, whether strategic, political or economic.*

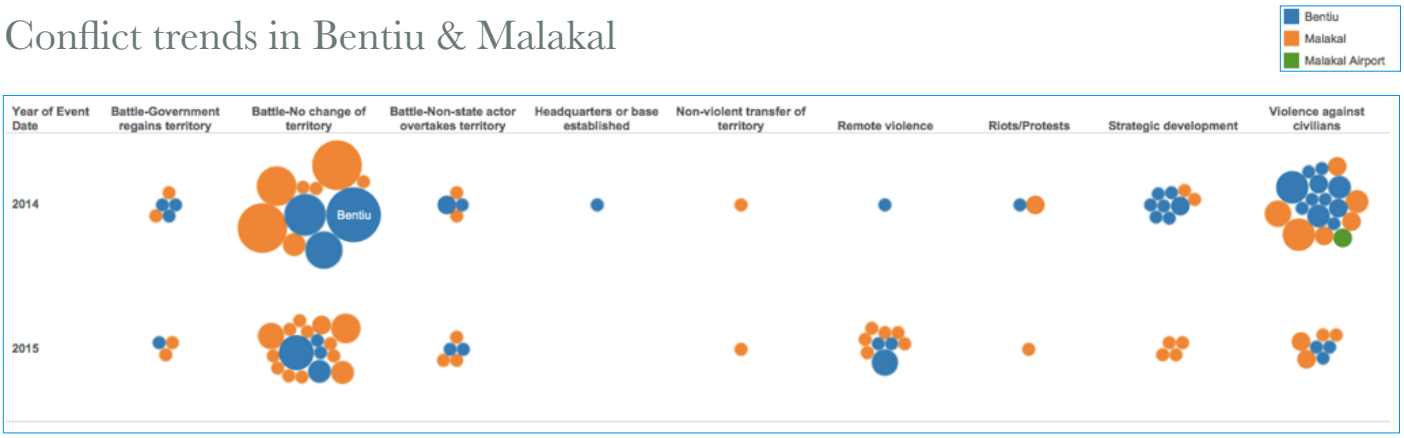
Other Sources: *The Small Arms Survey project, The Human Security Baseline Assessment for Sudan and South Sudan, available at: http://www.smallarmssurveysudan.org/; Special Report on South Sudan, by the Sudd Institute (August, 2014); Lauren Ploch Blachard (January, 2014). 'The Crisis in South Sudan' Congressional Research Project, available at https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R43344.pdf*

SOUTH SUDAN CONFLICT METRICS

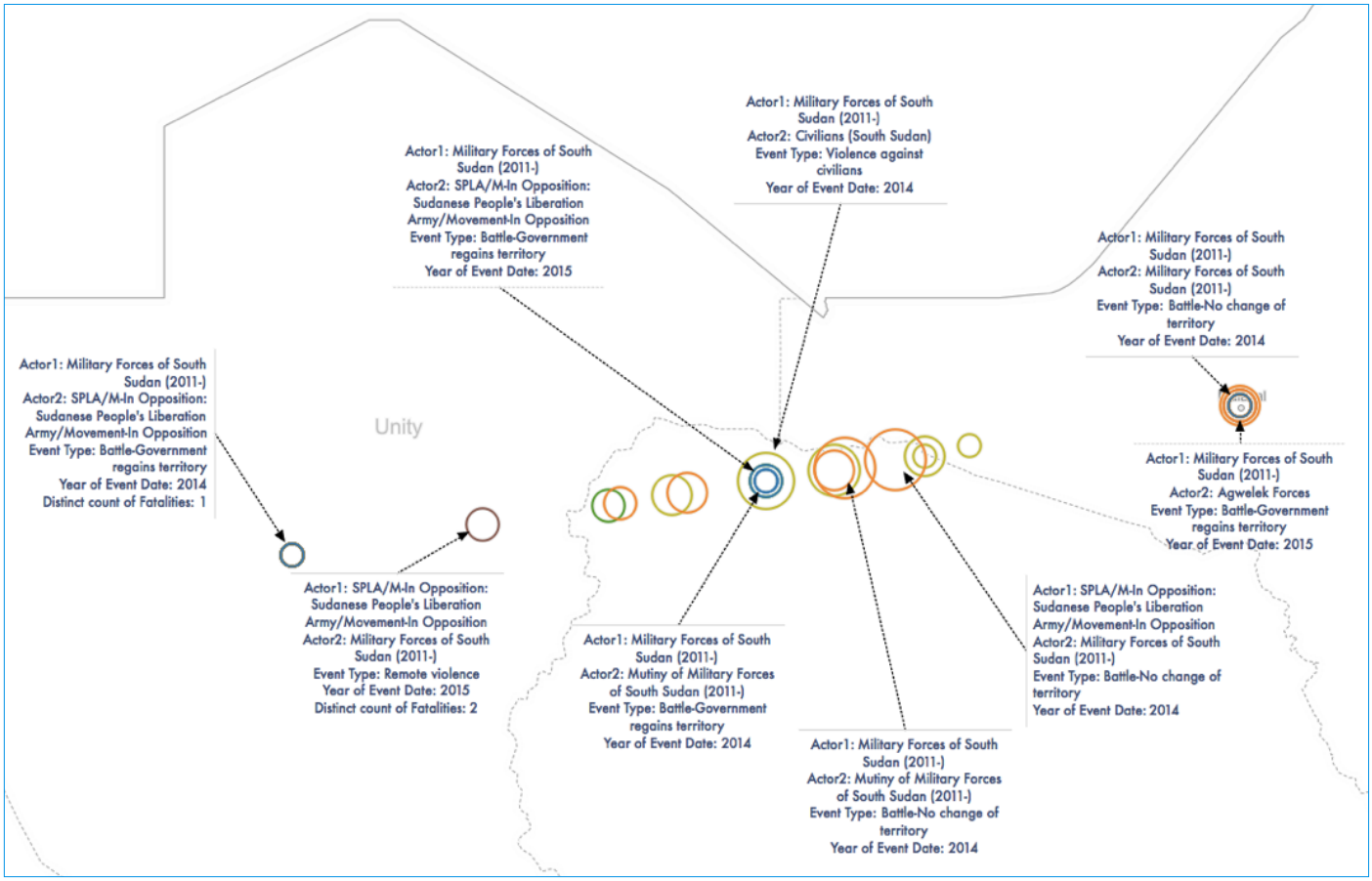
General trends by event type – 2014-2016



Conflict trends in Bentiu & Malakal



Conflict trends in Bentiu & Malakal



ACTORS IN THE SOMALIA CONFLICT

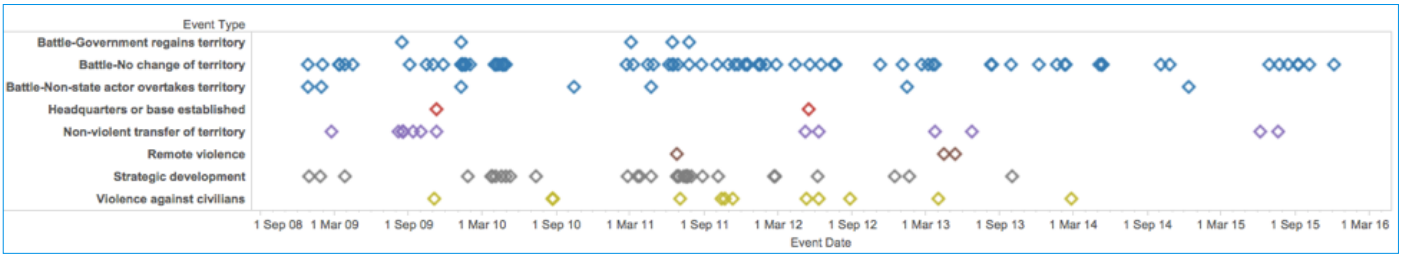
The **Transitional Somali Federal Government** (**TFG**) emerged in 2004 with the support of the international community. The aim was to pave the way for a permanent Somali government. It operated in exile until 2007, when its first President Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed returned to Mogadishu after the defeat of the ICU (the Islamic Courts Union). However, since its inception the TFG remained weak and divided, which provided fertile ground for radical Islamist groups, such as Hizbul Islam and Al-Shabab. In 2012, with the support of AU (African Union) and Kenyan troops, Al-Shabab was dispersed from most of its strongholds, including Mogadishu, Baidoa, Afgoye and Kismayo. Despite a permanent federal government (FGS), which replaced the provisional one, Somalia remains unstable.

Key actors

Ahlu Sunna Wal Jamma (**ASWJ**) (The Companions of the Prophet) is a Sufi paramilitary group created in 1991 in order to protect Sufi followers in Somalia. They emerged in response to a growing radical Islamist theology initially perpetrated by groups such as Al Ittihad Al Islamia (AIA). In 2009, ASWJ gave up its non-violent tactics and took arms in the fight against Islamist groups, Al-Shabab and Hizbul Islam. Despite the ASWJ's alliance with the Somali transitional government, rifts and disagreements persisted, with the ASWJ accusing the provisional government of having failed to meet the power sharing agreement and nominating ministers from within its ranks.

The movement's leadership is described as dynamic and fragmented along regional affiliations. ASWJ primarily operates in the central regions of Galgadud, Gedo and Mudug, as well as from parts of Mogadishu. Galgadug province remains its primary operational centre, within which the movement established the Administration of Central Somalia, an administrative base independent of the transitional government. Disagreements within the group emerged in early 2011, which severely weakened the alliance between the TFG and the ASWJ.

ASWJ activity by event-type

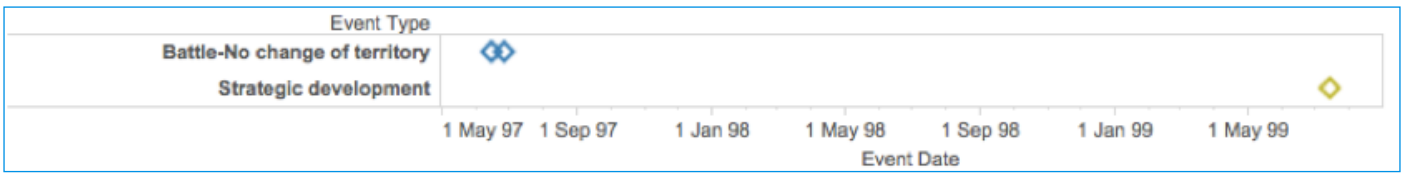


Al Ittihad Al Islamiya (**AIAI**) initially began as a nationalist opposition movement against President Siad Barre's dictatorship. Barre's tactics contributed to the radicalisation of Somali Islamists, who vehemently opposed the former president's policies of introducing scientific socialism and his dependence on economic foreign aid. The AIAI also sought to establish an Islamic state, governed by Sharia law. In 1991, AIAI ousted Siad Barre from power, concentrating efforts on the emancipation of Ogaden region from Ethiopia. To this effect, the group established training camps and initiated attacks against Ethiopia, assisted by the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF).

The AIAI moved its capital to Gedo, close to the Ethiopian border. This raised concerns with the Ethiopian government and military establishment. Ethiopia deployed troops to Somalia, partially in response to attacks from the AIAI, whose activities have since declined. There is a lack of internal cohesion and the leadership is divided. Fighting against the Somalia Salvation Democratic Front, a separatist movement based in the autonomous region of Puntland, fractured the group further. By 1997, as the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) emerged, many of AIAI's members defected or returned to their clan militias. ICU is largely considered as the AIAI successor.

The AIAI is believed to have received funds, logistical support and training from Al-Qaeda. Funding was also facilitated through Saudi international networks.

AIAI activity by event-type



The Islamic Courts Union (**ICU**) emerged as a system of Islamic courts first united under this brand in the southern parts of Mogadishu during the early 2000s. The movement resulted from a merger between several previously autonomous Islamic courts. Some of the courts were created to tackle the chaos that followed the ousting of President Barre in 1991. The system of courts in southern Mogadishu was heavily influenced by the more radical AIAI movement (disbanded in 1997) and its former members. Before 2000 the various Islamic courts controlled only limited geographical areas and relied on local clan militias for training and recruitment purposes. When the ICU emerged the loosely affiliated militias fused, creating the first Somali militant organisation not controlled by warlords or a dominant clan. It started to provide security and communal services it expanded beyond Mogadishu.

Although the transitional government was created in 2004, somewhat affecting ICU's support base, the TFG's (the Somali Transitional Federal Government, operating with Ethiopian and international support in exile) divisiveness and inability to provide security was conducive to enabling the re-emergence of the ICU as a potent force. Alleged affiliations with Al-Qaeda and growing extremism led to the formation of ARPCT (Alliance for the Restoration of Peace and Counter-Terrorism) with US support. Its primary aim was tackling the escalating influence of Islamic courts. The ICU defeated ARPCT in 2006 and regained control of Mogadishu and southern Somalia aided by its fledgling armed-wing, Al-Shabab. Negotiations between TFG and ICU for a power-sharing and peace agreement failed after an attempted assassination against then president Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed. Throughout 2006, the fight between the TFG and ICU escalated, prompting the UN Security Council to authorise the deployment of an AU (African Union) peacekeeping force (AMISOM). As the TFG, with the support of AU and Ethiopian forces, regained control of Mogadishu, the ICU dissolved and its leadership dispersed. However, the organisation's military wing, Al-Shabab, continues to operate as an independent militant group.

Since its inception the ICU is believed to have received financial support, weapons and training from Djibouti, Eritrea, Iran, Libya, Syria and Saudi Arabia.

