How International Policy Changes in Kivu
are Reflected in THE FAST Early Warning Data, 2002-2007

Heinz Krummenacher
Managing Director, swisspeace
heinz.krummenacher@swisspeace.ch
and Can Deniz
Project Assistant, swisspeace
can.deniz@swisspeace.ch)

The Research Question

From 1998 to 2008 swisspeace carried out a conflict early warning project called FAST.[1] Its methodological approach was twofold. On the one hand qualitative expert knowledge was utilized to assess root and proximate causes of potential violence, and on the other hand quantitative event data analysis served as a tool to measure short term trends in conflict and cooperation in the target countries. The uniqueness of the FAST approach consisted mainly in the introduction of so called "local information networks," i.e. systems of locally led information gathering units.[2] By comparison with other event data based systems, which use news wires or other print media as information sources, FAST's local observers identified many more salient events.[3] In addition, since all events were geo-coded, data aggregation could be done for alternatively defined geographic regions, such as the Ferghana valley, which overlaps three Central Asian countries, and for thematic topics such as refugee flows or environmental degradation.[4]

---

[1] FAST is a German acronym that stands for Early Recognition of Tensions and Factfinding. Funded by the Austrian, Canadian, Swedish, and Swiss development agencies, the early warning system covered 25 priority countries of these agencies. FAST had to stop its activities in April 2008 due to the donors' changed funding priorities.

[2] Other than using local information networks as sources for information the FAST approach differed little from other event data based approaches. Thus the event types and indicators used were those defined in the Integrated Data for Event Analysis (IDEA) framework. See for more details Krummenacher 2006.

[3] Initially also relying on news wires from Reuters, Agence France Press, and Itar Tass, we decided to create our own local information networks when we realized that countries like Uzbekistan or Madagascar received so little attention by those news agencies. For example, the average number of events from Reuters on Uzbekistan was 2 to 5 events per month. With the FAST local information networks in place this number grew exponentially. For Uzbekistan we counted between 100 and 180 salient conflictive and cooperative events per month.

[4]:See for example Krummenacher 2008. In this article we analyzed the relationship between environmental factors and violent conflict in different countries and regions (such as the Ferghana valley). With a traditional event data based approach this would not have been possible because (a) the data there is almost always aggregated on a national level and (b) event types are not linked to different event issues (like environment, economic or social system, etc.).

Even though local information networks produce many more salient events than alternative sources of information[5], it would be naive to believe that all relevant events are actually captured. The basic assumption of the quantitative approach used by FAST, however, was that the events stored in the data base were a representative sample of all conflictive and cooperative events within the individual target countries and thus made it possible to describe accurately developments on the ground. This paper provides a test of the accuracy of this assumption. Looking at the data on Kivu province in eastern Congo, one of the 25 regions and countries covered by FAST, we ask whether and how major international policy changes are reflected in FAST early warning data that cover the period between 2002 and 2007.

Political Developments in Kivu between 2002 and 2007

To show graphically political developments in Kivu between 2002 and 2007 we use an indicator called "relative forceful events".[6] This is the visual trace:

Graph 1: Relative Forceful Events Aug. 2002 – Dec. 2007

---
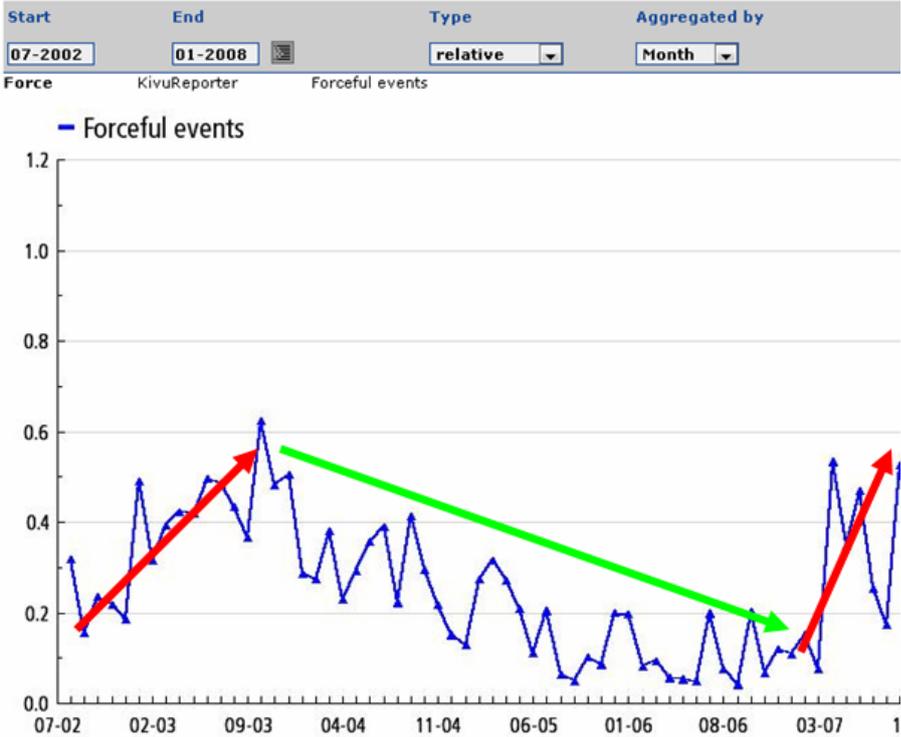
[5] A study by Senn, Krummenacher and Hämmerli (2008) shows that the local information network approach used by FAST yields much better results than for example internet based systems. We found that only 25% of events captured by local information networks can also be found on the internet, while around 75% are missing. This ratio fluctuates from country to country, but even in the case of Pakistan or Afghanistan where the likelihood that an event coded by the FAST country coordinator also shows up in the internet is highest, only around 60% of all coded events could be found via google on the www.

