"Welcome Guests, or Inevitable Victims? The Causes of Prisoner Abuse in War" Codebook

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June 20, 2012

Overview

This document provides details on the variables used in "Welcome Guests, or Inevitable Victims? The Causes of Prisoner Abuse in War" (Wallace Forthcoming). This data set, which I refer to as the Correlates of Prisoners of War (COPOW), represents Version 1.0. Updates will be released on a regular basis as new information becomes available, or new wars are included. I therefore welcome any comments or suggestions regarding mistakes, new documentation for particular wars, or uncertainties in the coding.

The data set examines prisoner treatment during all interstate wars from 1898 through 2003. The list of wars is based on the Correlates of War (COW) Inter-State War dataset version 4.0 (Sarkees and Wayman 2010). Several long multi-actor wars are divided into separate military confrontations, which more accurately captures actual fighting on the ground (Downes 2008, 43; Reiter and Stam 2002, 39). The unit of analysis is the warring-directed-dyad, meaning there are two observations for each pair of belligerents on opposing sides, where each is considered a potential violator and victim respectively.

As the outcome of interest concerns prisoner treatment, the main analysis focuses on states deemed to be "capable captors." For a state to be considered a capable captor is must meet the following two criteria (see the article manuscript for further details).

1) Independent prisoner policy: This is less of a concern in wars between only two states, but in conflicts involving many states the policies of some participants are often subordinated to those of stronger leading states in the coalition. Only those states possessing an independent prisoner policy are considered capable captors.
2) Opportunity for prisoner abuse: A state must have an opportunity to treat or mistreat prisoners by actually capturing enemy soldiers.

In order to limit the number of warring-directed-dyads, the replication data set only includes states possessing an independent prisoner policy.

Identifier variables

WARNAME: Name of the war.

WARNUM: Numerical identifier for the war.

YEAR: Start year of the war.

ABBREV1: Abbreviation for the potential violating state

ABBREV2: Abbreviation for the potential victim state.

CCODE1: COW country code for the potential violating state.

CCODE2: COW country code for the potential victim state.

CAPABLE: Dummy variable for whether or not the potential violating state was a capable captor (1 if yes; 0 if no). Note: since the replication data set only contains states that at least met the first criterion for capable captors (possessing an independent prisoner policy), incapable captors here refer to states that did not have a sincere opportunity for prisoner abuse.

CAPABLE_2: Corresponding dummy variable for whether the potential victim state was a capable captor.

Dependent Variable: Prisoner abuse

Prisoner abuse is defined as a military strategy enacted by political and military authorities that involves the intentional killing or harming, either directly or indirectly, of enemy combatants who have laid down their arms and surrendered. Because abuse can take many forms, prisoner treatment is measured along six separate dimensions based on those acts considered to be grave breaches of the 1949 Geneva Conventions.[1] These are execution, torture, denial of legal rights, compulsory military conscription, hard labor, and poor housing and nutrition. Relying on the 1949 Geneva Conventions might be seen as problematic in applying one set of principles to earlier periods that may have been guided by different expectations. This would, in turn, unduly bias against the perceived behavior of states in earlier conflicts. However, elements of each of these grave forms of abuse are found in earlier treaties, as well as customary norms going back at least to the nineteenth century

The component violations are then used to create a summary measure of prisoner abuse, which is described in greater detail below. Disaggregated data on the component violations will be released at a later date.

CAPCV: Level of prisoner abuse by capable captors measured as either High (2), Medium (1), or Low (0). Incapable captors are coded as missing. This summary measure is based on the highest value across the six prisoner abuse components based on the logic that any single abuse is considered a war crime under international law.

ALLCV: Corresponding level of prisoner abuse across all states in the data set measured as either High (2), Medium (1), or Low and incapable captors (0). This summary measure follows the same decision rule as CAPCV for aggregating across the separate abuse components.

[1] See Article 130 of the Third Geneva Convention.

Several alternative decision rules for aggregating the component violations into a summary measure of prisoner abuse were also considered.

CAPCVHIGH: Binary variable for prisoner abuse by capable captors that codes high levels of abuse as 1 and medium/low levels of abuse as 0.

CAPCV_AVG: Continuous measure for level of prisoner abuse by capable captors based on the average value of abuse across the six abuse components. Ranges from 0 to 3 with higher values indicating greater levels of abuse.

CAPCV_AVGCAT: Categorical measure for level of prisoner abuse by capable captors based on the average value of abuse across the six abuse components. Unlike CAPCV_AVG, the raw average value is rescaled so that values less than or equal to 0.5 are recoded as Low (0); values greater than 0.5 but less than or equal to 1.5 are recoded as Medium (1); and values greater than 1.5 are recoded as High (2).

CAPCV_MED: Categorical measure for prisoner abuse by capable captors based on the median value of abuse across the six abuse components.

Note: Measures for prisoner abuse that include the "_2" suffix refer to the corresponding level of prisoner treatment enacted by the violating state's opponent in each observation. So that states facing an opponent deemed to be an incapable captor are not excluded, the version of the opponent's prisoner abuse variable for all states is used in the analysis.