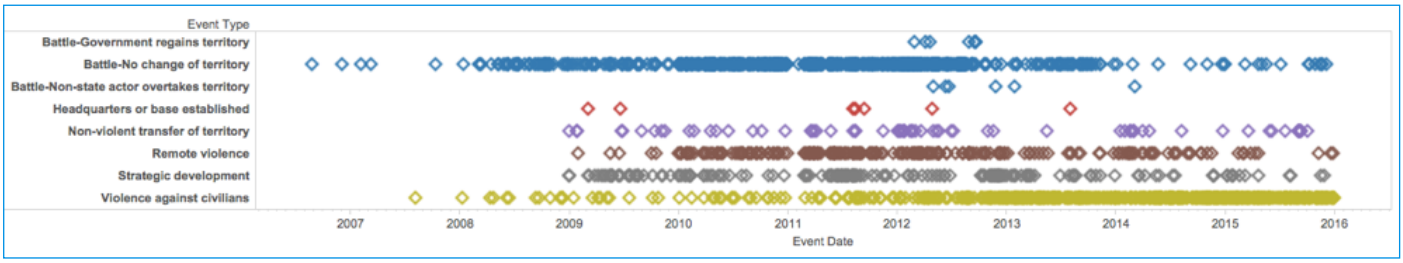
ICU activity by event-type

Al-Shabab, translated as 'Youth', is the largest militant organisation actively fighting to oust the Somali government. It commenced operations as an independent organisation in early December 2006 after breaking away from ICU upon its dissolution (Al-Shabab previously activated as ICU's military wing). In 2008 it strengthened ties with Al-Qaeda, its members travelling abroad to Al-Qaeda training facilities, and also received foreign fighters within its ranks.

In response to its leader's death during a US-led airstrike, Al-Shabab increased its attacks on US and UN targets stationed in Somalia, but also against Ethiopian troops. In its attempt to undermine the TFG, Al-Shabab established its own governing structures, collecting taxes and providing some basic services in areas it controlled. In 2009, Aweys (former AIAI) returned to Somalia as leader of Hizbul Islam, a radical group competing with Al-Shabab. Fighting between the two movements led to the weakening of Hizbul Islam and its absorption into Al-Shabab by the end of 2010. In 2011, Al-Shabab lost control of Mogadishu, pressured by government and AMISOM troops. The group was pushed out of its most lucrative strongholds, the seaports that ensured a steady influx of revenues. It still controls rural areas in several regions, including Juba, Bay, Shabelle and Bakol, with an increased presence along Somalia's northern Golis mountains and some urban areas of Puntland.

Despite its relative decline, Al-Shabab kept perpetrating high-profile attacks with an international focus. One of the bloodiest suicide attacks in Kenya claimed hundreds of lives. Others also occurred in Djibouti, Ethiopia, and Uganda. In 2012, the group formally announced its merger with Al-Qaeda. However, in 2015 the Islamic State released a video appealing to Al-Shabab's regional basis, which fuelled speculations that Al-Shabab might switch allegiance from Al-Qaeda to IS. It is not believed that this has yet occurred.

Al-Shabab activity by event-type

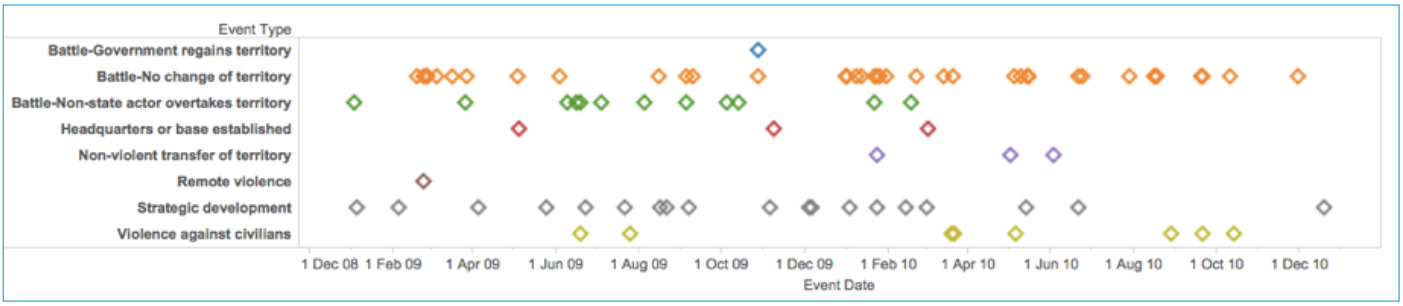


Hizbul Islam emerged in 2009 in opposition to the TFG (the Somali transitional federal government). It resulted from the merger of four groups – the Alliance for the Re-liberation of Somalia (ARS); the Ras Kamboni Brigade; Jabhatul Islamiya (Islamic Front); and the Anoole Forces. As the ARS former leader, Sharif Sheikh Ahmed assumed the TFG's presidency. The following month, dissident Islamist fighters opposing the settlement created Hizbul Islam. In 2009, Hassan Dahir Aweys (former AIAI Islamist leader) returned from Eritrea to spearhead the fledgling radical movement.

By July 2009, Hizbul Islam and Al-Shabab controlled most of southern Somalia. Although the two groups cooperated in their campaign against the provisional government, they soon became antagonistic over territorial disputes, resources and external influence, particularly Al-Qaeda's. As the movement weakened further, its leader announced the group's formal merger with Al-Shabab.

In 2012, it allegedly broke away from Al-Shabab due to leadership disagreements. Mohamed Aweys was offered amnesty and Hizbul Islam officially renounced its militant activities. Aweys also opened negotiations with the Somali government. In 2014, it was announced that Hizbul Islam changed its name to 'Istiqlaal', joining the Somali political system and functioning as a political party.

Hizbul Islam activity by event-type



The **Ras Kamboni Brigade** (**RKB**) was an Islamist militia operating in Jubaland, southern Somalia, near the Kenyan border. It emerged around the early 2000s under Hassan Abdullah Hersi Al-Turki's leadership, who was previously associated with the Islamist militant group AIAI (Al Ittihad Al Islamiya) and its successor, the ICU (Islamic Courts Union).

The Ras Kamboni Brigade fought against the transitional government and foreign troops stationed in Somalia. In 2009, it merged with other groups to form Hizbul Islam, another militant movement. Fractures within leadership contributed to the RKB's dissolution, one of the factions led by Al Turki allying itself with Al-Shabab, which at the time was fighting against Hizbul Islam. The faction also pledged alliance to Al-Qaeda.

The other faction of RKB, led by Ahmed Mohamed Islam – known as 'Madobe' – also left Hizbul Islam and formed a separated group, Ras Kamboni Movement.

From its inception the Ras Kamboni Brigade is believed to have received substantial funding from the Eritrean government. The group controlled strategic towns close to the Kenyan border, such as Jilib Afmadoow and Dhoobley. Most of its members and supporters belonged to the Ogaden clan, also based around southern Somalia.

Ras Kamboni Brigade activity by event-type

Sources: *ACLED Conflict/Crisis Data and Analyses, The Stanford – Mapping Militant Organisations Project – http://web.stanford.edu/group/mappingmilitants/cgi-bin*

CONFLICT TIMELINE: SOMALIA 1997-2016

1991

Muhammad Siad Barre, ruler of the Somali Democratic Republic since 1969, flees the country as rival clan militias overtake Mogadishu. Somaliland unilaterally declares independence. A power struggle ensues between the warring clans led by Mohamed Farah Aidid and Ali Mahdi Mohamed. Thousands of civilians are displaced or killed.

Ali Mahdi Mohamed declares himself President of the Republic.

Approximately 350,000 Somalis die from disease, starvation and civil war. Public pressure coerces US President George H. W. Bush into ordering emergency airlifts for food and humanitarian supplies.

1992

US Marines land in Mogadishu ahead of a UN peacekeeping force to safeguard the delivery of relief supplies. The UN Security Council approves 'Operation Restore Hope', the US-led mission to protect food shipments from warlords.

December

US Marines and Belgian paratroopers take control of Kismayo port and airport; the first relief convoy reaches the deprived inland town of Baidoa. The two main warlords, Mohamed Farah Aidid and Ali Mahdi Mohamed, promise to end hostilities. A UN arms embargo is imposed.

1993

June

Militias affiliated with warlord Mohamed Farah Aidid kill 24 Pakistani peacekeepers. Somali rebels shoot down two helicopters killing 18 US Army Rangers/Delta Force specialists and one Malaysian. The ensuing battle leaves at least 500 Somalis dead and more than 1,000 injured. President Clinton orders additional troops, heavy armour and naval firepower to Somalia in the short term while concurrently committing to a full retreat by the end of March 1994.

October

US Special envoy Robert Oakley attempts to mediate a peace agreement between warring clan leaders.

Mohamed Atef, an Al-Qaeda lieutenant who is close to Osama bin Laden, sets up training camps in Somalia supporting tribal clans in their opposition against UN peacekeeping forces.

1994

March

US troops complete withdrawal. The US Somali mission cost America around $1.7 billion and 43 dead, and wounded more than 150 of its soldiers. Approximately 20,000 UN troops remain to facilitate 'nation-building'.

1995

March

Militias loyal to Mohamed Farah Aidid seize Mogadishu airport after the withdrawal of UN peacekeeping forces. Aidid declares himself President. Fighting breaks out in Mogadishu after peace talks between clan leaders Mohamed Farah Aidid and his former supporter Osman Hassan Ali Atto fail.

1996

August

Mohamed Farah Aidid dies in a gun battle against a rival clan. His son, Hussein succeeds him.

1998

March

Ali Mohamed Mahdi and Hussein Mohamed Aidid agree to joint administration of Mogadishu after seven years of fighting.

1999

June

Ethiopian forces capture the regional capital of Garba Harre, 250 miles from Mogadishu. Most of the killed/captured rebels are from the Oromo Liberation Front.

2000

Djibouti President Ismael Omar Guelleh sets up talks in Arta hoping to re-establish a functioning government in neighbouring Somalia.

August

More than 2,000 Somali leaders gather in Djibouti to form a provisional government. Abdiqasim Salad Hassan, former interior minister, is elected President.

Islamists coalesce into the Somali Union of Islamic Courts, a national federation of sharia jurists.

2001

May

Militias affiliated with Aidid gain control of Mogadishu seaport.

November

Ethiopia sends troops to north-eastern Puntland, launching a crushing attack in Garoweh.

2002

January

US announce increased military presence following reports that Al Qaeda operatives might relocate to Somalia.

2003

An interim Somali government (TFG) is inaugurated and functions from Kenya.

2004

January

Somali leaders agree to form a new government based on clan affiliation.

December

The Somali parliament passes a motion of no-confidence against the country's new PM, Ali Mohamed Gedi.

2005

May

Warlords begin withdrawing militia fighters from Mogadishu.

The transitional government gradually returns. Divisions persist. Violence resumes.

Islamist groups form an organisation soon to brand itself as Al-Shabab (translated Youth), the armed branch of Islamic Courts Union.

2006

February

The Association for the Restoration of Peace and Counter-terrorism, a warlord alliance, is created with US support to curb the influence of the Islamic Courts Union.

The transitional government meets for the first time in Baidoa. Fighting erupts in Mogadishu. The Islamic Courts Union seizes most of southern Somalia and captures Mogadishu.

Ethiopian troops enter Somalia in a bid to support the weakened interim government. Somali interim PM Ali Gedi accuses Egypt, Lybia and Iran of supplying militants with weapons.

PM Ali Gedi appoints new cabinet after 29 ministers resigns, as defectors attempt reconciliation with Islamist militias.

Somalia's vulnerable UN-backed government reaches an agreement with Islamist militias controlling most of the South to form a unified national army. A coalition of East African countries commits to deploying troops in conflict-torn Somalia.

Islamist groups break off peace talks with the transitional government demanding the withdrawal of Ethiopian troops. Further rifts in the Somali administration re-emerge as a self-appointed delegation pursues negotiations with Islamist militias. Fighting breaks out in northern Somalia as Ethiopian-backed government troops clash with rival militias after the interim regime rejects peace talks with the Islamist movement.

December

Government and Ethiopian troops capture Mogadishu.

2007

January

Government and Ethiopian forces re-capture Al-Shabab strongholds in the South. Kenya closes its borders with Somalia in an effort to halt the surge of Islamist fighters and refugees fleeing the country.

A US airstrike kills Al-Shabab leader Aden Hashi Ayro. US commences air strikes in southern Somalia against suspected Al-Qaeda positions.

The UN Security Council approves a six-month AU peacekeeping mission. The arrival of AU peacekeeping troops triggers an Islamist insurgency in Mogadishu.

More than 340,000 people are displaced by conflict between March and April. The AU agrees to bolster peacekeeping efforts with an additional 8,000 troops.

A power struggle between Somali PM Ali Gedi and President Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed results in the premier's resignation.

Sheik Hassan Dahir Aweys takes over the Islamist opposition Alliance for the Re-liberation of Somalia, operating in exile from Eritrea. Failing in its stabilisation efforts, the AU urges UN to take over peacekeeping operations. Al-Shabab captures the southern port of Kismayo.

Pirates seize more than 80 ships off the Horn of Africa. EU formally launches its task-mission force off the Somali coasts. The UN Security Council approves land and air targeting of pirate strongholds.

2008

December

President Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed resigns amid rising international pressure, triggering the erosion of an already fragile government. The Islamic insurgency intensifies in Mogadishu as Ethiopian forces gradually retreat.

2009

January

Moderate Islamist leader Sheikh Sharif Ahmed is sworn in as President to try to bring together the country's feuding Islamic factions. Al-Shabab intensifies attacks.

May-August

Islamist fighters launch assault on Mogadishu. UN declares most severe humanitarian crisis in 18 years.

2010

January-February

Clashes between militias persist in the western strategic stronghold of Belet Weyne. UN Food Agency stops aid programmes in Al-Shabab-controlled southern areas after repeated attacks against international staff.

Al-Shabab becomes officially affiliated with Al-Qaeda.

September-November

Somali PM Omar Abdirashid Ali Sharmarke resigns as fighting escalates in Mogadishu. Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed, a Somali American, is appointed PM.