[6] The indicator "forceful events" depicts the proportion of events which entail the use of physical force compared to all direct actions (conflictive events). Direct actions consist of the following event types: threaten, demonstrate, reduce relationship, expel, seize and force.

At first glance we can distinguish roughly three different phases:
- First phase: growing tensions starting in December 2002 and culminating in the fall of 2003.
- Second phase: a de-escalation process from the end of 2003 until spring 2007.
- Third phase: rapid conflict escalation in March 2007.

If we take a closer look at the 2002 to 2004 time span (see graph 2) we observe that after the signing of the Pretoria accord in July 2002, an agreement in which Rwanda agreed to withdraw an estimated 20,000 Rwandan troops from the Democratic Republic of Congo in exchange for an international commitment to disarm the Hutu *interahamwe* based in Congo, there was a temporary decrease of tensions before the overall escalation trend prevailed.[7] This short period of relative detente was largely due to the massive diplomatic and financial pressure which the US government exerted on the Rwandan government to withdraw from the DRC, which they eventually did in September / October.

Graph 2: Phases of De-Escalation (green arrow) and Escalation (red arrow) Aug. 2002 – Oct. 2004
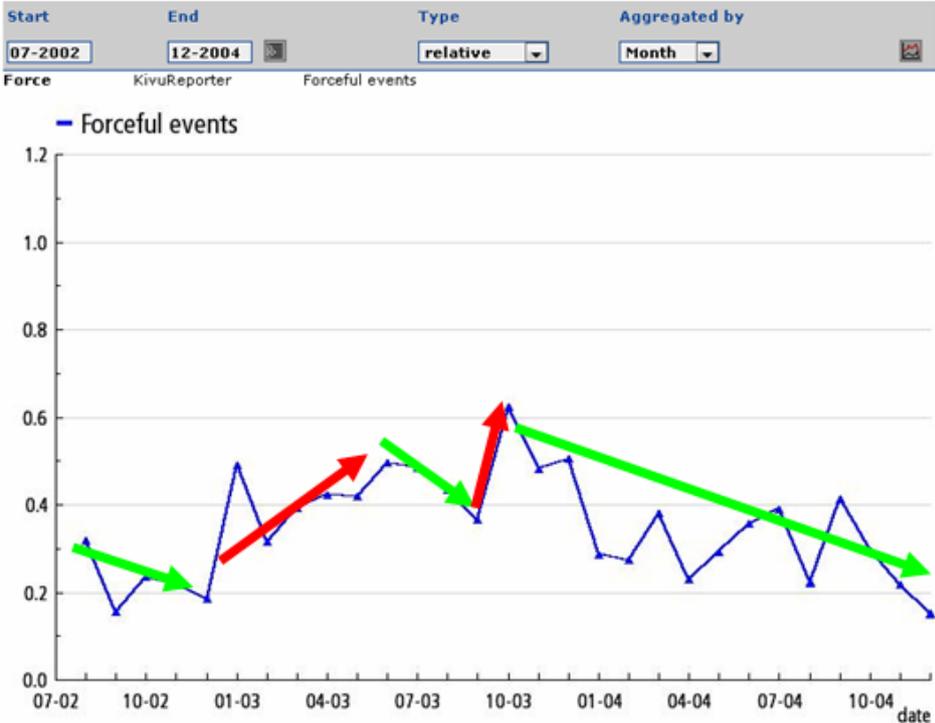
Yet the calm did not have a long shelf life since rebel leaders subsequently tried to strengthen their negotiation positions vis a vis the transitional government then in the making (January to June 2003). Even though there was strong support from the international community for the transitional government, which was formed in July

---

[7] All references, if not otherwise indicated, refer to the respective FAST Updates.

2003,[8] the spiral of rising tensions could not be immediately stopped. On the one hand, in June France had deployed army units to Bunia which were spearheading a UN-mandated rapid reaction force, but on the other hand dissident Congolese Tutsi officers (among them General Laurent Nkunda) jointly refused their nomination by Kinshasa to new posts in the national army (September 2003). Thus international peacekeeping measures were thwarted by internal dynamics which in the end meant that the situation continued to stay tense.

