Conflicts Databases

Editor's Note

There are close links between conflict and terrorism.[1] Predicting conflict escalation is helpful for assessing risks of greater use of terrorist tactics for conflict waging. Databases on conflict that are maintained over many years are especially useful for forecasting the escalation or de-escalation of acts of terrorism and other manifestations of political violence. An example is the Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research (HIIK) whose *Conflict Barometer* (Item No. 4 below) has looked at conflict dynamics since 1991. Its latest issue, covering the year 2020, counted 40 wars – 21 full scale wars and 19 limited wars. Short of war, the research team from Heidelberg university monitors also violent crises and non-violent conflicts. For last year (2020), it recorded a total of 359 conflicts worldwide, noting that "About 60 percent, 220, were fought violently, while 139 were on a non-violent level."[2] HIIK's respective figures for 2019 were: 358 conflicts worldwide of which 196 fought violently and 162 non-violently. This indicates an increase in violent conflicts which might also affect the level of terrorism in the active conflict zone and beyond (e.g., in diasporas). Combining and comparing databases on conflict with databases on terrorism can offer useful insights. One report (No. 17) directly seeks to integrate terrorism and conflict data.

Perspectives on Terrorism has asked Ishaansh Singh, who interns with the Terrorism Research Initiative (TRI), to make an inventory of databases on conflicts paralleling the one of Neil Bowie's new list on terrorism databases.

20 Databases on (Violent and Armed) Conflicts

by Ishaansh Singh

Abstract

This Research Note introduces 20 databases and datasets on violent and armed conflicts. It identifies some of their key features and their background. There is one overlap with one of the databases introduced by Neil Bowie in this issue of Perspectives on Terrorism - but different aspects of the available data are highlighted when reporting on ACLED.

N.B.: All website hyper-links have been validated as of 6th of April, 2021.

Keywords: armed conflict, civil wars, conflict, database, dataset, violent conflict

Introduction

This inventory lists twenty databases covering events ranging from violent protests to civil wars and mass killings. Some of these databases only look at events of the recent past whereas others have data going back to the late twentieth century. While some take the form of simple chronologies (e.g., items 12 and 18), others contain sophisticated variables (e.g., item 5). Some databases are country- or region-specific while others cover conflicts across multiple countries (e.g., item 14) or are global in scope.

At the time of research (early 2021), most of these databases were freely accessible. Most of them originate in the Western world and focus on domestic as well as international conflicts. Despite shortcomings of some of these databases due to reduction or termination of funding leading to lack of regular updating, they still contain valuable data which might be useful for some readers of *Perspectives on Terrorism.*

1. **Host Institution:** Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED)

    a. **ACLED 2019: The Year in Review**
        Host Institution: Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED)

        Scope: Data on political violence and demonstration activities in 2019.

        Access: Free

Website: https://acleddata.com/2020/03/02/acled-2019-the-year-in-review/

E-mail: admin@acleddata.com

Summary: ACLED's annual report for the year 2019 presents data on political violence and protest across Africa, West Asia, South Asia, South East Asia, Central Asia and the Caucasus, and South-Eastern and Eastern Europe that took place in the year 2019.

b. Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) 2018 Dataset

Host Institution: Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED)

Scope: The decline and rise of political violence and conflict-affected areas.

Access: Free

Website: https://acleddata.com/2019/01/11/acled-2018-the-year-in-review/

E-mail: admin@acleddata.com

Summary: The dataset registers distinct threat patterns across each region of its coverage. The dataset lists numbers and types of organized violence and protest events; the volume of reported fatalities; the proliferation of armed actors; and the geographic footprint of violence across time and location. In doing so, it surveys and contextualizes these trends, providing a fairly comprehensive survey.

c. Global Conflict and Disorder Patterns: 2020

Host Institution: Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED)

Scope: Evolution of disorder.

Access: Free

Website: https://acleddata.com/2020/02/14/global-conflict-and-disorder-patterns-2020/

E-mail: admin@acleddata.com

Summary: The report draws on the ACLED dataset of nearly a million events of political violence and events in over 100 countries. Based on these data, it recognises four broad categories that characterize the conflict landscape of 2020.

d. Political Violence and Protest in Europe: 2020

Host Institution: Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED)

Scope: Political violence and demonstration events in 52 countries and territories in Europe.