Heavy fighting breaks out close to the Kenyan border. Kenyan troops move into southern Somalia after a series of kidnappings perpetrated by Somali militias.

2011

September-October

American military starts operating UAVs from Ethiopia. Kenyan troops and AU forces drive Al-Shabab fighters out of strategic towns of Baidoa and Afgoye.

2012

February

Somalia's leaders agree on the basic structure of a new parliament and executive cabinet to replace the provisional government.

Somalia's first parliament for more than 20 years is sworn-in at Mogadishu airport.

August-October

AU forces recapture Kismayo, the second largest port and one of the last Al-Shabab strategic strongholds.

2013

September

International donors commit to $2.4 billion in reconstruction aid, a three-year 'New Deal'. Al-Shabab initiates attacks in Nairobi in retaliation for Kenya's military intervention in Somalia.

2014

June-September

Somali and AU troops arrest dozens of suspected Al-Shabab militants. Al-Shabab leader Ahmed Godane is killed during a US airstrike in the Lower Shabelle region. Somali government offers an amnesty to Al-Shabab fighters and a 45-day window to lay down arms. Islamist fighters choose Ahmad Umar as their new leader.

October-December

Somali troops and AU forces recapture Barawe, the last major port held by Al-Shabab, thus removing a considerable source of revenue.

2015

April

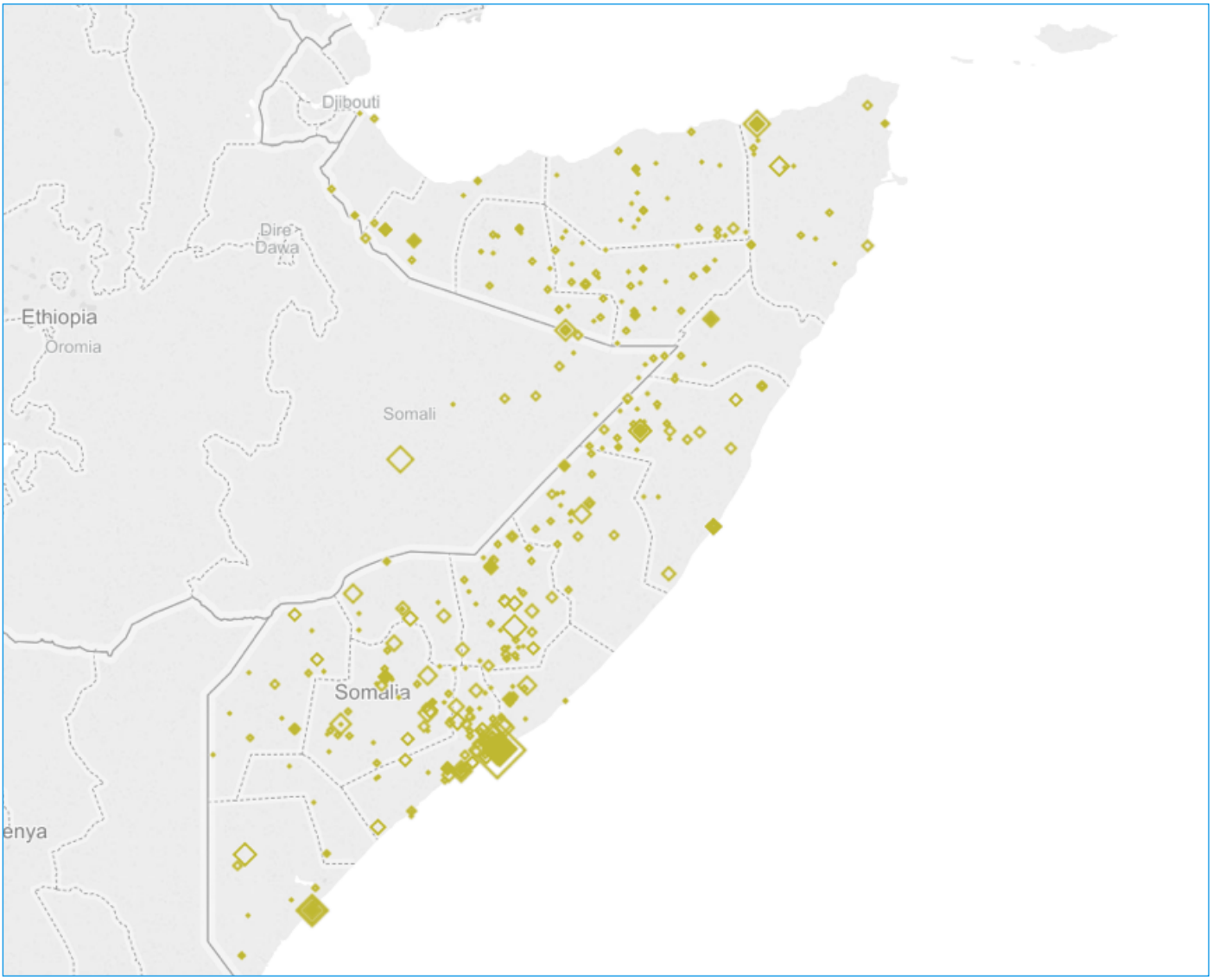
Al-Shabab claims responsibility for killing 145 people, mainly students, at Al Garissa University College in northern Kenya. In retaliation, Kenya commences airstrikes against Al-Shabab bases.

2016

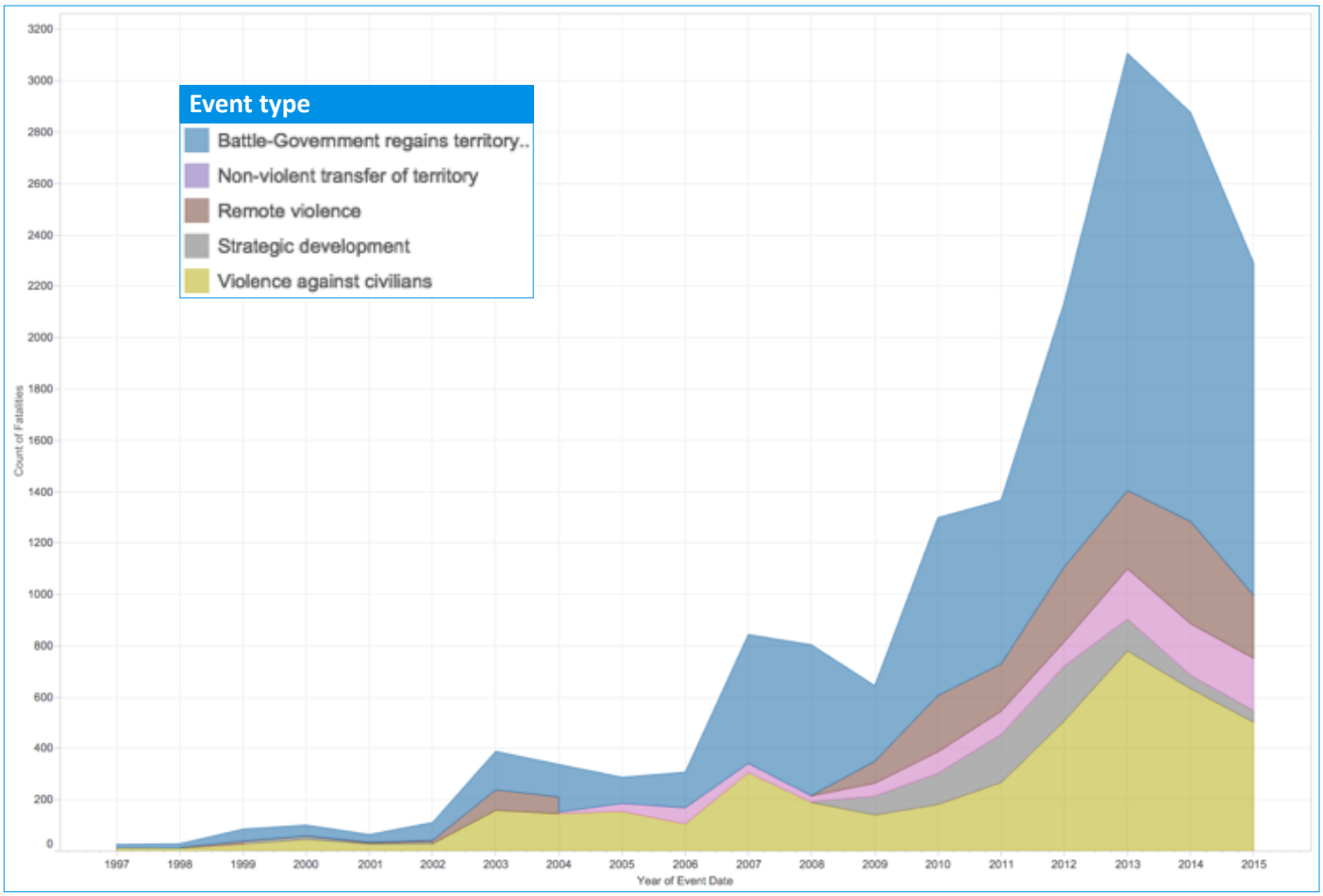
AU leaders agree on the need to fund and increase support for their military presence in Somalia after Al-Shabab intensifies attacks on civilians, government and peacekeeping troops.

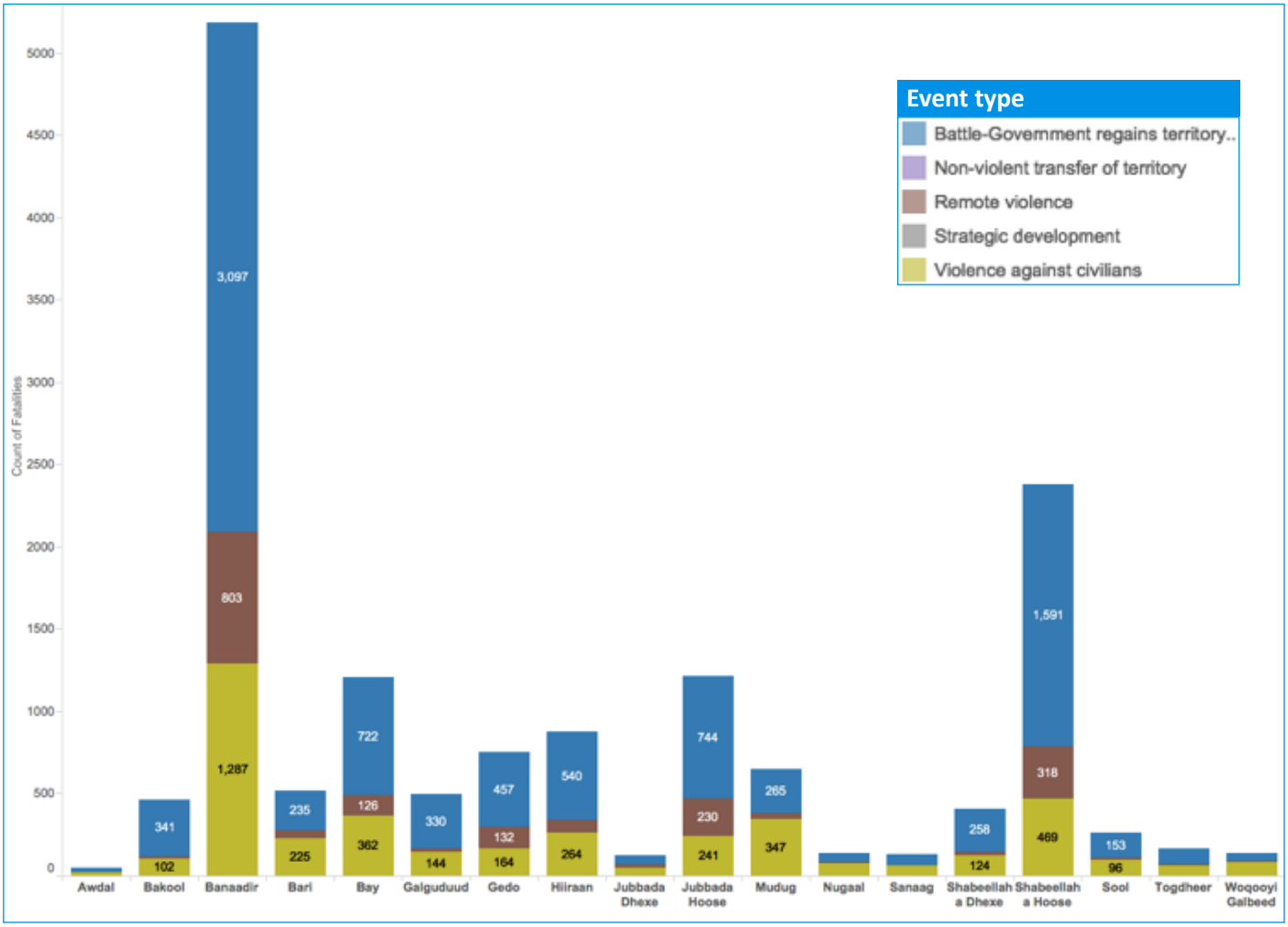
Sources: *BBC World, ACLED Crisis Data on Conflict and Political Violence in Somalia 1997-2016, The Atlantic Timeline on Somalia.*

