Arab Nonstate Aggression and Israeli Limited Uses of Force

Abstract

This data set presents a chronology of actions committed against Israeli targets by Arab non-state actors (terrorist organizations, private infiltrators, thieves, etc.) and Israeli military initiatives carried out either in retaliation to such acts or in order to prevent them. The data contained in this data set are taken from a wide variety of sources (including archive records, newspapers, and books) and they underwent numerous processes of cross checking before being included. It is the most comprehensive and reliable data base available to the public on such actions.

The data set covers the years 1949-1997. It is a zipped file of an Excel 7 workbook and may be downloaded.

Code Book

Definitions:

Non state actor: any person or organization that does not officially represent a sovereign state (the state denies that the actor is its agent).

Non-state Act of Violence: Any attempt (anywhere in the world) by a non state actor to harm or take by force Israeli citizens or property belonging to Israeli citizens.

Israeli military response: This is defined as any use of force that exceeds the immediate purpose of self defense and was also defined (either in official reports or by historians) as an act of retaliation to a non-state act of violence or as a preemptive initiative in order to prevent a non-state attack.

Variables and codes:

DAYS	Number of days during which events occurred
DAY	first day events started 0=unknown 1xx=approximately xx
MONTH	first month events started 0=unknown 1xx=approximately xx
YEAR	first year events started

TYPEACT1 TYPEACT2 TYPEACT3	Type of action: 1=throw rocks 2=encounter 3=ground penetration 4=sea penetration 5=smuggling 6=theft/robbery 7=abduction 8=taking hostages 9=sabotage public property 10=sabotage private property 11=attack with cold or unconventional weapons 12=assault soldiers/police with light arms 13=assault civilians with light arms 14=shell/rocket fire 15=plant mine 16=plant bomb 17=ambush 18=raid 19=murder soldiers 20=murder state officials 21=murder civilians 22=suicide attack 23=air or sea raid
ATKRS	Number of attackers. When precise number is not known, 0=unknown
OATKRS	Categories for AKTRS (number of attackers), which indicate approximate number: **0**=unknown; **1**=1-3; **2**=4-6; **3**= 7 and up
VICDEAD	Number of people killed by attackers; **999**=unknown
OVICDEAD	Categories for VICDEAD to indicate approximate number: **0**=0; **1**=1-3; **2**=4-6; **3**=7-9; **4**=10-12; **5**=15-31; **6**=16-18; **7**=19-21; **8**=22 and up; **999**=unknown
VICWND	Number of people wounded by attackers; **999**=unknown
OVICWND	Categories of VICWND, to indicate approximate number: **0**=0; **1**=1-5; **2**=6-10; **3**=11-15; **4**=16-20; **5**=21-25; **6**=26-30; **7**=31-35; **7**=36 and up; **999**=unknown
DAMAGE	**0**=none; **1**=damage; **2**=theft; **9**=unknown
ODEAD	Number of people killed accidentally; **999**=unknown
OWND	Number of people wounded accidentally; **999**=unknown
ATKDEAD	Number of attackers killed
OATKDEAD	Categories of ATKRDEAD, to indicate approximate number: **0**=0; **1**=1-2; **2**=3-4; **3**=5-6; **4**=7-8; **5**=9-10; **6**=11-12; **7**=13-14; **8**=15 and up; **999**=unknown
ATKWND	Number of attackers wounded
OATKWND	Categories of ATKRWND, to indicate approximate number: **0**=0; **1**=1-5; **2**=6-10; **3**=11-15; **4**=16-20; **5**=25-30; **6**=31-35; **7**=36-40; **8**=41 and up; **999**=unknown
ATKCAP	Number of attackers captured; **0**=unknown
FOILED	Was attack foiled by Israel: **0**=unknown; **1**=yes; **2**=no
POSTCAP	Were terrorists captured later: **0**=unknown; **1**=yes; **2**=no

ORG	Organization initiating attack: 1 – Unknown 2 – Bedouins 3 – Fatah or affiliated with Fatah 4 – Ephemeral Palestinian organization (<1 year) 5 – PFLP 6 - PLO affiliated 7 - Al-Saiqa 8 – DFLP 9 – PPSF 10 – PFLP - General Command 11 – Black September 12 - May 15 13 – FRC 14 – LCP 15 – Ephemeral Lebanese organization (<1 year) 16 – FNRL 17 - EL-Fatah Mutiny 18 – Egyptian Organization 19 - Force 17 20 – Muslim Jihad 21 – SSNP 22 - El Amal 23 - PLF-B 24 – National Resistance Movement 25 - Hizballah 26 - Hamas 27 - Hamas Iz-Addin-el-Kasam 28 - Fatah Hawks 29 - Iranian organization 30 - Hamas Zurif Cell 31 - Jordanian Islamic Resistance
REGION	Region of incident: 1=Egypt 2=Jordan 3=Syria 4=Lebanon 5=Abroad 6=Judea, Samaria (including Corridor) 7=Jerusalem 8=Sea strip between Haifa to Rehovot (western non Mountain) 9=South (Lachish, Negev, Arava, Siani) 13=Carmel, Izrael, Gilboa 10=North of Haifa 11=Israel (unknown location) 12=Jordan Valley and Bet Sh'an (Kindred to the Dead Sea)
EVENTS	Number of incidents

Sources:

A major concern that arose during the compilation of this data set was that different sources provide alternative reporting and explanations of events. Such discrepancies often emerged in regard to identification of the incident initiator, the date, estimation of casualties, number of wounded and amount of damage to property. In order to resolve these differences a hierarchy of reliability of documents was constructed:

Category I – filmed documentation of an incident, i.e. television broadcastings of events on news or documentary programs are regarded as providing highly reliable data.

