Ethnic war dataset

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The coding of wars is based on the UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflicts Data Set (ACD) (Gleditsch et al. 2002). ACD defines armed conflict as any armed and organized confrontation between government troops and rebel organizations, or between army factions, that reaches an annual battle-death threshold of 25 people. Massacres and genocides are not included because the victims are neither organized nor armed; communal riots and pogroms are excluded because the government is not directly involved.

We drew primarily on version 3-2005b of the ACD data set, which provides two levels of conflict identification, a more general war ID number and a disaggregated sub-ID that identifies whenever the constellation of rebel organizations changes completely or when more than 10 years elapse between episodes of violence. We relied on these sub-IDs to construct our own conflict list because we are interested in a disaggregated dependent variable that would allow us to differentiate between conflicts fought by actors claiming to represent different ethnic communities.[1] As a result, we code a larger number of armed conflict onsets than does the original ACD. To preserve comparability with other studies of civil war, we identify high-intensity conflicts as those that reach the standard threshold of 1,000 battle deaths in at least one year. For each conflict, we coded whether actors pursued ethnonationalist aims and if they pursued secessionist objectives.

Ethnic/nonethnic conflicts are distinguished by the aims of the armed organizations and their recruitment and alliance structures, in line with other ongoing coding projects (Sambanis 2009). Ethnic wars typically involve conflicts over ethnonational self-determination, the ethnic balance of power in government, ethnoregional autonomy, ethnic and racial discrimination (whether alleged or real), and language and other cultural rights. We define all other war aims as nonethnic. Examples of nonethnic conflicts include the various military coups staged in Argentina and the civil wars in China, Greece, and Algeria. Regarding recruitment and alliance structures, we define ethnic wars as those fought by armed organizations that recruit fighters predominantly among their own ethnic group and who forge alliances on the basis of ethnic affiliation. For a conflict to be classified as ethnic, armed organizations have to both explicitly pursue

[1] The ACD data set appears to be more consistent with regard to coding sub-IDs from 1989 onward. We fused sub-IDs that were based on a change in the type of civil war (e.g. internationalized versus non-internationalized conflicts). We also split or merged some wars to be consistent with the rules governing sub-ID coding. A list of our conflicts and how they relate to the ACD war IDs is available upon request.

ethnonationalist aims, motivations, and interests *and* recruit fighters and forge alliances on the basis of ethnic affiliations.

We linked all ethnic conflicts to the politically relevant ethnic category in the name of which an armed organization instigated the conflict. We looked at the aims and recruitment patterns of each armed organization separately. In some complex cases (e.g., Afghanistan, Burma, Chad, Uganda, Angola, and Zaire), we disaggregated a conflict into several war fronts with different ethnic claims made on the nongovernmental side. This was necessary when the constellation of rebel organizations changed dramatically over time.

Separatist wars are fought by armed organizations that aim at establishing a separate, independent, internationally recognized state or that want to join another existing state (irredentism). We assessed the intentions of the armed organizations immediately at the outbreak of war—not how their intentions developed in the course of the armed conflict—because our analysis takes war onset as the dependent variable. We also distinguished between cases where the demand for independence was tactical (the Karen's threat to establish an independent state) or represented a long-term strategic objective.

Our data set includes 215 armed conflicts fought between 1946 and 2005, 110 of which were ethnic conflicts. Of the 215 conflicts, 60 had secessionist aims, the vast majority of which were also ethnic in character. Among the 110 ethnic conflicts, 20 were fought by groups in power (according to the EPR dataset classification), 64 by powerless or discriminated groups, and 26 by autonomous groups. One half of the conflicts reached the standard threshold of civil war (more than 1,000 battle deaths in a year).[2] Table 1 summarizes the conflict classifications.

Table 1
The conflict dataset

	Ethnic conflicts		Non-ethnic conflicts	*Total conflicts*
Secessionist	57		3	*60*
Non-secessionist	53		102	*155*
Total	*110*		*105*	*215*
	20	90		
	Infighting (conflicts fought in the name of groups in power	Rebellions (conflicts fought in the name of excluded groups)		

[2] In comparison, Fearon and Laitin (2003) identify 114 civil wars, of which 78 are ethnic, from 1945 to 1999. Sambanis (2004) counts 145 civil wars in his data set covering the same timeframe.

Bibliography

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