Violence against civilians – Somalia 1997-2015

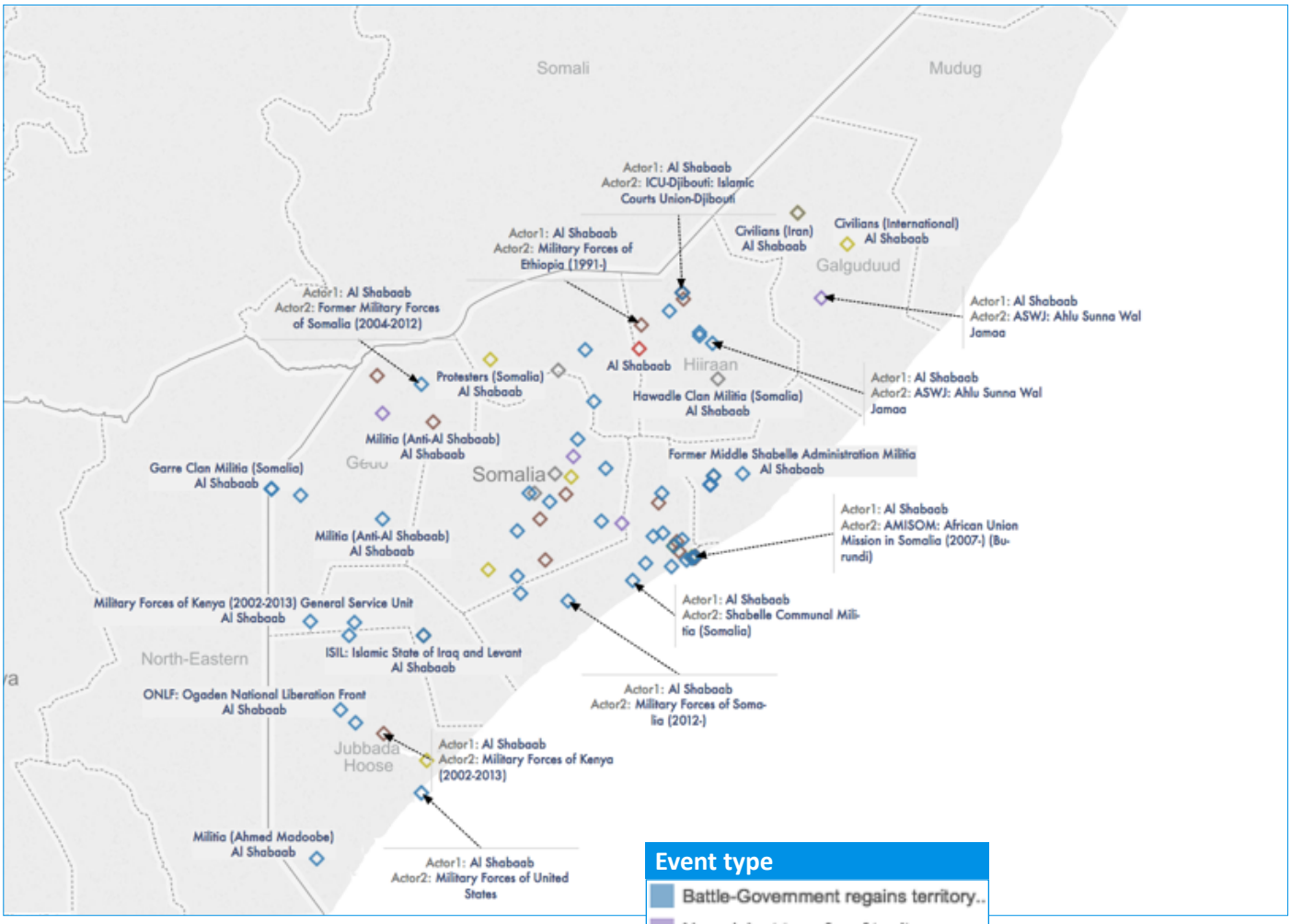


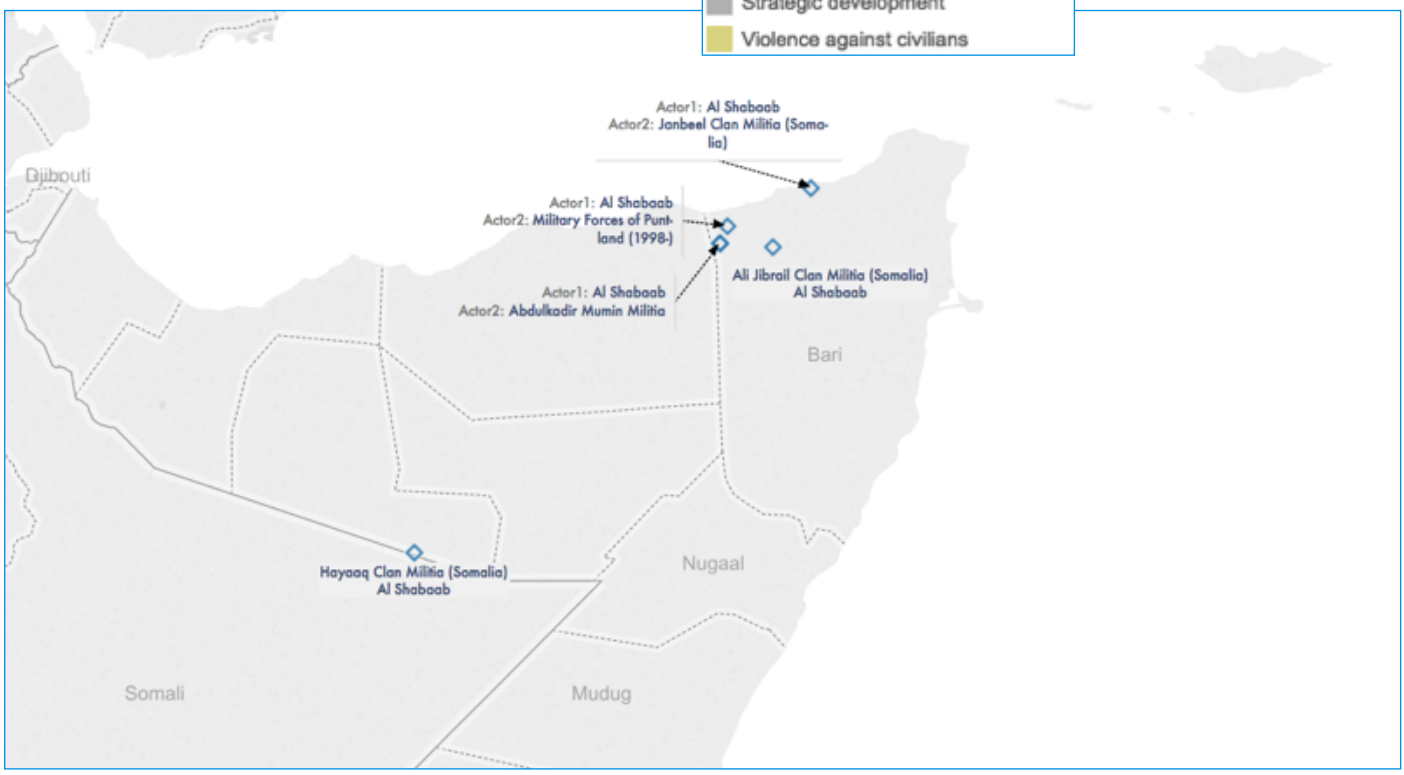
Somalia – Fatalities by event type and administrative region