Independent Variables

DEMOC7: Binary variable for whether or not a state is considered a democracy before the start of the war. Coded as 1 if the country scores 7 or above on the Polity IV index (Marshall and Jaggers 2007), and 0 otherwise.

DEMOC6: Similar binary variable for democracy, but with a cutoff of 6 on the Polity IV index.

DEMOC8: Similar binary variable for democracy, but with a cutoff of 8 on the Polity IV index.

LIBERAL: Binary variable that equals 1 if a country is considered a liberal state according to Doyle (1997, 261-264), and 0 otherwise.

ANOCRACY: Binary variable that equals 1 if a country scores between -6 and +6 on the Polity IV index, and 0 otherwise.

REGPOL: Score on the Polity IV index for each state before the start of the war. Ranges from -10 to +10.

REGPOL_SQUARE: The squared value of REGPOL.

ATTRITION2: Records whether or not the war devolved into a war of attrition typified by static, or protracted fighting; this may also include counterinsurgency warfare. Coding based largely on Downes (2008), along with personal research. Note: two conflicts originally coded as 0 are recoded as wars of attrition due to the prominence of counterinsurgency operations. These are the Spanish-Moroccan War (1909-1910) and the Franco-Turkish War (1919-1921).

ATTRITION: Version of ATTRITION2 that does not use the recoded values for certain observations.

ANNEX2: Records whether or not the violating state sought to conquer territory from the adversary. Coding based on Downes (2008). Several observations originally coded as 0 are recoded to reflect the territorial nature of the violator's war aims. These are Russia against Poland (WWII), the Somalia in the Ogaden War (1977-1978); and Iraq against Kuwait (1990).

ANNEX: Version of ANNEX2 that does not use the recoded values for certain observations.

WAEXPAND: Records whether or not the violating state sought expansive war aims, such as regime change or unconditional surrender. Coding based on Downes (2008).

LN_COMBDEATHS: Battle deaths (logged) suffered by the violating state during the war. Based on data from Downes (2008) and Sarkees and Wayman (2010).

LN_DURATION: Length of the war in days (logged).

CIVDIFF: Records whether or not the two states in a given warring-directed-dyad were from different civilizational backgrounds. 1 if states are from different civilizations; 0 if from same. Based on the coding scheme for civilizations from Henderson and Tucker (2001).

DETERRENCE: Binary variable that equals 1 if both states in the warring-directed-dyad are capable captors, and 0 otherwise.

TREATY: Records whether or not the violating state ratified the prevailing treaty governing the laws of war by the start of the conflict. Ratification dates come from international humanitarian law database of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).[2] The relevant treaty used for the start date of each war is defined as follows by period: from 1899-1907 the 1899 Hague Convention; from 1907-1929 either the 1899 or the 1907 Hague Convention, since it is generally accepted the later version did not substantially build upon obligations from the original convention (Roberts 1994, 122); from 1929-1949 the 1929 Geneva Convention; and from 1949 to the present the 1949 Third Geneva Convention.

TREATY_2: Corresponding variable recording whether or not the victim state ratified the prevailing treaty governing the laws of war by the start of the conflict.

[2] Available at http://www.icrc.org/ihl.

JOINT_TREATY: Records whether or not both states ratified the prevailing treaty governing the laws of war by the start of the conflict.

RELCAP_D: Measures the capabilities of the violating state as a percentage of the total capabilities of all states participating in the war. The level of capabilities is measured using the COW composite index of national capability (Singer et al. 1972). Capabilities are also corrected for distance from the main battlefront using the formula from Bueno de Mesquita (1981, 103-108).

YDUM1949: To capture potential period effects due to the normative influence of the 1949 Geneva Conventions, this variable equals 1 for all wars that began after 1949, and 0 for all wars starting beforehand.

INITABD: Dummy variable that records whether or not the violating country initiated the war.

USA: Binary variable for observations where the United States was the violating country.

NAZIGERMANY: Binary variable for observations where Nazi Germany was the violating country.

COMMUNIST: Binary variable for observations where a Communist country was the violating country. Data based on Karnai (Karnai 1992), and supplemented with country histories from the Library of Congress.[3]

WW1: Binary variable to identify observations from the First World War.

WW2: Binary variable to identify observations from the Second World War.

There are also a number of interaction terms between regime type (DEMOC7) and various other explanatory variables. Each starts with a "DEM_" prefix followed by the variable name for the other appropriate constituent term. Those included are as follows: DEM_ALLCV_2, DEM_DETERRENCE, DEM_ATTRITION2, DEM_TREATY, DEM_INITABD, and DEM_1949DUM.

For a number of independent variables, the corresponding variable for the potential victim state in the warring-directed-dyad is also included for the purposes of some of the robustness checks. These variables are indicated by a "_2" suffix. Those included are as follows: DEMOC7_2, ATTRITION2_2, WAEXPAND_2, ANNEX2_2, and RELCAP_D_2.

[3] http://memory.loc.gov/frd/cs/.

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