It was only in October of 2003 that the process of de-escalation gained momentum. Landmark events during this month were:

- The uniting of RCD-G[9] and RCD-ML[10] as well as the alliance between the two influential governors Eugene Serufuli and Julien Pakulu;
- The demobilization of the Mai-Mai militia and rebel groups supported by Rwanda;
- The appointment of General Nyabyolwa as head of the military region of South Kivu and of General David Padiri Bulenda, a former Mai Mai-warlord, to a high-ranking position in the Congolese Army;
- The turnaround in Ituri which was provoked by international pressure;
- The peace accords signed between the Congolese army and the Mai-Mai militia.

This de-escalation process went on in 2004 / 2005 and culminated in the adoption of a new constitution by the Parliament and the electorate, thus paving the way for elections in 2006. As illustrated in graph 1, during this period the proportion of forceful events decreased from 0.6 in September 2003 to roughly 0.1 to 0.2 in 2006 / beginning of 2007.

This positive development ended in March 2007 when forceful events increased exponentially due to the end of the power sharing agreement. While the co-optation of the main rebel groups' leaders during the transitional phase had softened political tensions, now the "winner takes it all mentality" after the presidential elections in late 2006 reversed this trend. The growing accumulation of power in the hands of the new President Joseph Kabila, whose party also gained the majority of seats both in the National Assembly and in the Senate, alienated other commanders who suddenly found themselves sidelined. It was the concentration of executive and legislative power in the hands of President Joseph Kabila which marked the end of detente in the DRC and

---

[8] The leaders of the two main rebel groups (Azarias Ruberwa for the Congolese Rally for Democracy (RCD), Jean-Pierre Bemba for the Movement for the Liberation of Congo (MLC)) as well as Abdoulaye Yerodia Ndombasi of the outgoing Kinshasa regime and Arthur Z'ahidi Ngoma of the political opposition were sworn in as vice presidents with wide competences (see FAST Update, September to November 2003, page 3.).

[9] Congolese Rally for Democracy – Goma (Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie – Goma).

[10] Congolese Rally for Democracy –Movement for the Liberation (Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie – Mouvement de Libération).

prompted the frustrated opposition leaders to resort to arms again. The power struggle peaked in March when governmental troops and several hundred body guards of opposition commander Jean-Pierre Bemba, who refused to be disarmed, engaged in fierce battles (International Crisis Group 2007).

Conclusions

The findings presented in this article provide ample evidence that international policy changes in Kivu between 2002 and 2007 are well reflected in the FAST data. Broadly speaking, we can identify three different phases:

- First, a rise in violence after the Pretoria peace accords due to the different rebel factions' attempts to consolidate their negotiation positions in the run-up to the upcoming presidential elections.
- Second, a rather extended phase of de-escalation in between the end of 2003 and spring of 2007, when international pressure forced the political rivals to accept a power sharing model, and
- Third, renewed sharp hostilities after the elections when President Joseph Kabila acted in a "winner take all" mode that is all too common following elections in post-colonial Africa.

The FAST data set, however incomplete it might be, is far more complete than other events data sets and quite accurately depicts the developments in the target region during the period under scrutiny. It clearly shows that political pressure and economic support by powerful external actors (such as the USA and France) at various occasions helped to curb the conflict spiral. At the same time, however, the data also provide ample evidence that in countries that lack adequate institutional mechanisms to cope with political and social conflict, sustainable and lasting peace cannot be achieved by outside intervention. As long as Africa's political and military elites are not willing to share power, outside interventions remain nothing but piecemeal and palliative efforts.

References

FAST Updates on DRC/Kivu region, Quarterly Risk Assessments, swisspeace, 2003 - 2007, http://www.swisspeace.ch/typo3/en/peace-conflict-research/previous-projects/fast-international/countries/index.html#c1604.

International Crisis Group (2007). *Congo's Peace: Miracle or Mirage?,* Brussels, 23 April 2007.

Krummenacher, Heinz (2008). "Environmental Factors as Triggers for Violent Conflict: Empirical Evidence from the 'FAST' Data Base." In *Monitoring Environment and Security,* brief 37. Bonn International Center for Conversion: 43 - 45. 2008.

Krummenacher, Heinz (2006). "Computer Assisted Early Warning - the FAST Example." In: Robert Trappl (ed.), *Programming for Peace. Computer-Aided Methods for International Conflict Resolution and Prevention.* Dordrecht: Springer.

Senn, Dominic, Heinz Krummenacher and August Hämmerli (2008). "Estimating the Informational Overlap Between Hand-Coded Political Event Data and the World Wide Web." In: *The 12th World Multi-Conference on Systemics, Cybernetics and Informatics, Proceedings.* Orlando, FL: International Institute of Informatics and Systemics.