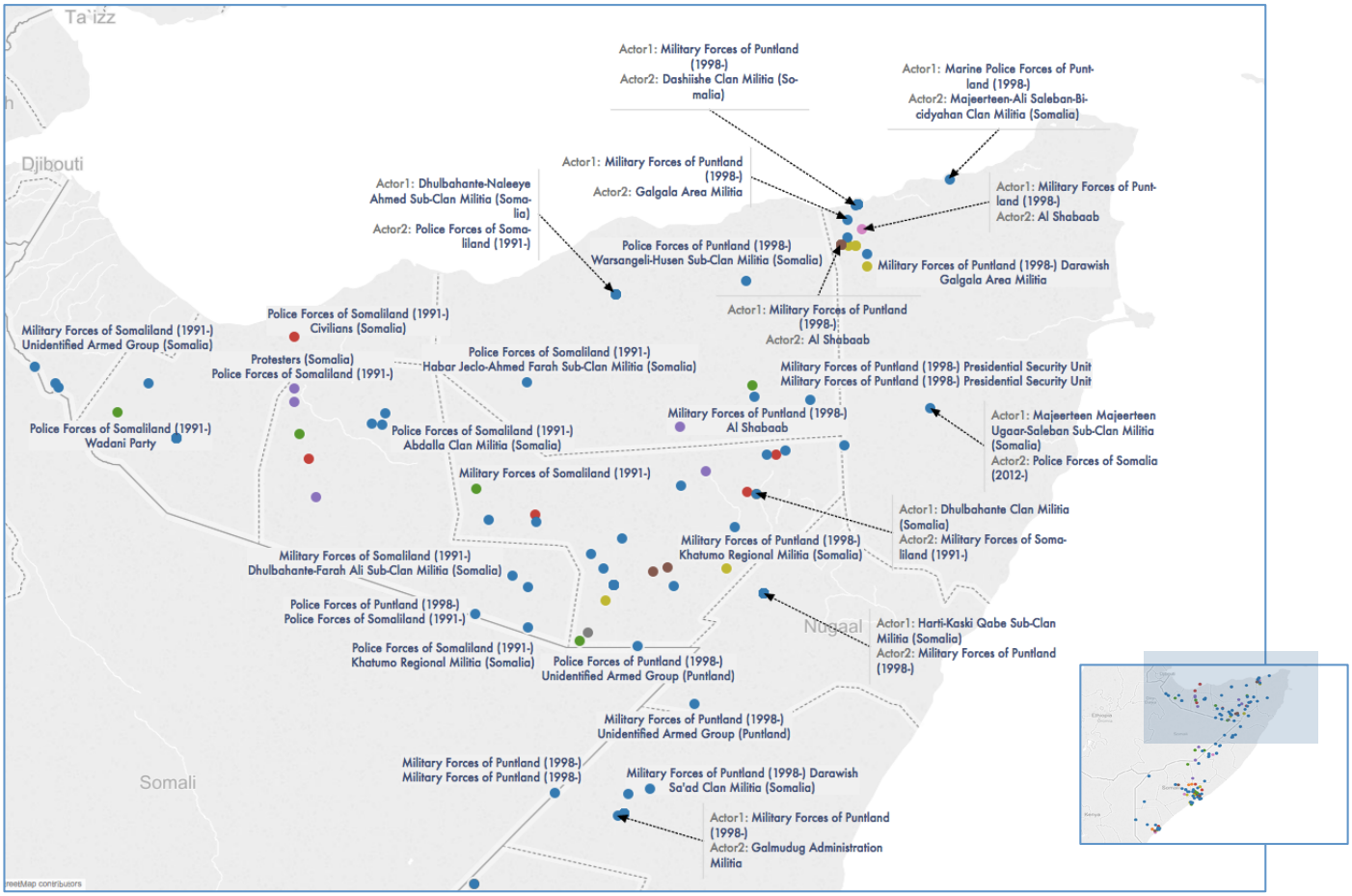


Al-Shabab – activity by conflict event-type, 2006-2015

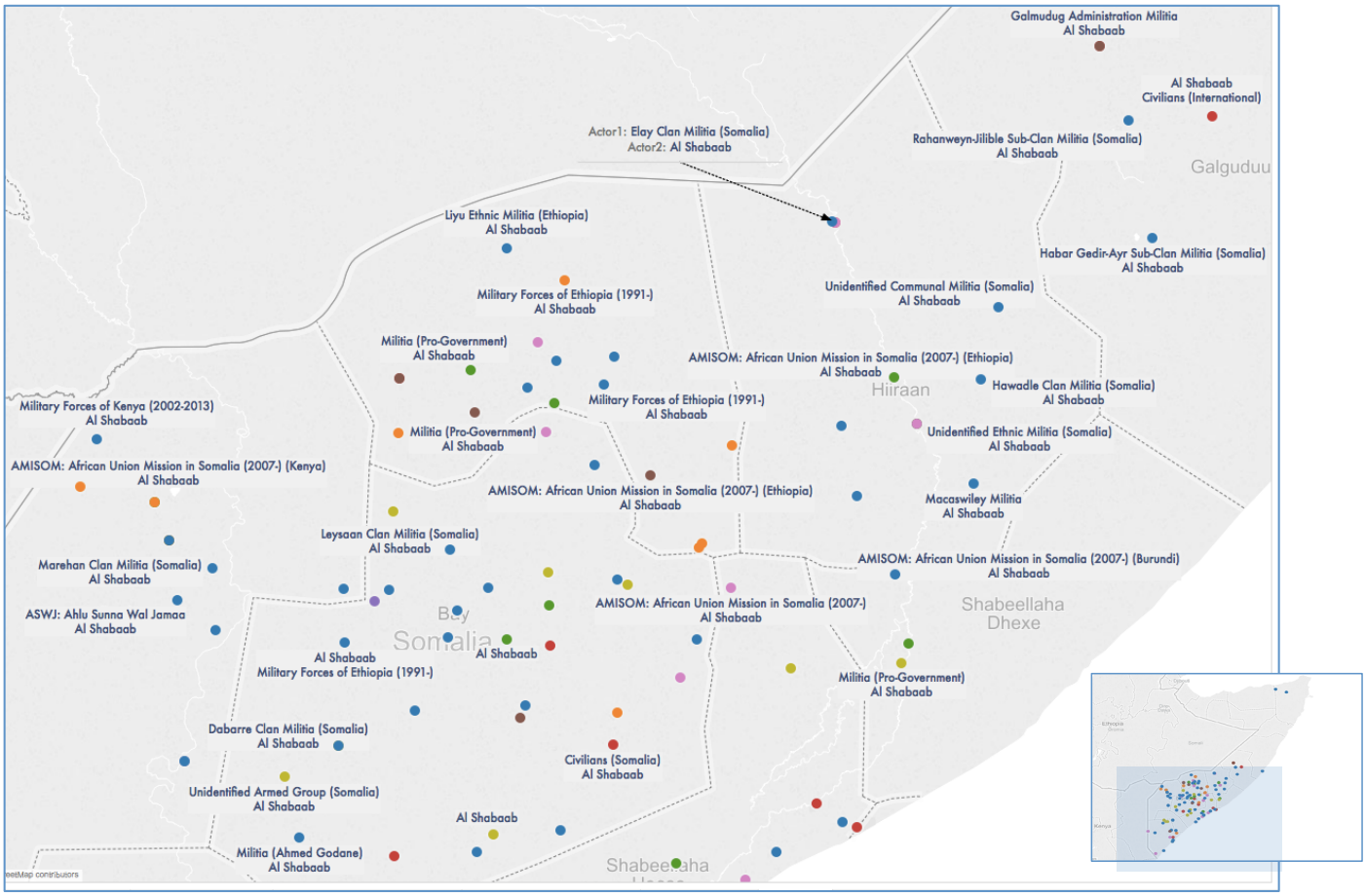


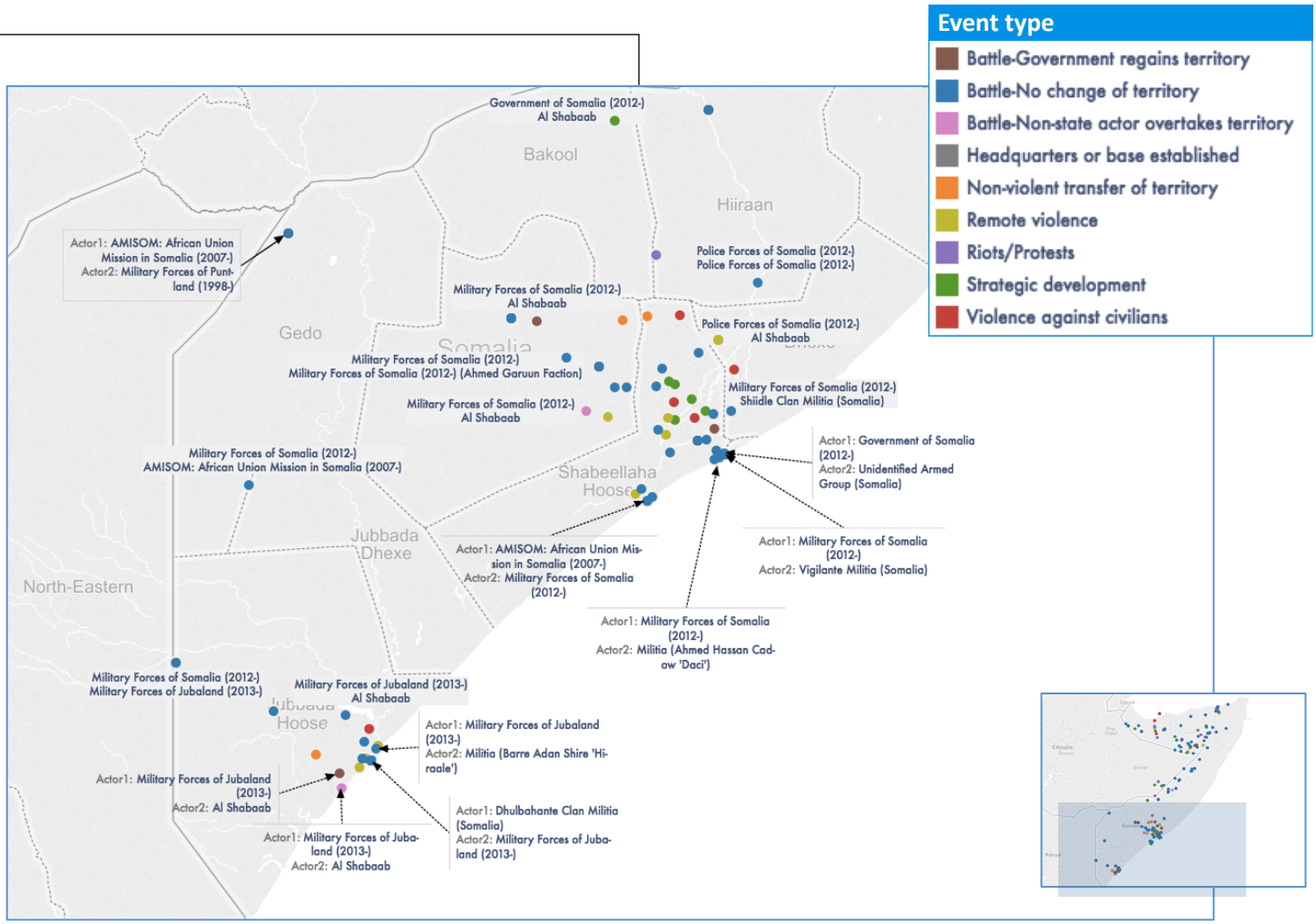


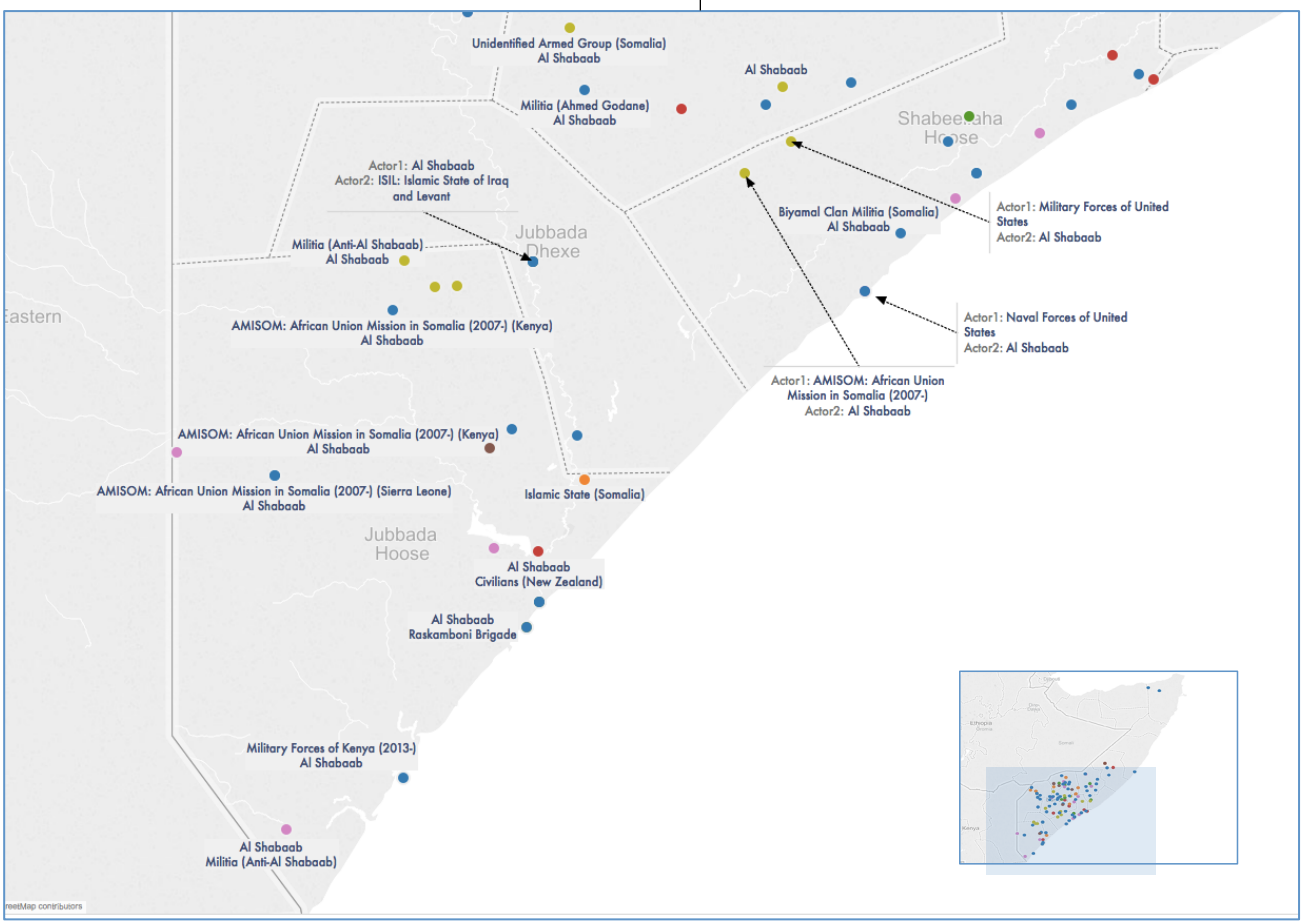
[Military, Police Forces: conflict activity by event type – Somalia 2013 - 2015]



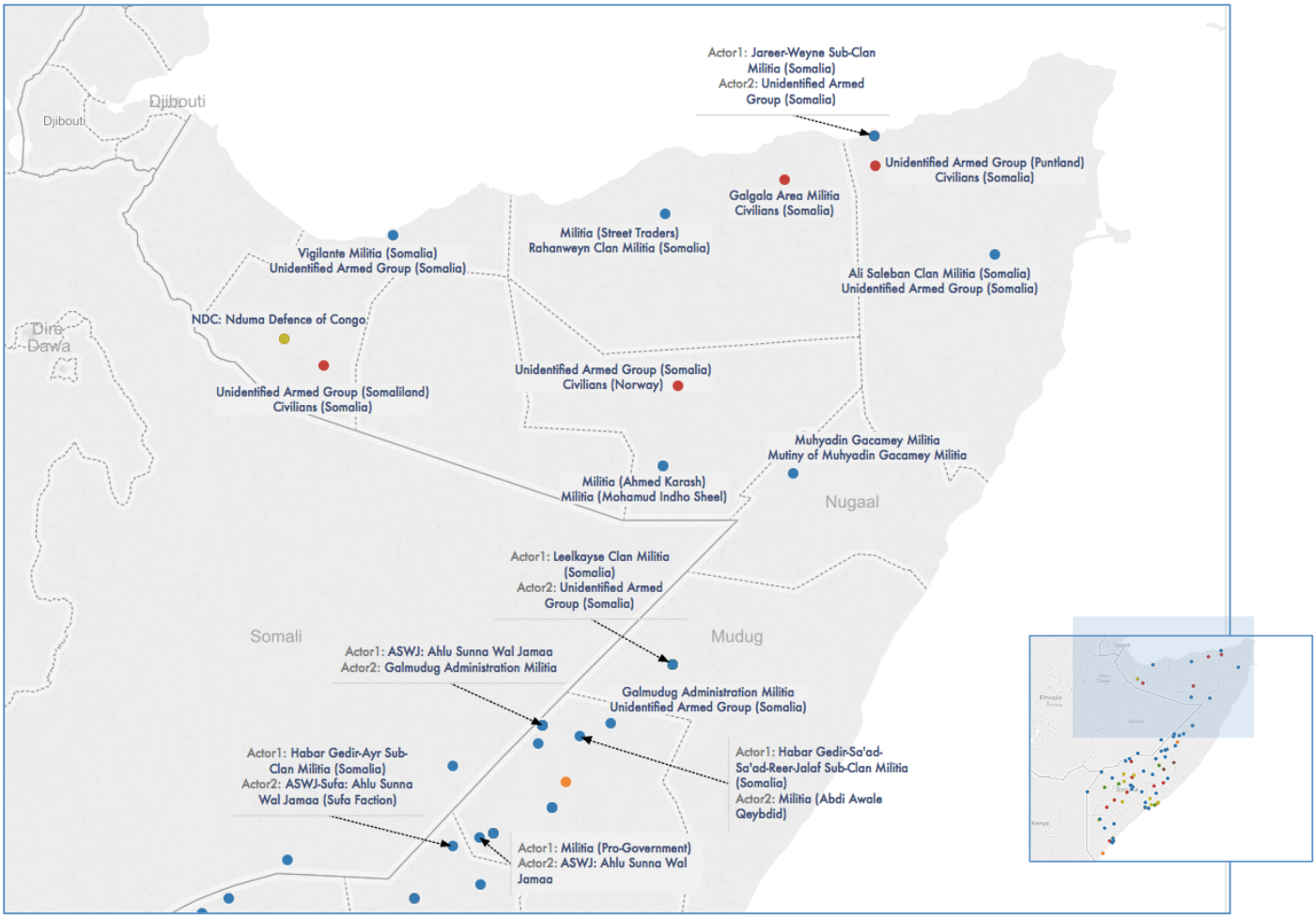
[Rebel forces: conflict activity by event type, 2013 - 2015]



