Codebook for the Modern Conquest Dataset
Version 2.1

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The Modern Conquest dataset (v2.1) is an updated expansion of the Land Grabs dataset (v1). MC v2.0 was shared but never formally released. Future versions and updates will be posted at www.danielwaltman.com.

Scope and Unit of Analysis

The data encompass conquest attempts from 1918-2017. Each observation is one conquest attempt. The term land grab (not used after v1.0) is equivalent to a conquest attempt targeting part of a state (see Entire variable) except for a few specific differences regarding retaliatory conquest attempts (enumerated below).

Definition of Conquest Attempt

A conquest attempt occurs when one state uses its military to seize disputed territory without permission and with the intention to assume lasting control of that territory. Although conquest attempts are militarized assertions of sovereignty over territory, use of the term implies nothing about whether each conquest attempt is normatively legitimate, legal under international law, or recognized as a change in a border by other states. Formal annexation is not required for a conquest attempt to occur.

The definition excludes most cross-border military operations. Incursions other than conquest attempts include interventions in civil wars, raids on rebel bases, peacekeeping missions, and navigation errors by military patrols. The dataset relies on secondary sources (usually histories, policy briefs, or journalistic accounts) to determine intent along with two simpler indicators from which the secondary sources rarely deviate: 1) the articulation of a sovereignty claim to the territory and 2) the establishment of a fixed position in the disputed territory where before there was none (either because it was empty or because the defender held that ground).

Each challenger may only commit one conquest attempt against each defender within each militarized dispute, crisis, or war. For example, suppose that a challenger seizes multiple separate areas, each on different days, from the same defender over the course of several months; the dataset will record only one conquest attempt. The same challenger can attempt to conquer the same territory from the same defender multiple times only when those events are separated by a period of peace (the absence of a militarized dispute, crisis, or war).

Reinforcing an existing position is not a conquest attempt. Nor is deploying troops to a new area unclaimed by any other state (*terra nullius*). In general, the dataset omits reoccupations of positions held in the recent past but, for instance, temporarily vacated due to severe weather. In general, it also

omits reoccupations of positions after the end of wars that were not taken by force during the war by the re-occupier.

The definition also excludes conquests by or against non-state actors amid civil conflicts, including secessionist and state formation conflicts that transition uninterruptedly into interstate conflicts over territory. When no prior border existed, it is problematic to identify and study attempts to change to it. Whether attempts to secede are civil or interstate conflicts raises difficult questions and too easily gets defined ex post. The omitted cases cluster in a few transitional periods: former Ottoman Empire 1910s, former Austria-Hungary 1910s, former Russian Empire 1910s, Israel-Palestine 1940s, India-Pakistan 1940s, and Balkans 1990s. A future version of the dataset may include these cases as a separate category.

Along similar lines, the dataset omits cases of externally-imposed partitions in which third parties intervene to aid in a secessionist cause, including liberations of recently conquered states. Examples include the creation of Bangladesh in 1971, the creation of Kosovo in 1999, the liberation of Kuwait in 1991, and the liberation of France in WWII. A future version of the dataset may include these cases as a separate category.

In a few cases, the armed force seizing territory is composed of civilians, paramilitary militiamen, or soldiers who have removed identifying insignia. As long as the territorial seizure meets the other criteria and receives official or unofficial state backing, the case is included.

Finally, recognizing that states can dispute the status of individual military posts or markers set virtually atop a border without disputing the border itself, all conquered territories are required to extend beyond the confines of a single small post. Seizures of single posts only qualify if their control comes with a surrounding area that is also disputed.

Variables

ACNUM
The unique number for each conquest attempt. Entire-state cases are numbered separately, starting with 1000.

CONFNUM
The unique number for each conflict (i.e., each militarized dispute). A conquest attempt and a retaliatory conquest attempt retaking that territory will share the same conflict number. Note that these numbers correspond to militarized disputes, not territorial disputes (which can span decades). This variable was coded originally; it does not take other datasets into account. Entire-state cases are number separately, starting with 1000.

VICTIM
Country name abbreviation for the victim of the conquest attempt. The victim is the state from whom territory is taken, including empty territory that was previously claimed but unoccupied.

VICID
Correlates of War country code for the victim of the conquest attempt.

PERPID
Country name abbreviation for the perpetrator of the conquest attempt. The perpetrator is the state that seizes the territory. If state A seizes territory on behalf of state B, state A is listed (this currently affects only the Doklam case).

PERPID
Correlates of War country code for the perpetrator of the conquest attempt.

YEAR
Year that the conquest attempt began.