Access: Free

Website: https://acleddata.com/2021/01/14/acled-expands-to-all-of-europe/

E-mail: admin@acleddata.com

Summary: This dataset includes data on political violence and demonstration events in 37 new countries and territories in Europe, thereby bringing the total number of countries and territories covered to 52. The dataset allows for data-driven analysis of disorder trends across Europe such as the Yellow Vest demonstrations in France, abortion related protests in Poland, climate change strikes in Sweden, prison unrest in Italy, manifestations by separatists in Spain, and far-right activity in Germany.

2. **Host Institution:** Center for Systemic Peace

   a. **Global Report 2017**

   Host Institution: [Publication] Marshall, M.G. & Elzinga-Marshall, G. (2017). *Global Report 2017: Conflict, Governance, and State Fragility*. Center for Systemic Peace, Vienna, USA.

   Scope: Global system performance and fragility in the era of globalisation

   Access: Free

   Website: http://www.systemicpeace.org/vlibrary/GlobalReport2017.pdf

   E-mail: contact@systemicpeace.org

   Summary: The report monitors key trends in armed conflicts and governance along with societal-system development. The empirical analysis of current data highlights threats to the global system through environmental degradation and political violence, with particular emphasis on West Asia and North Africa.

   b. **Major Episodes of Political Violence, 1946-201**

   Host Institution: Center for Systemic Peace.

   Scope: Inter-state, societal, and communal warfare.

   Access: Free

   Website: http://www.systemicpeace.org/inscr/MEPVv2018.xls

   E-mail: contact@systemicpeace.org

   Summary: The dataset lists annual, time-series, and cross-national data on societal, interstate, and communal warfare and scores their magnitude for all countries, based on variables such as ethnicity, interstate dimension, civil violence and warfare.

3. **Conflict, Violent Extremism, and Development**

   Host Institution: [Book Publication] Andrew Glazzard, Sasha Jesperson, Thomas Maguire, and Emily Winterbotham. *Conflict, Violent Extremism, and Development: New Challenges, New Responses*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, (2018).

   Scope: The nature of new challenges in civil conflicts to development practice.

   Access: Free

   Website: https://www.academia.edu/34901610/CONFLICT_VIOLENT_EXTREMISM_AND_DEVELOPMENT_New_Challenges_New_Responses?email_work_card=view-paper

   E-mail: N/A

   Summary: The report examines the implications for international development actors of the new kinds of terrorism that takes place in civil conflicts. The study aims to address and answer questions about the difference in the nature of conflict actors through a combination of theoretical inquiry and investigation of three case studies. It further aims to identify the challenges posed by those groups to development practices and to propose a way forward for meeting these challenges.

4. **Conflict Barometer 2019**

   Host Institution: Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research (HIIK)

Scope: Political conflict dynamics and developments worldwide.

Access: Free

Website: https://hiik.de/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/CoBa-Final-%C3%BCberarbeitet.pdf

E-mail: info@hiik.de

Summary: HIIK in 2019 observed a total of 358 conflicts worldwide covering political conflict dynamics and developments worldwide. This publication described the trends in global conflict developments, escalations, de-escalations, and settlements in the same year. HIIK has been monitoring conflicts since 1991.

5. **Contemporary Slavery in Armed Conflict (CSAC)**

    Host Institution: The University of Nottingham

    Scope: Various types of enslavement within modern armed conflicts.

    Access: Free

    Website: https://www.csac.org.uk/

    E-mail: rightslab@nottingham.ac.uk

    Summary: The *Contemporary Slavery in Armed Conflict (CSAC)* dataset measures incidents of human trafficking, enslavement, child soldering, forced marriage, forced labour, and related violations which were committed by armed actors from 1989 to 2016. It includes cases across 171 conflicts and wars fought during that time period. Additionally, the database records information on the forms of slavery present; one of the variables assesses whether the use of slavery by an armed actor was in pursuit of tactical or strategic aims or both.

6. **Host Institution: Council on Foreign Relations**

    a. **Conflicts to Watch in 2020**

        Home Institution: Council on Foreign Relations

        Scope: The likelihood and impact of thirty potential conflicts in the year 2020.