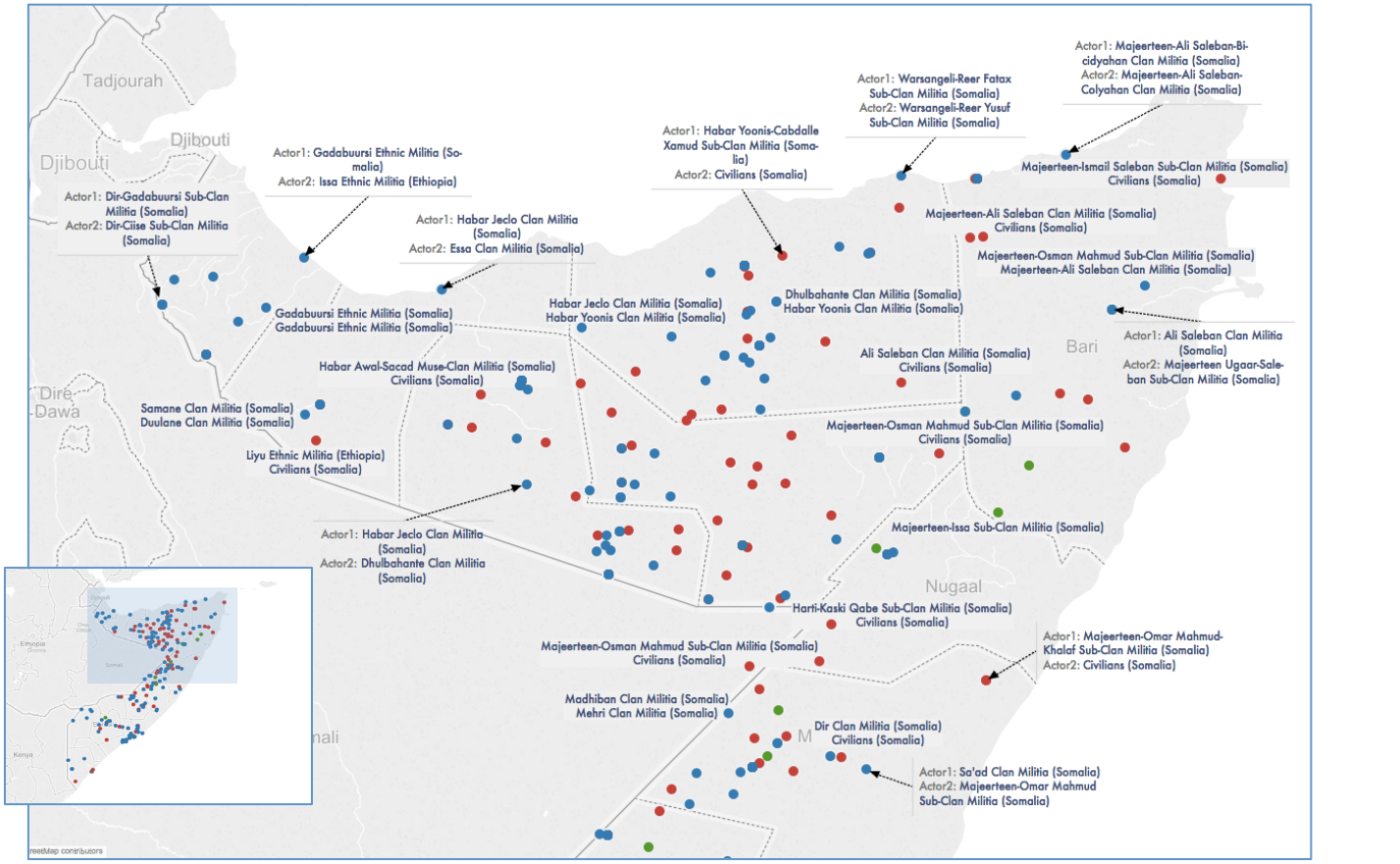

Event type
Battle-Government regains territory
Battle-No change of territory
Battle-Non-state actor overtakes territory
Headquarters or base established
Non-violent transfer of territory
Remote violence
Riots/Protests
Strategic development
Violence against civilians
Bakool
Hiiraan
Gedo
Somalia
Shabeellaha Hoose
Jubbada Dhexe
North-Eastern
Jubbada Hoose
Government of Somalia (2012-)
Al Shabaab
Actor1: AMISOM: African Union Mission in Somalia (2007-)
Actor2: Military Forces of Punt-land (1998-)
Police Forces of Somalia (2012-)
Police Forces of Somalia (2012-)
Military Forces of Somalia (2012-)
Al Shabaab
Police Forces of Somalia (2012-)
Al Shabaab
Military Forces of Somalia (2012-)
Military Forces of Somalia (2012-) (Ahmed Garuun Faction)
Military Forces of Somalia (2012-)
Al Shabaab
Military Forces of Somalia (2012-)
Shiidle Clan Militia (Somalia)
Actor1: Government of Somalia (2012-)
Actor2: Unidentified Armed Group (Somalia)
Military Forces of Somalia (2012-)
AMISOM: African Union Mission in Somalia (2007-)
Actor1: AMISOM: African Union Mission in Somalia (2007-)
Actor2: Military Forces of Somalia (2012-)
Actor1: Military Forces of Somalia (2012-)
Actor2: Vigilante Militia (Somalia)
Actor1: Military Forces of Somalia (2012-)
Actor2: Militia (Ahmed Hassan Cadow 'Daci')
Military Forces of Somalia (2012-)
Military Forces of Jubaland (2013-)
Military Forces of Jubaland (2013-)
Al Shabaab
Actor1: Military Forces of Jubaland (2013-)
Actor2: Militia (Barre Adan Shire 'Hiraale')
Actor1: Military Forces of Jubaland (2013-)
Actor2: Al Shabaab
Actor1: Dhulbahante Clan Militia (Somalia)
Actor2: Military Forces of Jubaland (2013-)
Actor1: Military Forces of Jubaland (2013-)
Actor2: Al Shabaab

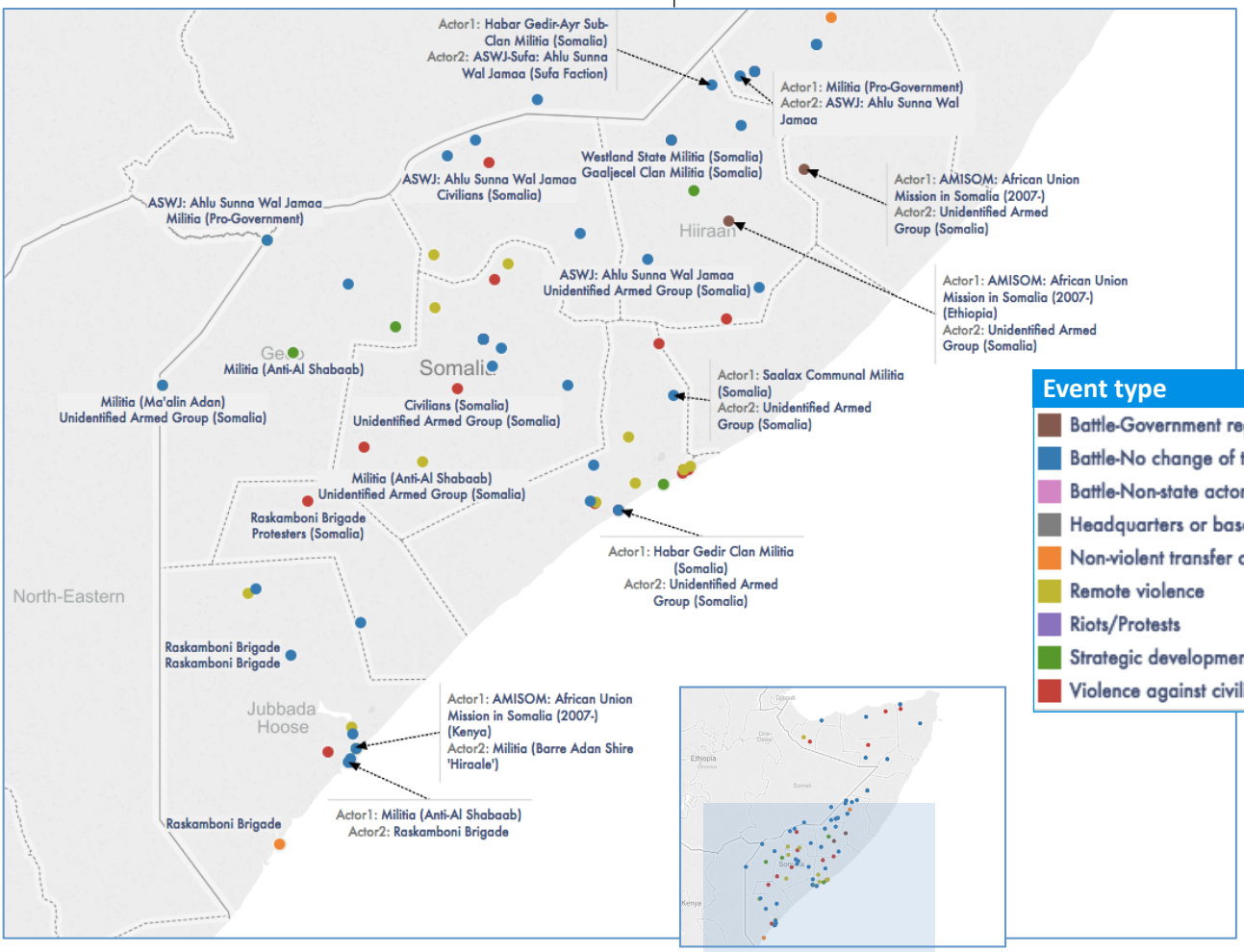

Unidentified Armed Group (Somalia)
Al Shabaab
Militia (Ahmed Godane)
Al Shabaab
Al Shabaab
Shabeellaha Hoose
Actor1: Al Shabaab
Actor2: ISIL: Islamic State of Iraq and Levant
Jubbada Dhexe
Militia (Anti-Al Shabaab)
Al Shabaab
Biyamal Clan Militia (Somalia)
Al Shabaab
Actor1: Military Forces of United States
Actor2: Al Shabaab
AMISOM: African Union Mission in Somalia (2007-) (Kenya)
Al Shabaab
Actor1: Naval Forces of United States
Actor2: Al Shabaab
Actor1: AMISOM: African Union Mission in Somalia (2007-)
Actor2: Al Shabaab
AMISOM: African Union Mission in Somalia (2007-) (Kenya)
Al Shabaab
AMISOM: African Union Mission in Somalia (2007-) (Sierra Leone)
Al Shabaab
Islamic State (Somalia)
Jubbada Hoose
Al Shabaab
Civilians (New Zealand)
Al Shabaab
Raskamboni Brigade
Military Forces of Kenya (2013-)
Al Shabaab
Al Shabaab
Militia (Anti-Al Shabaab)

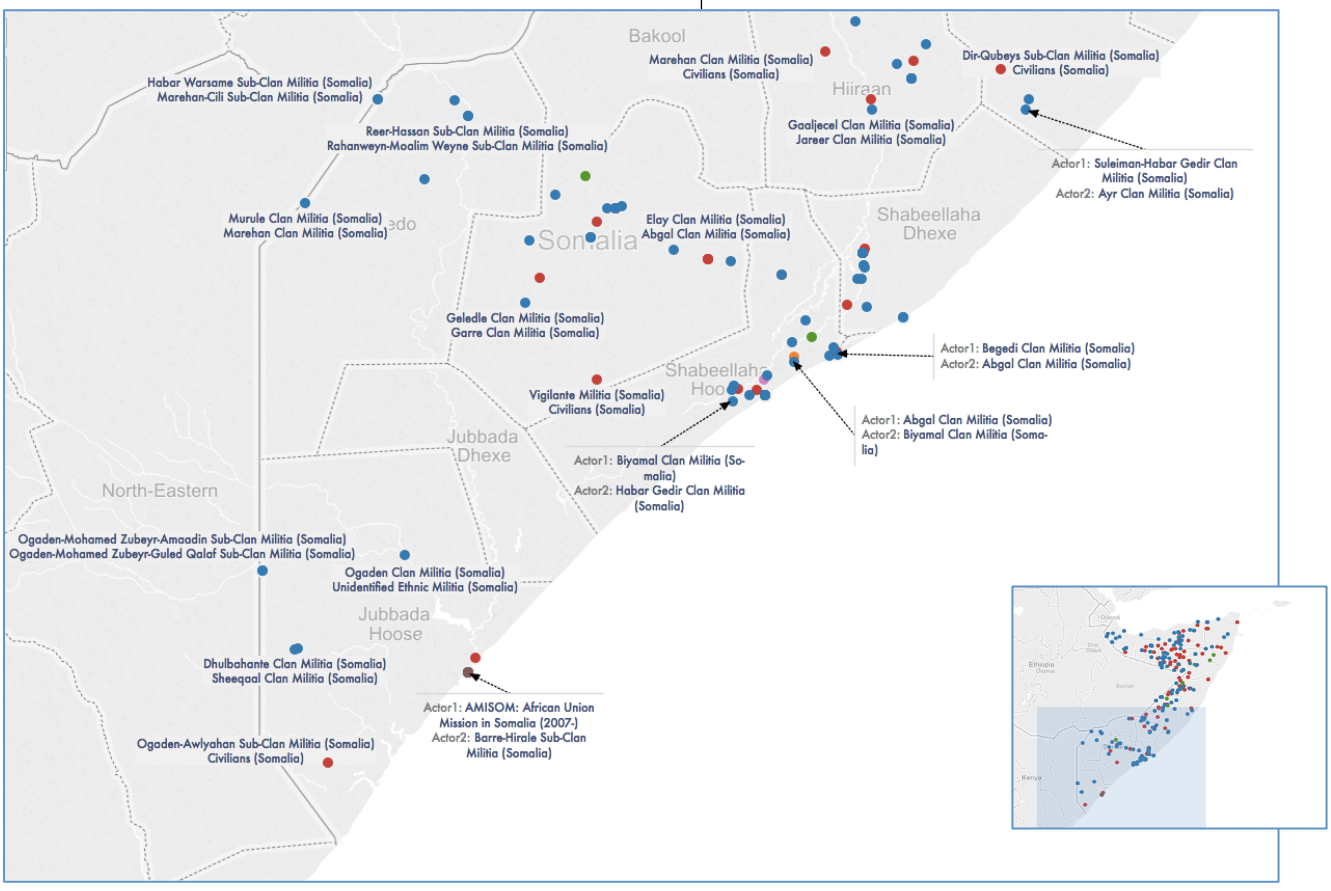
[Political militias: conflict activity by event type]



[Communal militias: conflict activity by event type]




