



Patterns of Violent Conflict Maluku, Indonesia 2000 – 2003 Conflict Intensity Mapping



Overview

In 1999, a fight broke out between a Muslim bus driver and a Christian passenger, igniting widespread violent conflict throughout Indonesia's Maluku Province. The communal conflict spread rapidly, ultimately displacing 500,000 - nearly a quarter of the population. Today, the conflict is discussed in religious terms, although underlying factors such as economic, social, and political competition drove insecurity in the region. The conflict in Maluku was heavily influenced by the role of external provocateurs. These external fighters brought resources and weapons, fueling the spread of conflict in the remote island chain. This project seeks to analyze the spread and density of violent conflict over time to deepen our understanding of how conflict moved throughout the region.

Methods

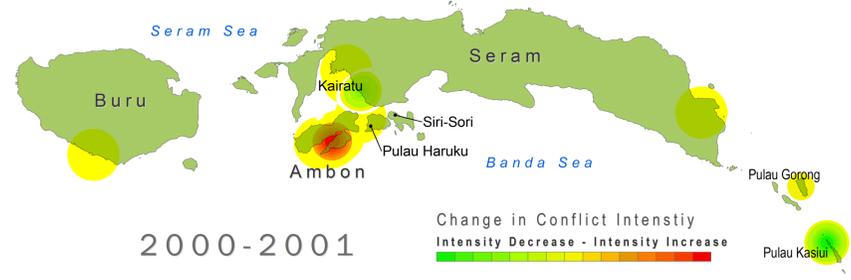
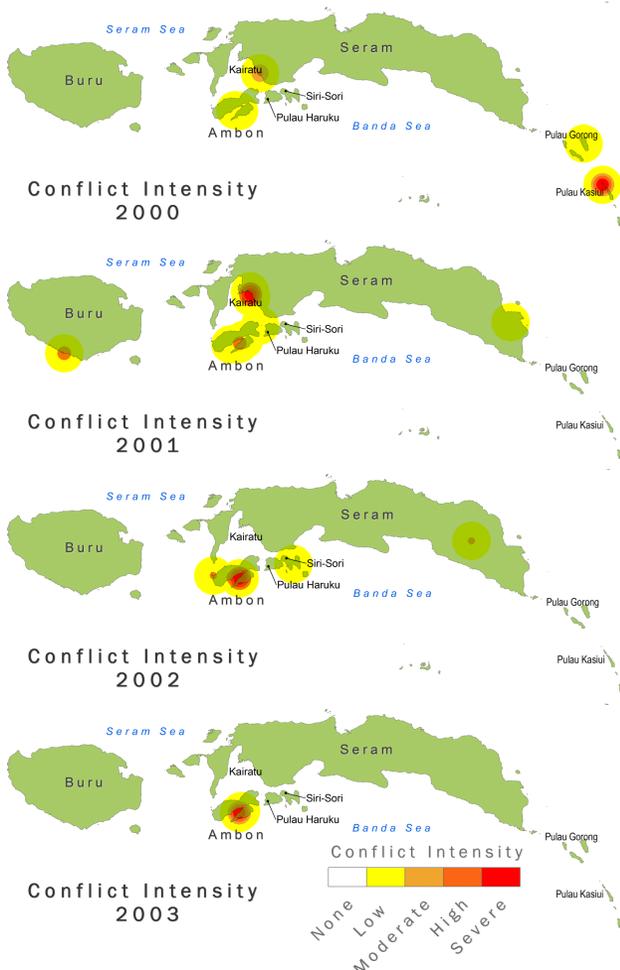
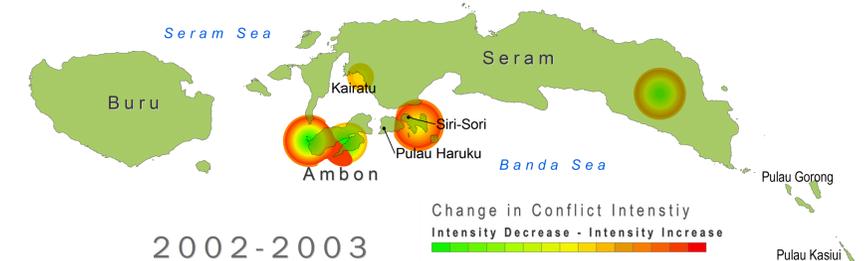
The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) produced a series of situation reports from December 2001 – July 2003. Beginning one year after the initial eruption of violence, these reports detailed conflict events throughout Maluku. Conflict incidents such as massive destruction, razed villages, burned religious structures, population displacement and killings were coded for levels of severity and location. Using density analysis, four separate conflict periods were mapped to determine the spread and intensity of violence over time. Change detection analysis was used to determine the percentage of change in conflict intensity between the each target period.

Analysis

Spatial analysis strengthens our understanding of how conflict evolved over time and space in Maluku, Indonesia. UNOCHA began documenting violent communal conflict in December 2000 – one year after the outbreak of violence. By creating an index to represent the intensity of violent conflict events, this project measured the change in magnitude over time and space.

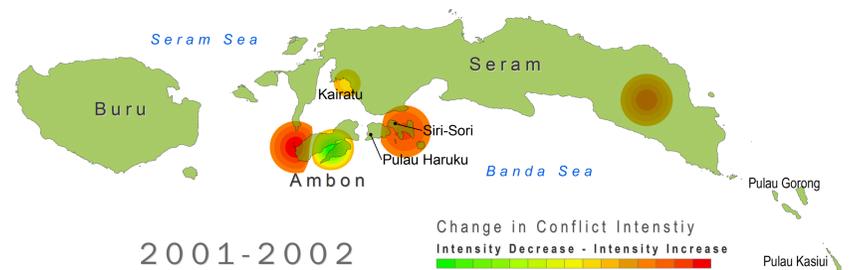
Spatial analysis illustrates that between 2002 – 2003, conflict continued to intensify in the city of Ambon. As more resources continued to enter the theater from throughout Indonesia, violence continued to intensify.

As efforts to resolve Maluku's conflict took hold, we can see a n improvement in the intensity of conflict on Seram Island and periods of both increases and decrease in conflict intensity in Ambon itself.



One year after conflict erupted in Ambon, violence was concentrated in the outer lying islands of Seram and the eastern islands of Pulau Kasui and Pulau Gorong. At this stage in the conflict, local communities engaged in intense conflict, largely fueled by competition over scarce resource. Through spatial analysis, we can see that subsequent violence not only returned to Ambon, but also significantly intensified. In March 2001, UNOCHA reported the arrival of external fighters from outside Maluku. Change detection confirms that with their arrival, we see a shift of the intensity of conflict from the outer islands back to Ambon.

“...alleged perpetrators are said to be wearing military fatigues and be armed with bayonets, machetes and makeshift firearms and bombs ... brutality and seeming randomness of the killings are a marked shift from previous attacks...”
UNOCHA (2001)



Conclusions

Using density and change detection analysis, confirms that the entrance of external fighters from across Indonesia fundamentally impacted both the location and intensity of violent conflict in Maluku, Indonesia. By using an index to represent conflict intensity, this analysis advances understanding of how conflict spread throughout the province .

References

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Indonesia Administrative Boundaries: GIS-Diva.org

* Conflict Intensity Index developed by the author using
United Nations Office for the Coordinator of Humanitarian Assistance: Situation Reports (1, 13, 17, 25, 27, 40, 52, 88, 106, 117, 121,127, 136, 138) (December 2000 – July 2003)

** All photos taken by the author on Seram Island, Maluku, Indonesia, 2010.