        Access: Free

        Website: https://www.cfr.org/report/conflicts-watch-2020?utm_content=121819&utm_source=tw&utm_medium=social_owned&utm_campaign=pps-2020

        E-mail: pstares@cfr.org

        Summary: The dataset analyses and ranks thirty ongoing or potentially escalating conflicts, based on their likelihood to occur or expand in the following year and assessing their possible impact on U.S. interests. The dataset identified thirteen conflicts as top priorities for the United States in the year 2020, based on impact and likelihood and classified them into three tiers: high, moderate, and low priority.

    b. **Global Conflict Tracker**

        Host Institution: Council on Foreign Relations

        Scope: Conflicts of concern to the United States

        Access: Free

Website: https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/?category=us

E-mail: communications@cfr.org

Summary: The Global Conflict Tracker (last updated February 9, 2021)
serves as an interactive guide to ongoing conflicts throughout the world and their relevance to the interests of the United States. It includes almost thirty conflicts and offers background information on each conflict.

7. **Countries at Risk for Mass Killing 2020-2021**

   Host Institution: [Report] Early Warning Project

   Scope: Genocide and crimes against humanity.

   Access: Free

   Website: https://earlywarningproject.ushmm.org/reports/countries-at-risk-for-mass-killings-2020-2021-early-warning-project-statistical-risk-assessment-results

   E-mail: ewp@ushmm.org

   Summary: The report assesses and identifies the risk and the possibility of mass killings taking place. It uses publicly available data and statistical modelling to create a list of countries based on their estimated risk of experiencing new episodes or onset of mass killings. The report further highlights findings related to the countries with the highest estimated risks of (new) mass killings in 2020 or 2021, countries that have experienced high risks consistently for multiple years, countries where the estimated risk has increased or decreased, and countries with unexpected results.

8. **Current Trends in Violent Conflict**

   Host Institution: [Report] Avis, W. (2019). *Current Trends in Violent Conflict*. K4D Helpdesk Report 565. Brighton, UK: Institute of Development Studies.

   Scope: Drivers, responses, and themes of violent conflict and the reason for changes over time.

   Access: Free

   Website: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5cf669ace5274a07692466db/565_Trends_in_Violent_Conflict.pdf

   E-mail: helpdesk@k4d.info

   Summary: A report based on seven days of desk research, summarizing findings from various databases in a report for the British government. It draws on grey and academic literature and includes qualitative and quantitative analyses of conflict datasets. It is divided into two sections where the first section provides a summary of conflict trends and the second section provides an annotated bibliography that highlights key studies and their findings.

9. **Economic Value of Peace 2021**

   Home Institution: Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP)

   Scope: Measure of the global economic impact of violence and conflict.

   Access: Free

   Website: https://www.visionofhumanity.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/EVP-2021-web.pdf

   E-mail: info@economicsandpeace.org

   Summary: This report by the Australian Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP) evaluates the im-

pact of conflict and violence on the global economy. The economic model is broken down into three domains: violence containment, armed conflict related costs, and consequential costs of violence.

10. **Event Data on Armed Conflict and Security (EDACS)**

    Host Institution: [Publication] Chojnacki, S. (2012). Event Data on Armed Conflict and Security: New Perspectives, Old Challenges, and Some Solutions. *International Interactions*.

    Scope: Discussing problems and solutions of the EDACS event data set

    Access: Free

    Website: https://www.conflict-data.org/publications/EDACS/EDACS__Naked/index.html

    E-mail: N/A

    Summary: The article presents the dataset on Event Data on Conflict and Security (EDACS) and discusses the inherent problems of event data, in addition to showing how the challenges identified were met within EDACS. It further demonstrates how the dataset enables the analyst to deal with issues such as - but not limited to - bias arising due to the selection of certain news sources and use of secondary data.

11. **Getting Religion Right in Civil Wars**

    Host Institution: [Publication] Toft, M. D. (2021). Getting Religion Right in Civil Wars. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*.

    Scope: Civil wars, religions, and armed conflicts.

    Access: Paid subscription

    Website: https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002721997895

    E-mail: monica.toft@tufts.edu

    Summary: The article examines the increasing influence of religious cleavages and grievances in civil wars and armed conflicts. It seeks to understand how the causes and outcomes of religious civil wars differ from other civil wars. The first section of the text reviews literature and sheds light on the importance of religion. The author then introduces a dataset and describes key trends in religious civil war. It is followed by tests of whether Muslim or Arab Muslim societies in particular are more prone to religious strife.

12. **Host Institution: International Crisis Group**

    a. **10 Conflicts to Watch in 2021**

        Scope: Conflicts to lookout for in 2021.