Actor1: Habar Gedir-Ayr Sub-Clan Militia (Somalia)
Actor2: ASWJ-Sufa: Ahlu Sunna Wal Jamaa (Sufa Faction)
Actor1: Militia (Pro-Government)
Actor2: ASWJ: Ahlu Sunna Wal Jamaa
Westland State Militia (Somalia)
Gaaljecel Clan Militia (Somalia)
ASWJ: Ahlu Sunna Wal Jamaa
Civilians (Somalia)
ASWJ: Ahlu Sunna Wal Jamaa
Militia (Pro-Government)
Actor1: AMISOM: African Union Mission in Somalia (2007-)
Actor2: Unidentified Armed Group (Somalia)
Hiiraan
ASWJ: Ahlu Sunna Wal Jamaa
Unidentified Armed Group (Somalia)
Actor1: AMISOM: African Union Mission in Somalia (2007-) (Ethiopia)
Actor2: Unidentified Armed Group (Somalia)
Militia (Anti-Al Shabaab)
Somalia
Militia (Ma'alin Adan)
Unidentified Armed Group (Somalia)
Civilians (Somalia)
Unidentified Armed Group (Somalia)
Actor1: Saalax Communal Militia (Somalia)
Actor2: Unidentified Armed Group (Somalia)
Militia (Anti-Al Shabaab)
Unidentified Armed Group (Somalia)
Raskamboni Brigade
Protesters (Somalia)
Actor1: Habar Gedir Clan Militia (Somalia)
Actor2: Unidentified Armed Group (Somalia)
North-Eastern
Raskamboni Brigade
Raskamboni Brigade
Jubbada Hoose
Actor1: AMISOM: African Union Mission in Somalia (2007-) (Kenya)
Actor2: Militia (Barre Adan Shire 'Hiraale')
Actor1: Militia (Anti-Al Shabaab)
Actor2: Raskamboni Brigade
Raskamboni Brigade
Event type
Battle-Government regains territory
Battle-No change of territory
Battle-Non-state actor overtakes territory
Headquarters or base established
Non-violent transfer of territory
Remote violence
Riots/Protests
Strategic development
Violence against civilians


Bakool
Marehan Clan Militia (Somalia)
Civilians (Somalia)
Dir-Qubeys Sub-Clan Militia (Somalia)
Civilians (Somalia)
Habar Warsame Sub-Clan Militia (Somalia)
Marehan-Cili Sub-Clan Militia (Somalia)
Hiiraan
Gaaljecel Clan Militia (Somalia)
Jareer Clan Militia (Somalia)
Reer-Hassan Sub-Clan Militia (Somalia)
Rahanweyn-Moalim Weyne Sub-Clan Militia (Somalia)
Actor1: Suleiman-Habar Gedir Clan Militia (Somalia)
Actor2: Ayr Clan Militia (Somalia)
Murule Clan Militia (Somalia)
Marehan Clan Militia (Somalia)
Elay Clan Militia (Somalia)
Abgal Clan Militia (Somalia)
Shabeellaha Dhexe
Somalia
Geledle Clan Militia (Somalia)
Garre Clan Militia (Somalia)
Actor1: Begedi Clan Militia (Somalia)
Actor2: Abgal Clan Militia (Somalia)
Shabeellaha Hoose
Vigilante Militia (Somalia)
Civilians (Somalia)
Actor1: Abgal Clan Militia (Somalia)
Actor2: Biyamal Clan Militia (Somalia)
Jubbada Dhexe
Actor1: Biyamal Clan Militia (Somalia)
Actor2: Habar Gedir Clan Militia (Somalia)
North-Eastern
Ogaden-Mohamed Zubeyr-Amaadin Sub-Clan Militia (Somalia)
Ogaden-Mohamed Zubeyr-Guled Qalaf Sub-Clan Militia (Somalia)
Ogaden Clan Militia (Somalia)
Unidentified Ethnic Militia (Somalia)
Jubbada Hoose
Dhulbahante Clan Militia (Somalia)
Sheegaal Clan Militia (Somalia)
Actor1: AMISOM: African Union Mission in Somalia (2007-)
Actor2: Barre-Hirale Sub-Clan Militia (Somalia)
Ogaden-Awlyahan Sub-Clan Militia (Somalia)
Civilians (Somalia)

WADING THROUGH SOUTH SUDAN'S FLOODED FRONTLINE

South Sudan was ushered into being by the international community in July 2011 after decades of civil war as a Christian region of what was then larger Sudan. Joining the ranks of the United Nations as the world's newest country, the jubilant mood in South Sudan was buoyed by hope and potential then. Mentored and supported by the USA, UK and Norway, the country's secession had been a lengthy and delicate project. This began properly with Sudan and the southern rebels signing a comprehensive peace agreement in 2006 which led to a referendum in early 2011 on self-determination by the South. But even on her first day of independence, South Sudan looked perilously like 'damaged goods'.

Through 60 years of systematic underinvestment, repressive policies and widespread violence, Khartoum had stripped out much of the intelligentsia and natural resources from the South. So, the nation-building project was always going to be lengthy and precarious if the international community was going to avoid simply inventing another failed state.

Three years later, in the capital city of Juba, some of the symbols of progress are immediately apparent. There are new ministry offices, a presidential palace and mirror-sided buildings that hint at investment. There are also the diplomatic missions, all helpfully engaged with the new nation during her first faltering steps of independence – yet keen also to take a share of the natural wealth of oil and minerals that abound here. However, despite something of a feeding frenzy over resources by government and corporate prospectors, there are still only a few kilometres of tarmac road and just a single bridge across the mighty White Nile in the entire country – the latter a colonial relic of a 1950s Bailey bridge left by the British.

Keen to ensure that a model of good governance and propriety was put in place here, the United Nations was deployed in 2011 with military, police and civil experts. All was going steadily to plan by 2013. Well, as much as anything in Equatorial Africa ever goes to plan; corruption and cronyism becoming instantly endemic amongst the new elite. That aside, the many diverse ethnic and tribal factions of South Sudan seemed to be working together in a representative government, with the same spirit that had bound them during the long struggle with the North; fighting shoulder-to-shoulder through a strong marriage of belief and common purpose.

> "Even on her first day of independence, South Sudan looked perilously like 'damaged goods'. Through 60 years of underinvestment, repressive policies and widespread violence, Khartoum had stripped out much of the intelligentsia and natural resources

Then came the dramatic divorce. On 15th December 2013, the recently-resigned Vice President, Dr Riek Machar, led what has since been described as a coup against the democratically-elected President Salva Kiir Mayardit. Both men are erstwhile freedom fighters and long-time political partners. But Machar is a Nuer and Kiir a Dinka. Occupying swathes of ancient tribal lands across South Sudan, the Dinka and Nuer are the largest ethnicities within the defined borders and have, historically, always clashed over land and cattle, the latter being the ancient measure of wealth in this region of Africa.

In South Sudan's first two-and-a-half years, these two dominant ethnic groups had begun vying for hegemony, quietly sidelining the prominent government figures of the many smaller ethnicities. Although thousands of disaffected people immediately took to the streets in Juba during the coup, the insurrection was put down swiftly by the President

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in some 48 hours of intense and focused bloodshed. But the fissure was irreparable, as Machar's move had been backed by approximately 60 per cent of the Army, largely (but not exclusively) Nuer.

Mobilising rapidly across the country, the troops took with them a sizable proportion of the Army's key equipment and armoured vehicles. Retreating into their heartlands, which include or threaten much of the oil-rich regions of South Sudan, a wider offensive of ethnic attrition began.

This continues today, targeting wealth and strategic towns whilst further exacerbating a disintegration of the nascent societal apparatus that the UN had struggled to implant prior to the crisis. This means that the conflict-affected areas have now descended into a lawless and dangerous morass, where armed youth and militia on both sides act viciously with complete impunity; sexual violence being one of the most-used offensive tactics to suppress, dehumanise and disperse entire communities. We don't know the number of people killed, raped or displaced in this latest spate of violence. Estimates hint at 100,000 plus killed to-date and two million displaced, perhaps 500,000 of whom have fled over the border to seek refuge in neighbouring countries. In immediate response, the United Nations mission opened the gates of its camps and now plays host to more than 100,000 threatened and vulnerable people across South Sudan, putting very considerable strain on the resources and infrastructure of the

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The conflict-affected areas have now descended into a lawless and dangerous morass, where armed youth and militia on both sides act viciously with complete impunity

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The displaced opt to face cholera, malaria, typhoid and malnutrition in this vast flooded hell where, after one night of heavy seasonal rain, sleeping babies have drowned

UN and those humanitarian organisations that stayed to help. In Bentiu, all the complications and difficulties of this multi-faceted and confusing conflict are magnified by the human catastrophe unfolding. Throughout a seven-month rainy season, displaced people have preferred to shelter under the precarious protection of the UN in utterly degrading conditions to avoid having to face the dominant tribe beyond the wire. Indeed, many have nowhere now to return to: widespread ethnic rebalancing has occurred; vast parts of the upper Nile are underwater, flooding entire villages; in other areas, settlements have been systematically removed. Instead, the displaced opt to face cholera, malaria, typhoid and malnutrition in this vast flooded hell where, after one night of heavy seasonal rain, sleeping babies have drowned before the rising water has woken parents and siblings all packed into wretched waterlogged shelters. And every single day, at least one person will die of a perfectly preventable disease in this ill-named protection site.

Akin to the population of a modest town, yet occupying only a few square kilometres, the tensions within the site have driven further internal conflict and insidious abuse; a microcosm of the wider conflict but driven as much by the sense of impunity that now exists as it is by the actual fighting. Murder, rape and extortion are defining features of life here. Meanwhile, the beleaguered, under-equipped and overstretched UN force struggles to intervene in the conflict to protect the vulnerable and help mediate a sustainable peace.

THE STRATEGIC LEVEL

Discussion of the strategic drivers for the deployment to South Sudan revealed the prevalence of practicality over strict priority. It was noted that South Sudan is now set to witness the second largest deployment of UK forces, which may not correlate to the relative priorities set by the FCO and MoD. That said, the wider political effects achieved by demonstrating the UK's renewed willingness to contribute troops to UN operations may result in it having an effect out of proportion to this relative priority. It was assessed that these likely strategic goals are countering the growing threat to the UK's status as a permanent member of the UN Security Council and demonstrating our willingness to take a lead in UN military operations, and to undertake operations that our ally, the US, may wish to do but are constrained from undertaking. It was agreed that the UK has the credible capability required to take such a lead and now has a key strategic interest in so doing.

> The fact that the UK's military contribution is to be in engineering was felt to be positive, contrasting helpfully with recent counter-insurgency operations

The fact that the UK's military contribution is to be in engineering support rather than combat capability was felt to be significant and positive, contrasting helpfully with recent counter-insurgency operations. However, it was recognised that the fact that this capability will primarily support the UN force rather than the beleaguered population of South Sudan, at least during the initial stages, could undermine claims that we are back as a 'force for good'. While it may help answer particular UN demands and fill a role that others shy away from, it could also potentially restrict our contribution to supporting roles which risks undermining our desire to demonstrate leadership and establish the credibility that we seek.

These disparate and complex strategic drivers for the mission create an imperative for the Government (FCO and MoD in particular) to be careful and coordinated in its strategic messaging, lest inconsistencies are picked apart. A clear lesson from Afghanistan is that this risk becomes far more prominent and less manageable when tactical circumstances become more challenging and costly, leading inevitably to more stringent examination of national strategy.

The deployment will offer rich opportunities for the British Army, opening a new chapter of operational engagement and demonstrating the wider utility offered by the Army 2020 model. At a lower level, operational environments such as South Sudan will bring a new array of challenges upon which a new generation of Army leaders, especially at the junior level, can cut its teeth. These challenges will include complex cultural issues, austere conditions, exposure to human horror, fragile support networks, uncertain allies and political factors played out at every level. Managing these dynamics will demand as much ingenuity, physical vigour and mental robustness as any recent operation. It will also help to expand the Army's reservoir of regional and cultural understanding, providing opportunities for units and individuals to develop specialist knowledge, alongside other engagement and capacity building tasks. However, there are also risks for the Army. Principally, peacekeeping is a distinct and challenging task, but it must not erode commitment to restoring the Army's capacity to deliver warfighting capability (and therefore conventional deterrence) as its raison d'etre. In this vein, and noting the UN's particular demand for sophisticated enabling capabilities, there is a risk that UN commitments will impose further pressure on capabilities that are already over-committed by extant tasks.

The British Army is no longer attuned or accustomed to the character of UN operations; peacekeeping operations are no longer studied in UK staff colleges nor practised within the collective training regime and UN doctrine has been similarly neglected. Instead, the Army is largely trained and equipped for counter-insurgency operations. Launching elements from this posture into politically and culturally sensitive environments, complicated by the challenges noted above, without thorough preparation will carry significant strategic and reputational risks. Hence the Army must take great care to prepare the first elements to deploy thoroughly and meanwhile quickly restore peacekeeping to the syllabi of its key education and training establishments.

Notwithstanding all the acknowledged complexity, challenges and risks inherent in the South Sudan operation and in UN operations per se, it was generally concluded that these are far outweighed by the rich opportunities for the UK, Defence and the British Army. The lessons of UNPROFOR in Bosnia are instructive, but they should not deter the UK from committing its military forces more routinely to the unique challenges.

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THE TACTICAL LEVEL

One of the discussions during the CHACR UN study day focused on how to effectively translate strategic intent into measurable tactical activities; what constitutes success? And, closely related, what qualifies as failure in the context of peacekeeping missions? How can the UK magnify its role and effectively contribute to the scope of UN operations?

The anticipated political and strategic effects of re-engaging in peacekeeping operations can only be achieved by going on the ground, by widening UK's participation in international missions; the UK must not only be prepared to pay for UN operations but it must be prepared to deploy. UN operations may, in the light of recent counter-insurgency operations, perhaps be viewed by some as the easy option, however these deployments do contain inherent risks. Although the UK's involvement may be perceived as 'example setting' with a positive spillover in terms of widening the pool of contributions (perhaps encouraging more countries to follow suit), this can also exert additional pressure to perform, especially from countries with superior experience in peacekeeping deployments. The UK's success during these engagements will be closely scrutinised, with both positive and negative aspects attached to it; there may be logistical and cross-training demands, which in the long run may prove overwhelming, thus perhaps contributing to a sense that 'expectations have not been met'.