Category II – Internal Israeli reports of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Israeli Police and the Israeli Defense Forces. Since these documents were unintended for publication, there is no reason to assume that this data is unreliable and it is also regarded as highly reliable.

Category III – Three historical studies conducted by the 'new generation' of Israeli historians: Motti Golani (19992), Benny Morris (1993), and an unpublished list of Israeli military operations until 1956 compiled by David Tal from Tel Aviv University.
The motto of the new Israeli historians has been to reveal new evidence regarding Israeli history that meets the standards of the 'traditional' historians, on the basis of indiscriminate presentation of archive material. This new evidence includes documents from foreign countries, rather than relying on the autobiographies of Israeli leaders who provide selective information that often serves political purposes. Although every historian is free to subjectively interpret the available documents, since the sources are accessible to public inspection, the 'traditional' historians do not possess a monopoly over the data (Ha'aretz, 1989).

Category IV – Israeli atlases, encyclopedias, journalistic books and memoirs. These publications have revealed new data that was unpublished or distorted at the time of events. However, the authors do not provide their sources and frequently rely on the memory of witnesses, thus not adhering to the criteria of the professional historians and reducing the reliability of their information. Hence, the interpretation of the sources in categories I, II, and III prevailed over information described in these books.

Category V – Israeli newspaper reports from Ha'aretz and Ma'ariv. Most of the data from these newspapers was obtained from the following three data sets:

1. Ranan Kuperman, Data Set of Arab-Israeli Acts of Violence
2. Ariel Merari, Data Set of International Terrorism (Political Violence Research Unit, Tel Aviv University).
3. IDF Archives, data Set of Israeli Newspaper References.

The Israeli newspapers have a reputation for unaffiliated investigative reporting. Frequently, the newspapers have succeeded to uncover actual events, even if these were morally or politically uncomfortable. Information regarding casualties and damage are especially reliable since in such a small country it is difficult to hide or invent such matters. However, the reliability of this information is not always adequate regarding details such as who initiated the incidents, since there are attempts by government officials to mislead the press. In some cases information has been censured for reasons of national security.

Category VI – Foreign Resources. These included:
Barry M. Blechman ((1972); The New York Times; Keessing's Contemporary Archives; Edward E. Azar, Conflict and Peace Data Bank (COPDAB); and yearbooks of the United Nations.

Like the Israeli newspapers, the authors of these sources have aspired to present objective facts. However, Israeli reporters usually have more reliable connections as well as first hand knowledge. For this reason, the reports in the Israeli newspapers have priority over these.

Category VII – Statements by the Israeli government of IDF Spokesman. This information has been obtained from declarations made in the Knesset by the Israeli minister of defense, from the IDF Spokesman's office in Tel Aviv, from documents published by the IDF Spokesman that were collected by the Political Violence Research Unit at the Tel Aviv University, or from press releases quoted in the

newspapers. As described above, information regarding casualties and damage are very reliable since in such a small country it is difficult to hide or invent such matters. However, the Israeli government has frequently been purposely dishonest about reporting who initiated the incident. Thus, the sources from the higher categories were honored a higher priority over the official Israeli declarations.

Category VIII – Official declarations by Arab governments, Palestinian organizations, or Arab newspapers (there is no freedom of press in Arab countries). These declarations are often quoted in the Israeli press. The reports of all these sources are very unreliable. This is because these announcements are usually part of the state propaganda. Information revealed in government archives frequently demonstrate examples of outright lies. Unless evidence from additional sources above was provided, these sources were dismissed.

Most of the data in the Non-state Aggression – Military Retaliation data set is based on Israeli newspapers. The Israeli press, at least since the nineteen sixties, has usually delivered accurate accounts of events. Israeli newspapers have never hesitated to publish unfavorable information, unless it was censured by the IDF for security reasons. However, even in these cases, this problem was overcome by quoting reports from the foreign press. In the nineteen fifties the situation was more complex since most of the military operations initiated by Israel were censured and foreign correspondents in Arab countries did not directly observe and report these events. However, most of these operations have since been revealed.

Two types of events proved to be more problematic than others:

1. Data regarding Arab low intensity violence, such as damage to property, theft or events that did not result in any casualties. The newspapers did not always report these incidents and when they did, they did not usually provide any estimation of damage. The reason for this is probably because these incidents occurred in such a high frequency (especially in the nineteen fifties) that they lacked any newsworthy value. However, since recently opened government records do contain accurate monthly aggregates of such events, this information will shortly be added to the data-set.
2. Reports of firing across the cease fire lines from Israel into Arab countries with light weapons were entirely excluded. The reliability of these reports (which are usually exclusively from Arab sources) is very low. In many cases, investigations by the UN revealed that these were incidents of shooting at infiltrators or Israeli soldiers who fired contrary to the regular firing orders of the IDF, rather than preplanned offensives.