        Access: Free

        Website: https://www.crisisgroup.org/global/10-conflicts-watch-2021

        E-mail: brussels@crisisgroup.org

        Summary: The report focuses on possible conflicts and their consequences in 2021, covering, inter alia, the impact of COVID-19 climate changes, recent incidents in American politics, the Armenian-Azerbaijani war, and the Ethiopian conflict in the Tigray region.

    b. **Crisis Watch: October Trends and November Alerts**

Scope: Dangers of escalating conflicts.

Access: Free

Website: https://www.crisisgroup.org/crisiswatch/november-alerts-october-trends-2019

E-mail: brussels@crisisgroup.org

Summary: This edition of the conflict tracker highlights the dangers of escalating conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Guinea-Bissau, Syria, Iraq, and South Sudan. Additionally, it also looks at conflict resolution opportunities in Yemen.

c. Diverse Global Protests

Scope: Diverse protests taking place in West Asia, Africa, Latin America, and Asia.

Access: Free

Website: https://www.crisisgroup.org/content/diverse-global-protests-share-common-target-status-quo

E-mail: brussels@crisisgroup.org

Summary: The dataset indicates that protests across the globe, while having their own dynamic, have yet something in common. The dataset further analyses the impact particular events will have on conflicts in the Middle East, Latin America and Asia.

13. MAR Data

Host Institution: Minorities at Risk

Scope: The suffering or benefits a group collectively experiences and its systematic discriminatory treatment vis-a-vis other groups in society.

Access: Free

Website: http://www.mar.umd.edu/mar_data.asp

E-mail: amar-cidcm@umd.edu

Summary: The Minorities at Risk data tracks 284 politically active ethnic groups across the world from 1945 to the present. The data is organised qualitatively and quantitatively and includes minority group assessments and chronologies.

14. Massive Atrocities: Dataset and Typology

Host Institution: [Publication and dataset] Conley, Bridget and Hazlett, Chad (July 2020) "How Very Massive Atrocities End: A Dataset and Typology." *Journal of Peace Research*. DOI:10.1177/0022343319900912

Scope: Mass atrocities since 1945 with more than 50,0000 fatalities.

Access: Restricted subscription service.

Website: https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0022343319900912

E-mail: chazlett@ucla.edu

Summary: The article uses a dataset that covers a total of forty-three mass atrocities perpetrated by state or non-state actors since 1945 with at least 50,000 civilian fatalities. Additionally, it provides an inductively generated typology of three major ending types: (i) carrying out violence to its intended conclusion (ii) militarily driving the perpetrator out of power, and (iii) shift to strategies that no lon-

ger involve mass atrocities against civilians.

15. **Re-Describing Transnational Conflict in Africa**

Host Institution: [Publication] Twagiramungu, N., Duursma, A., Berhe, M., De Waal, A. (2019). Re-describing transnational conflict in Africa. *The Journal of Modern African Studies, 57*(3), 377-391. DOI:10.1017/S0022278X19000107 as presented by Department for International Development, U.K.

Scope: Presentation of main findings from a new integrated dataset of transnational armed conflict in Africa.

Access: Free

Website: https://www.gov.uk/research-for-development-outputs/re-describing-transnational-conflict-in-africa

E-mail: N/A

Summary: The data indicate that a major feature of armed conflict in Africa is transnationality, that 'civil wars' have an international character. Existing definitions of 'civil war' and 'interstate conflict' do not capture the particularities of many wars in Africa.

16. **Small Arms Survey**

Host Institution: [Briefing Paper] Hideg, Gergely & Alvazzi del Frate, Anna (2021). *Still Not There: Global Violent Deaths Scenarios, 2019-30.* Security Assessment in North Africa.

Scope: Global violent deaths and trends in Northern Africa and G5 Sahel region.

Access: Free

Website: http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/fileadmin/docs/T-Briefing-Papers/SAS-SA-NA-BP-GVD-scenarios.pdf

E-mail: info@smallarmssurvey.org

Summary: The paper provides an updated trend analysis of violent deaths based on data from 2018. It presents scenarios that reflect possible trends in violent deaths in Northern Africa, the G5 Sahel regions, as well as globally in the period leading to 2030.

17. **Terrorism in Armed Conflict Project**

Host Institution: Conflict Management and Peace Science Journal. Report by Fortna, V. P., Lotito, N. J., & Rubin, M. A. (2020). *Terrorism in Armed Conflict: New Data Attributing Terrorism to Rebel Organizations.*

Scope: Civil conflict, civil war, political violence, terrorism.