> The fact that the UK's military contribution is to be in engineering was felt to be positive, contrasting helpfully with recent counter-insurgency operations

In order to meet such challenges, managing expectations will be crucial. A successful engagement equally depends on a thorough pre-deployment preparation, focused on judgemental and risk awareness training. Whilst on the ground, getting the interaction right with local communities, as well as the NGO sector, could equally bolster the mission's success. In the long run, presence on the ground will gradually enable UK to develop an iterative dialogue, formulating the kind of influence it seeks to exert. There are legitimate fears that UK's contribution may not be visible at a host-country level, and that most efforts will be 'UN-centric', concentrated on facilitating the UN mission instead of producing a measurable positive impact benefiting local communities. However, whilst it may be necessary to self-task and proactively demonstrate commitment to the mission's objectives, it is equally important not to undermine, act against or duplicate the UN task and mandate. Thus, extending UK's contribution to the host country, to issues of governance or infrastructural development for instance, will likely be a long-term process, stemming from our successful participation and cooperation within the wider landscape of UN's peacekeeping operations.

In terms of political effects, the UK's presence on the ground will undeniably benefit decision-making. As deployed troops communicate realities on the ground, this first-hand information will act as 'evidence for policy-making'. Thus, the UK may develop a more sophisticated understanding of how other resources may be deployed in support of the security and humanitarian sectors resulting in better, more informed decisions.

A number of practical points should be borne in mind by those that deploy, and the headquarters that train them for deployment:

- Understanding the audience.
- Effectively communicate the UN mission's intent and the UK's part of it.
- Pre-deployment training ought to be 'country-minded' rather than generic 'Africa' training, and the missions in Somalia, South Sudan or the myriad other UN missions must not be conflated.
- Training scenarios should be discussed with those who have deployed to the country already.
- The nature of direct and indirect risks must be understood in order to develop mitigation for them within the UN mandate.
- Manage expectations before deployment; well-prepared troops adapt more quickly once deployed.

BACK IN BLUE: A SUMMARY

Blue helmets and berets will once again become a familiar feature of British Army apparel following the Prime Minister's announcement that the UK is to contribute troops to United Nations (UN) operations in Somalia and South Sudan. Although at its height the UK's commitment to peacekeeping operations in Bosnia involved 15,000 personnel, the intervening years – dominated militarily by lengthy campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan – have seen minimal numbers of 'blue-hatted' Brits on the ground.

However, the world, UN and British Armed Forces have changed vastly since 1995. Those tasked with bolstering efforts to bring security and stability to South Sudan and Somalia face a largely alien operating environment.

For the UN's part, it now has circa 90,800 personnel deployed across Africa, Asia and the Middle East and recent years have seen a shift in the key players conducting its operations. African nations, perhaps more willing to exert force and sustain casualties on UN missions than many other contributors, are taking the lead and account for 13 of the top 20 troop contributors to UN peacekeeping.

Russia, on the other hand, continues to be noticeable by its absence on missions despite retaining a seat on the Security Council. Conversely, China is now the ninth biggest contributor, with 3,000 personnel deployed, well over double the number provided by the rest of the 'Permanent 5' (P5) combined. Although not yet greatly involved in shaping policy, China's constructive approach is, unsurprisingly, more welcome than Russia's current "defensive" and "no shame" tack.

The intervening years – dominated militarily by lengthy campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan – have seen minimal numbers of 'blue-hatted' Brits on the ground

Hitherto, the P5 members of the Security Council have not had to fight to retain their positions, but the international mood is beginning to change and other countries or alliances may soon be actively seeking, and have a strong case for, membership. The African Union is becoming more powerful and those current member nations that don't put in as much as they get out need to prove their worth.

Organisationally and operationally, the UN is currently in a period of rethinking and reflection following a succession of high-profile reports and reviews in 2015. There are a number of new issues it needs to consider – such as continued improvements in the protection of civilians – but also old concerns that need addressing, chief among them being the disparity between mission mandate and capability.

Other policy areas requiring focus in respect of UN peacekeeping include the need to build on political strategy to resolve conflict; to improve situational awareness and intelligence; review safety and security measures (to address concerns in relation to inadequate technologies and healthcare provision); and issues surrounding regional engagement.

One of the biggest challenges to any major reform is that, for some actors, there are financial and political incentives for maintaining the status quo. Indeed, the UN can be described as a club with 193 member states "who are all in it for what they can get out of it" and a "coalition of the more willing for differing reasons". Some countries view peacekeeping missions as a money-making opportunity. Some fund a large percentage of their defence budgets from their commitments to the UN. While the notion that money can be the principal motivator for some contributing troops and assets, the figures paid to peacekeeping providers are not insubstantial.

As a consequence of such factors, the force generation process within the UN is in a state of flux. Historically, setting up a peacekeeping mission has been a slow, cumbersome exercise that can take years to reach full deployment. However, it is hoped that the abandonment of the old pledge system – which may be considered as little more than a "vague statement of interest" from prospective contributors – will speed the process up. The UN is now using a Pledge Contribution Registration System, which promises to be more than just a name change; it commits bidding nations to drafted Memorandums of Understanding and advisory visits. While it can do little to expedite nations' internal political processes, which remain a "piece-of-string"-style lottery depending on the state in

Notable contributor: A Chinese peacekeeper patrols the perimeter of UN House in Juba
© UN Photo/JC McIlwaine

question, it should prevent any "queue jumping" and provide the UN with a better menu of peacekeepers and capabilities to choose from. There is a real sense that the UN is moving from a sellers' to a buyers' market.

However, the UN must be more mindful of the "buyer beware" mantra in respect of a number of its current missions. As an organisation, it can already boast quantity, but it is the quality of that quantity that is a key concern. The capability gap between contributing nations on missions can be stark, with ill-prepared, ill-trained and ill-equipped allies potentially joining UK personnel on operations. The experience of deploying on a UN mission may be no different to the "chaos and confusion" encountered on a NATO operation, but that the motivation and mindset (money and time off) of other contributors could come as a shock. Even more disturbing can be the conduct of some international peacekeepers and it was stressed that the much-publicised sexual exploitation issues plaguing the UN were an intractable problem blighting not only the least or less developed contributors.

The UN's in-theatre procurement system has been described as broken, and the auditing of missions as non-existent. Future UK peacekeepers were warned by at least one attendee with experience of UN operations that "if you want something, bring it yourself" and "if you want something doing, do it yourself". In order to address issues of sub-standard support systems and supply chains, the UN may need to disregard its "accountant's view" and pay a premium for capabilities – in respect of both manning and equipment – to prevent the need to keep paying out to patch problems.

Furthermore, with huge discrepancies in how UN missions are manned, the chain of command can be "fraught with peril", and the task of Force Commanders is made all the more difficult by the often unknown caveats governing contributing nations and the "long screwdrivers" influencing activity – or inactivity – from capital cities.

Despite these difficulties, there are myriad motivations for the UK to re-energise and re-engage with the UN. Cynics may

Combating criminal conduct: Jane Holl Lute (centre), UN Special Coordinator on improving the United Nations response to sexual exploitation and abuse, visits Bambari, Central African Republic © UN Photo/Nektarios Markogiannis

United front: UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon meets with the UK's Prime Minister David Cameron in New York last year © UN Photo/Evan Schneider

suggest that a call from President Obama or the potential benefits to the Treasury served as key catalysts to the planned deployments to East Africa, but there was a consensus among study day attendees that a UK return was right, essential and an opportunity to be firmly embraced.

> "Boots on the ground will enhance the nation's credibility and demonstrate publicly it is "a player not just a payer". Such an impression is vital if the UK wishes to have a voice in how its annual £323 million contribution to peacekeeping is spent and to influence UN policy and strategy reform

In respect of South Sudan, where two million people are displaced and millions more are facing food shortages, the humanitarian need for the British Army to deploy engineering and medical support is clear. Likewise, the logistical support that will be afforded to the UN mission in Somalia will strengthen international efforts to build stability in the country and counter the threat posed by the terrorist group Al-Shabab.

The limited scale of the planned deployments (circa 250 and 70 personnel respectively) means that the UK will not leap up the league table of contributing nations overnight, but boots on the ground will enhance the nation's credibility and demonstrate publicly it is "a player not just a payer". Such an impression is vital if the UK wishes to have a voice in how its annual £323 million contribution to peacekeeping is spent and to influence UN policy and strategy reform. Aside from their expected tactical effect on operations, the reputation of those deploying and the strength of the British Army brand is likely to bring further benefits to the UN. A UK deployment will act as a force multiplier – encouraging and allowing for smaller, more reluctant or under-resourced nations to bolt on to a trusted capability – and, through capacity building and mentoring, help to raise standards and modernise the modes and configuration of peacekeeping missions. The UN is short of "best practice champions" and the British military is considered to have "greater intellectual grunt" than most.

For the Army itself, distinct advantages and opportunities were identified. In addition to reaffirming its status as a force for good, such missions would provide the Service with an opportunity to return to the sort of role it played in the 1990s in Angola, Bosnia and Rwanda. For the post-Herrick generation, it represents a chance for young soldiers and leaders to cut their teeth on operations and can have a positive impact on recruitment and retention. Any adverse response

to tour lengths (six months without R&R) among personnel is likely to be mitigated by the competitive culture that exists within the ranks and a desire to do the jobs they are trained to do. The power of having some with stories of austerity and medals, and some without, should not be underestimated.

However, it was recognised that the feedback from those deployed first will influence the appetite of those set to follow and their expectations should be managed accordingly. It was flagged that soldiers have become accustomed to comforts, be it hot water or Wi-Fi, as a consequence of creating "Taj Mahals in the middle of the desert", conditions not in keeping with the reality of UN peacekeeping missions.

Presentational risks, in respect of the perceived role of British forces being misconstrued by UN partners, UK politicians and the public, may also be a concern. The British Army's taskings in East Africa will be very different to Iraq and Afghanistan and clear messaging to hammer home that UK troops are not going in to "save South Sudan" may be necessary. Equally, those beneath the blue helmets need to understand that their contribution to missions will be nuanced and measured in terms of tactical effect and not operational success. Recognition of the bigger picture and the measuring of success by different parameters will be key, as the UK seeks to demonstrate to the UN that it is a good partner. There will be opportunities to have an impact on many levels, but the approach should be to under-promise and over-deliver. Humility will be required across the ranks and there should be an acceptance of a slower tempo than the Army is otherwise used to, with "if it feels uncomfortable it is probably right" proffered as the adaptive approach to adopt.

From a military perspective, the challenges of operating in a UN environment were viewed as testing but not insurmountable. Indeed, the danger of British sappers serving

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Temporarily 're-hatting' British soldiers for peacekeeping duties is a noble and important thing to do. Doing so will enable the UK, through its military resources, to make a positive difference in regions renowned for doom

up a "gold-plated solution" in South Sudan and delivering "catastrophic success" is also a potential worry. Doing too good a job might lead to more Internally Displaced People being drawn to British Army locations and an incentive structure will be needed to negate this. Conversely, UK involvement may attract adverse attention and make camps a target for enemy attack.

Above all else, good preparation – physical, moral and conceptual – is vital and this applies to all those deploying, with every soldier a potential diplomat. It is important to know not only about local conditions but also other forces serving on the mission and, as cited by one attendee, "no time spent briefing will be wasted". A wealth of existing information is being harvested and the Army has become proficient at human terrain mapping.

In conclusion, regardless of any political and financial incentives for the UK re-engaging with UN missions, temporarily "re-hatting" British soldiers for peacekeeping duties is a noble and important thing to do. Doing so will enable the UK, through its military resources, to make a positive difference in regions renowned for doom. For the Army, a re-energised political appetite for peacekeeping missions represents an opportunity to exploit and lean in to while concurrently exercising caution that the political appetite, jaundiced by a decade of large-scale deployments, may ultimately prove small but come with high expectations.

Being seen to contribute at the coalface of missions by others on the Security Council, and doing more than talking about how much money we put in, is important. Tactically, it should not be seen as an easy option and those deploying will need to be properly prepared if the Army is to alleviate the culture shock of dealing with the UN and indigenous populations as well as the mosquitoes. Its personnel need to be post-modern soldiers, no longer just warriors but diplomats, scholars and innovators, and the Army as a whole needs to relearn the art of living out of a Bergen in austere conditions.

APPENDIX

1. Acronyms

AIAI	Al Ittihad Al Islamiya
AMISOM	African Union Mission in Somalia
ARPCT	Alliance for the Restoration of Peace and Counter-Terrorism
ASWJ	Ahlu Sunna Wal Jamma
BATUK	British Army Training Unit Kenya
CASEVAC	Casualty Evacuation
CJTF	Combined Joint Task Force
DPKO	Department of Peacekeeping Operations
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office
HIPPO	High Level Panel on Peace Operations
HoA	Horn of Africa
ICU	Islamic Courts Union
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
JOA	Joint Operations Area
JEF	Joint Expeditionary Force
JEM	Justice and Equality Movement
GoS	Government of Sudan
LRA	Lords Resistance Army
ONLF	Ogaden National Liberation Front
TCC	Troop Contributing Country
TFG	Transitional (Somali) Federal Government
UN	United Nations
UNMISS	United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
RKB	Ras Kamboni Brigade
SANU	Sudan African Nationalist Union
SPLA	Sudanese Peoples Liberation Movement
SPLA-IO	Sudanese Peoples Liberation Movement – In Opposition
SSDF	South Sudan Defence Force
SSDM	South Sudan Democratic Movement
SSLM/A	Southern Sudan Liberation Movement /Army
SSIM	South Sudan Independence Movement

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