

Inter-state Wars (Version 4.0): Definitions and Variables by Meredith Reid Sarkees

The Correlates of War (COW) Project has utilized a classification of wars that is based upon the status of territorial entities, in particular focusing on those that are classified as members of the inter-state system (referred to as “states”). Wars have been categorized by whether they primarily take place between/among states, between/among a state(s) and a non-state entity, and within states. This dataset encompasses wars in the first category (WarType #1)– wars that take place between or among states (members of the interstate system). For a complete description of the COW war typology and for a definition of the major variables as they apply to all wars, see “The COW Typology of War: Defining and Categorizing Wars [Version 4 of the Data]” by Meredith Reid Sarkees, also available on this website. A more detailed discussion can also be found in Chapter 2 of *Resort to War: A Data Guide to Inter-State, Extra-State, Intra-state, and Non-State Wars, 1816-2007* by Meredith Reid Sarkees and Frank Whelon Wayman, (Washington, DC: CQ Press 2010). This volume also contains a brief historical description of each war and a discussion of the coding decisions made in each case.

Within the COW war typology, an inter-state war must meet some definitional requirements of all wars in that the war must involve sustained combat, involving organized armed forces, resulting in a minimum of 1,000 battle-related combatant fatalities within a twelve month period. In *Resort to Arms*, Correlates of War scholars Melvin Small and J. David Singer further established the requisite condition that for a conflict to be a war, it must involve armed forces capable of “effective resistance” on

both sides. The effective resistance criteria were specifically utilized to differentiate wars from massacres, one-sided state killings, or general riots by unorganized individuals. Such one-sided violence is not considered to be the same phenomenon as war and is not included here.

As with all categories of war, for a state to be considered a war participant, the minimum requirement is that it has to either commit 1,000 troops to the war or suffer 100 battle-related deaths.

One particular addition to this version of the data is information concerning war “transformations.” Though the understanding of wars being transformed or changing categories goes back to the origins of the COW project and *Wages of War*, it is only in this version of the data that specific variables addressing such transformations have been added. Wars are often not as clearly delineated as our typologies, and can often contain elements of different types of wars. Furthermore, a conflict can, over its life span, metamorphose from one type of war to another. COW has attempted to deal with such complexity by relying on two major determinants: the principle of the mutual exclusivity of wars, and the classification of wars based upon the decision concerning which parties are doing the “bulk of the fighting.” Thus, if a war changes so that one or more of the parties doing the bulk of the fighting changes, the initial war ends and the conflict is transformed into a war of a second type. Such transformations can be seen in all types of war: for example, if another state intervenes in an intra-state war on the side of the non-state forces, and then takes over the bulk of the fighting, the war is transformed into an inter-state war between the two states. Conversely, inter-state wars can also be

transformed into intra-state or extra-state wars, for example when a state withdraws from an inter-state war, leaving one state in continuing combat with a non-state actor. The fact that such a transformation has taken place are sometimes indicated in the title of the war, for example: The Viet Nam War phase 2 of 1965-1975.

Variables Layout

In general, there is one record for each state war participant, unless the state changed sides during the war, in which case there are two records.

WarNum - the number assigned to the war

WarName - the name given to the war

WarType - 1 = Inter-state war

Ccode – the System Membership number (or Country Code) for the state participant

State Name - the name of the System Member

StartMonth1 - the month in which sustained combat began: -9 = month unknown

StartDay1 - the day on which sustained combat began: -9 = day unknown

StartYear1 - the year in which sustained combat began: -9 = year is unknown

EndMonth1 - the month in which sustained combat ended, or the month of the last major engagement after which fatalities declined below the war fatality threshold: -7 = war ongoing as if 12/31/2007, -9 = month unknown

EndDay1 - the day on which sustained combat ended, or the day after the last major engagement after which fatalities declined below the war fatality threshold: -7 = war ongoing as if 12/31/2007, -9 = day unknown

EndYear1 - the year in which sustained combat ended, or the year of the last major engagement after which fatalities declined below the war fatality threshold: -7 = war ongoing as if 12/31/2007, -9 = year unknown

StartMonth2 - after a break in the fighting, the month in which sustained combat resumes: -9 = month unknown, -8 = not applicable

StartDay2 - after a break in the fighting, the day on which sustained combat resumes: -9 = month unknown, -8 = not applicable

StartYear2 - after a break in the fighting, the year in which sustained combat resumes: -9 = year unknown, -8 = not applicable

EndMonth2 - after fighting resumes, the month in which sustained combat ended, or the month of the last major engagement after which fatalities declined below the war fatality threshold: -7 = war ongoing as if 12/31/2007, -9 = month unknown, -8 = not applicable

EndDay2 - after fighting resumes, the day on which sustained combat ended, or the day after the last major engagement after which fatalities declined below the war fatality threshold: -7 = war ongoing as if 12/31/2007, -9 = day unknown, -8 = not applicable

EndYear2 - after fighting resumes, the year in which sustained combat ended, or the year of the last major engagement after which fatalities declined below the war fatality threshold: -7 = war ongoing as if 12/31/2007, -9 = year unknown, -8 = not applicable

TransFrom - the War# of a preceding war that was transformed into this inter-state war: -8 = Not applicable

WhereFought - Region(s) where combat involving the state occurred. Values are:

1 = W. Hemisphere

2 = Europe

4 = Africa

6 = Middle East

7 = Asia

9 = Oceania

11 = Europe & Middle East

12 = Europe & Asia

13 = W. Hemisphere & Asia

14 = Europe, Africa & Middle East

15 = Europe, Africa, Middle East, & Asia

16 = Africa, Middle East, Asia & Oceania

17 = Asia & Oceania

18 = Africa & Middle East

19 = Europe, Africa, Middle East, Asia & Oceania

Initiator - whether the state initiated the war

1 = Yes

2 = No

TransTo - the WarNum of the war that this war transformed into, -8=Not applicable

Outcome: coded as:

1 = Winner

2 = Loser

3 = Compromise/Tied

4 = The war was transformed into another type of war

5 = The war is ongoing as of 12/31/2007

6 = Stalemate

7 = Conflict continues at below war level

8 = changed sides

BatDeaths - the battle-related combatant fatalities suffered by the state: -9= data unknown

Version - Version of the data = 4.0