TERRITORY
The name of the seized territory. For attempts to conquer entire states, no territory name is listed (the name of the victim state is listed already). For a variety of reasons, seized territories often have multiple appropriate names. In general, the name provided is the name(s) most often associated with the conflict in common usage (histories, news reports, etc.). Sometimes this meant naming the specific areas seized. In other cases, it meant naming the larger territory of which a part was seized. These cases are denoted with (p) after the territory name. The name selected implies no stance on the legitimacy of any particular claim to or name of the territory.

ENTIRE
An attempt was made to conquer the entire territory of a state (the victim). Cases such as the Korean War where that attempt did not succeed are included (see COMPLETED below). A zero on this variable implies an attempt to seize only part of a state.

RETALIATORY
This marks all conquest attempts that are not initial conquest attempts (It may be clearer to think of this variable as if it were named "NON-INITIAL"). All retaliatory conquest attempts occur within the same conflict (militarized dispute, crisis, or war) as the events to which they are retaliating/following. Retaliatory conquest attempts include the following: 1) Cases where the victim retakes land that the perpetrator just seized; 2) Cases where the victim takes more or different land than the perpetrator just seized; 3) Cases where the victim retakes the seized territory and then continues on to attempt to remove the regime of the perpetrator; 4) Cases where the victim of an entire-state conquest attempt that failed to take complete control takes back seized territory in a part-of-state retaliatory conquest attempt; 5) Cases where the conquest attempt begins during a war that is already underway for other reasons. Note that the Land Grabs dataset (v1) did not include #3-5, which were not defined as land grabs.

INTRAWAR

A subset of retaliatory conquest attempts corresponding to the 5th type (see above list). These are conquest attempts that occur after a war is underway. They are neither initial conquest attempts nor immediate retaliatory conquest attempts.

ISLAND
The seized territory consists only of an island or a set of islands. If a state itself is an island (e.g., Cyprus), that main island is excluded from this variable; only other secondary islands qualify as islands. With that stipulation, seizing part of an island is recorded as seizing an island.

VIOLENCE
The conquest attempt caused at least one battle death, including deaths in both the initial seizure of the territory and any retaliatory action by the victim.

GARRISON
At least one armed and uniformed (or otherwise sanctioned) officer of the victim state was present in the seized territory when the conquest attempt began. This variable includes police and militiamen alongside soldiers. It describes the seized territory, not the disputed territory.

SIZE
The number of provinces seized in the conquest attempt. If the territory is not officially part of a province, it is assigned to the closest province(s). No value is present for attempts to conquer entire states, which are captured by the ENTIRE variable (also see COMPLETED).

-9: Overseas Colony
.5: Part of one province
1: One province
1.5: Parts of two provinces (even if extremely small)
2: Two provinces
2.5: Parts of three provinces (even if extremely small)
3: Three provinces
…

POPUL
The population of the seized territory.

0: No inhabitants
1: Inhabited but with no major city of at least 100,000 persons
2: Inhabited with a major city of at least 100,000 persons

ETHNIC
The perpetrator had an ethnic motive to seize the territory. In general, this means that the perpetrator had ethnic kinship ties to the inhabitants of the seized area, whereas one or more different ethnic groups held power in the victim state.

TPVIO
Third-party military interventions (firing at least one shot) in defense of the victim. Does not include interventions supporting the perpetrator.

COMPLETED
Variable for entire-state cases only. Records whether or not the perpetrator ever controlled the full territory of the state it attacked (completing the conquest). For instance, Germany's invasion of Poland in WWII was completed but not Held (see below), as was Iraq's invasion of Kuwait.

HELD
The perpetrator held control of the territory immediately after the associated militarized dispute, crisis, or war ended (based on whichever of the three ended last, if they appear to differ). For example, in the Falklands case, Argentina did not hold onto the islands.

HELD10
The perpetrator held the territory ten years after the conquest attempt began regardless of what happened in the intervening ten years.

HELD10UN
The perpetrator held the territory ten years after the conquest attempt began and held uninterrupted control of it until then.

ISOISLANDS
The subset of island disputes in which the perpetrator and victim do not share a land border.

COLONY
The seized territory is an overseas colony of the victim (generally located in a different continent).

AFRICA
The seized territory is in Africa.

AMERICAS
The seized territory is in the Americas.

ASIA
The seized territory is in Asia, excluding the Middle East.

EUROPE
The seized territory is in Europe.

MIDEAST
The seized territory is in the Middle East, excluding Northern Africa. The Sinai Peninsula is included in the Middle East region.

COWWAR
The conquest attempt occurs at the start of or during an inter-state war by Correlates of War (CoW) criteria.

MONTH
Month that the conquest attempt began. Unlike the remainder of the data, day and month were coded by a research assistant as part of an intercoder reliability check on the post-1945 cases.

DAY
Day that the conquest attempt began. Unlike the remainder of the data, day and month were coded by a research assistant as part of an intercoder reliability check on the post-1945 cases.