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

Previously, the Correlates of War (COW) Project has examined only wars that involved the government of a member of the interstate system (a state) in one form or another. The inclusion of non-state wars in the data presented here represents an attempt to broaden our understanding of war by including wars between or among non-state entities. Such entities include governments of other types of geopolitical units (GPUs), such as dependencies or non-state autonomous entities, that do not meet the criteria of system membership. They also might involve nonterritorial entities (NTEs) or non-state armed groups (NSAs) that have no defined territorial base. From a state-centric theoretical perspective, wars between or among non-state actors fall into four general categories (For a complete description of the COW 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.).[1]

Two of these types take place within existing system members--regional internal wars (war type 6) and inter-communal wars (war type 7)--and thus are included along with civil wars in the broader category of intra-state wars. The remaining two classifications, wars between or among non-state entities that take place in non-state territory (war type 8, of which we have sixty-one) and wars between NSAs that take place across state borders (war type 9, of which we have identified one), are included in the Non-State War dataset presented here.

In the first class, in non-state territory, combat takes place in territory that is not part of the territory of a member of the interstate system. Such territory could be a dependency, a non-state autonomous entity (which does not meet the criteria of system membership), or a theoretically uninhabited territory. Such conflicts were common in territories that were in pre-state-formation periods. The second category, across state borders, involves wars that take place across the borders of existing states but do not involve the state or regional governments in the conflict.

Identifying such non-state wars involves many of the same difficulties experienced while identifying extra-state and intra-state wars, in terms of both describing the non-state participants in the war and recording the battle-related deaths. When discussing civil wars, Correlates of War scholars Melvin Small and J. David Singer established the requisite condition that war must involved armed forces capable of "effective resistance." They then developed two alternative criteria for defining effective resistance: "(a) both sides had to be initially organized for violent conflict and prepared to resist the attacks of their antagonists, or (b) the weaker side, although initially unprepared, is able to inflict upon the stronger opponents at least five percent of the number of fatalities it sustains."[2] The effective resistance criteria were specifically utilized to differentiate wars from massacres, one-sided state killings, or general riots by unorganized individuals. For a state to be considered a participant in any class of war, the minimum requirement is that it has to either commit 1,000 troops to the war or suffer 100 battle-related deaths. Since non-state armed groups are generally smaller than states and

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[1] Also see Meredith Reid Sarkees and Frank Whelon Wayman, *Resort to War: A Data Guide to Inter-State, Extra-State, Intra-state, and Non-State Wars, 1816-2007* (Washington, DC: CQ Press 2010).
[2] Melvin Small and J. David Singer, *Resort to Arms: International and Civil War, 1816-1980* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage, 1982), 215.

have fewer resources than states, we have adopted a more minimalist requirement for an NSA to be considered a war participant. An NSA can be considered a war participant if it either commits 100 armed personnel to the war or suffers 25 battle-related deaths. Thus non-state wars involve combat between two or more non-state armed groups that are organized for combat, are capable of effective resistance, and commit a minimum of 100 troops to the war or suffer 25 battle-related deaths. Admittedly, this lower level to qualify as a war participant may make it more complicated to identify all of the participants in a non-state war. The participants are grouped as to whether they fought on Side A or Side B of the war (the letters A and B having no particular meaning)..

The same battle-related death definition of war as involving sustained combat with 1,000 battle-related deaths between/among the combatants per year (or twelve month period from the start of the war) applies to all wars, including non-state wars. However, as with civil wars, it is often more difficult to ascertain battle-related deaths in non-state wars. Non-state armed groups may or may not wear identifying clothing, so it may be more difficult for observers to distinguish combatant deaths from civilians who may have been killed. Similarly, it is frequently difficult to separate wars (or actions by NSAs) from general riots that may result from, or occur along with, armed group actions. Consequently, historians frequently report fatality and casualty numbers that include the deaths of noncombatants. Nevertheless, we have attempted to report only battle-related deaths among the combatants, frequently by making judgments on fatalities related to the reported sizes of the combatant forces, if available.

The data-set presented here includes the sixty-two non-state wars that have been identified to date. Since this dataset is in its initial release, it is assumed that there are a number of non-state wars that have not yet been identified. It is hoped that colleagues in the research community will be willing to report any potential war candidates. Individual descriptions of the wars follow the table.

Variables Layout
WarNum - the number assigned to the war
WarName - the name given to the war
WarType - 8 = wars between or among non-state entities that take place in non-state territory: 9 = wars between NSAs that take place across state borders
WhereFought - Region where combat occurred. Values are:
      1 = W. Hemisphere
      2 = Europe
      4 = Africa
      6 = Middle East
      7 = Asia
      9 = Oceania
SideA1 - the first Non-State Armed group (NSA) fighting on one side (Side A) of the war
SideA2 - the second Non-State Armed group (NSA) fighting on one side (Side A) of the war: -8=Not Applicable (no second party on this side)
SideB1 - the first Non-State Armed group (NSA) fighting on the other side of the war (Side B)

SideB2 - the second Non-State Armed group (NSA) fighting on the other side of the war (Side B): -8=Not Applicable (no second party on this side)

SideB3 - the third Non-State Armed group (NSA) fighting on the other side of the war (Side B): -8=Not Applicable (no third party on this side)

SideB4 - the fourth Non-State Armed group (NSA) fighting on the other side of the war (Side B): -8=Not Applicable (no fourth party on this side)

SideB5 - the fifth Non-State Armed group (NSA) fighting on the other side of the war (Side B): -8=Not Applicable (no fifth party on this side)

StartYear - the year in which sustained combat began

StartMonth - the month in which sustained combat began: -9 is used when a specific month is as yet unknown

StartDay- the day on which sustained combat began: -9 is used when a specific day is as yet unknown

EndYear - the year in which sustained combat ended, or the year of the last major engagement after which fatalities declined below the war fatality threshold

EndMonth - the month in which sustained combat ended, or the month of the last major engagement after which fatalities declined below the war fatality threshold: -9 is used when a specific month is as yet unknown

EndDay - the day on which sustained combat ended, or the day after the last major engagement after which fatalities declined below the war fatality threshold: -9 is used when a specific day is as yet unknown

Initiator - the side, which began combat: A or B

TransFrom - the WarNum of a preceding war which was transformed into this war, -8=Not applicable

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

Outcome: coded as:
   1 - Side A wins
   2 - Side B wins
   3 - Compromise
   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

SideADeaths - the battle-related combatant fatalities suffered by Side A, -9= data unknown

SideBDeaths - the battle-related combatant fatalities suffered by Side B, -9= data unknown

TotalCombatDeaths - the combination of Side A Deaths and Side B. Deaths. If the specific fatalities of the Sides are unknown, a total combatant fatality figure may be provided, -9= data unknown

Version - the version of the dataset = 4.0