Access: Paid subscription

Website: https://doi.org/10.1177/0738894220972996

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Summary: This project integrates Uppsala Conflict Data Project sample of rebel organizations with the University of Maryland's START's Global Terrorism Database (GTD), covering 409 organisations for the period of 1970-2013. The dataset provides attribution to specific rebel groups with coding for uncertainty due to missing or ambiguous information of the perpetrators. This enables researchers to address 'description bias' in media-based terrorism data, model uncertainty about perpetrator attribution, and adjust the manner in which terrorism can be counted. The dataset also provides a measure of deliberately indiscriminate terrorism.

18. **The Expanding Reach of Transnational Organized Crime**

Host Institution: Global Initiative Against International Organized Crime, Geneva, Switzerland.

Scope: Show rise in the global illicit economy since 2000 and its threat to security, development, and justice. While not offering a dataset of its own, the report *'The Global Illicit Economy: Trajectories of Transnational Organized Crime'* (2021) integrates data from various datasets.

Access: Free

Website: https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/The-Global-Illicit-Economy-GI-TOC-Low.pdf

E-mail: secretariat@globalinitiative.net

Summary: The report is based on data in the public domain and provides an analysis on the threat posed to security, development, and justice by the illicit global economy that has boomed in the past twenty years. The report shows interdependencies between crime and conflict.

19. **Host Institution:** Uppsala Conflict Data Program

    a. **Armed Conflict Dataset**

       Host Institution: Uppsala Conflict Data Program and Peace Research Institute Oslo, Norway.

       Scope: Internal and external armed conflicts in the period from 1946 to 2019.

       Access: Free

       Website: https://ucdp.uu.se/exploratory

       E-mail: info@prio.org

       Summary: This dataset is a collaborative project which lists internal and external armed conflicts in the period from 1946 to 2019. The dataset is categorised in terms of actors, conflicts, and countries and provides numerical data related to state-based violence, non-state violence, and one-sided violence.

    b. **Battle-Related Deaths Dataset**

       Host Institution: Uppsala Conflict Data Program and Peace Research Institute Oslo, Norway.

       Scope: Battle-related deaths in conflicts from 1989-2019.

       Access: Free

       Website: https://ucdp.uu.se/downloads/index.html#battlerelated

       E-mail: info@pcr.uu.se

       Summary: The UCDP Battle-Related Deaths Dataset version 20.1 contains a dyad-year dataset where each individual pair of two fighting actors has its individual entry in the year the conflict dyad was active. It offers information on the number of battle-related deaths in the conflicts that appear in the UCDP/ PRIO Conflict Dataset from 1989 to 2019.

    c. **Non-State Conflict Dataset**

       Host Institution: Uppsala Conflict Data Programme (UCDP), Oslo, Norway.

Scope: Communal and organised armed conflict

Access: Free

Website: https://ucdp.uu.se/downloads/index.html#nonstate

Email: info@pcr.uu.se

Summary: This dataset covers individual events of organised violence occurring at a given time and place from 1989 to 2019. These events can be geo-coded to the levels of individual villages, with temporal durations listed under individual days.

20. **War and Peace**

Home Institution: Visual Capitalist

Scope: Effects of violence on the global economy

Access: Free

Website: https://www.visualcapitalist.com/violence-disrupting-global-economy/
E-mail: info@visualcapitalist.com

Summary: The *War and Peace* info-graph provides insights into the role of violence in the disruption of the global economy. It visualises data estimates from the Global Peace Index 2019 on the costs of violence and its geographical spread. It further lists the ten worst-affected countries, based on the cost incurred due to higher than average death toll, and sizable military expenditures.

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Notes

[1] According to a study by the Institute for Economics & Peace, "The internal conflict indicator has the highest overall correlation with terrorism, for both advanced and non-advanced economies. (…) Over the past two decades, conflict has been one of the strongest predictors of the impact of terrorism, with just under 95 per cent of deaths from terrorism occurring in countries involved in conflict." - Institute for Economics & Peace. Global Terrorism Index 2020: Measuring the Impact of Terrorism, Sydney, November 2020, p.68.URL: https://www.visionofhumanity.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/GTI-2020-web-1.pdf

[2] The figures for 2019 were: 358 conflicts worldwide, of which 196 violent and 162 non-violent. - Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research (HIIK), Conflict Barometer 2020. Heidelberg: HIIK, 2021, pp. 15-16; URL: https://hiik.de/