Event Data Project on Conflict and Security (EDACS) in Areas of Limited Statehood[1]

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1. Introduction[2]

The Research Center (SFB) 700 focuses on "new" or hybrid modes of governance in areas of limited statehood and integrates four divisions of research projects: *theory building* (A), *political authority and rule making* (B), *security* (C), and *welfare and environment* (D)[3]. All projects assume that in areas of limited statehood the capacity of the state to enforce central decisions and its monopoly on the legitimate use of physical force is contested or lacking. Thus it appears that governance involves a variety of public and private actors (e.g. states, international organizations, and firms) at different levels (societal, national, regional, and global). All "C" projects within the SFB focus on the problems that arise when the state monopoly on the use of force is no longer or only marginally intact. In particular, they explore how security is provided in areas of limited statehood and why security is sometimes not available to large parts of the population.

In order to explain the evolution and demise of armed conflict and security in areas of limited statehood, the *Event Data Project on Conflict and Security* (EDACS) collects, integrates, and analyzes data on both actors and structural conditions. This goal is pursued by disaggregating conflict data in time and space, enabling research differentiating and analyzing secure and non-secure areas of limited statehood. If we define security narrowly as the absence of acute physical threats to individuals or groups and the prospect of survival, then we expect to observe hybrid forms of security even under the conditions of violent conflicts and state failure. We also assume that strategies of violence and insecurity (e.g. deliberate killings of civilians, control of resources and territory) are closely linked to geographic opportunities. Therefore EDACS contributes both to the governance problematique as a central research focus in contemporary social sciences (Risse & Lehmkuhl, 2006), especially to the question where and under what conditions secure order is established and how it is sustained, and to the recent studies disaggregating armed conflict and the correlates of war (Cederman et al., 2007; Buhaug & Rød, 2006; Gilmore et al., 2005; Raleigh & Hegre, 2005; Buhaug & Gates, 2002). In the first phase (2007-2009) of the C4 project all African countries experiencing armed conflict between 1990 and 2008 will be coded.

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[3] For further details see Risse and Lehmkuhl (2006) and http://www.sfb-governance.de/en/index.html

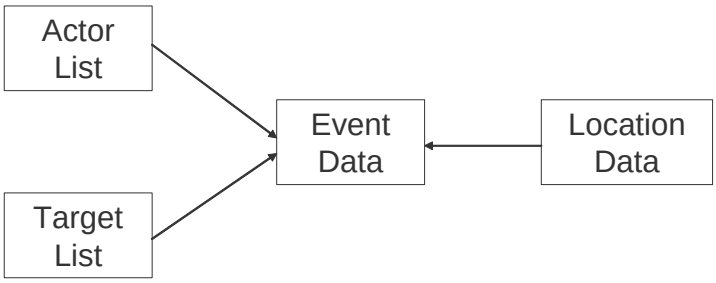
2. Overview of the Data Structure

The C4 data project consists of four datasets. At the core of the project stands the event dataset where individual violent events are coded. An event in the dataset is defined as a violent incidence with at least one casualty resulting from the direct use of armed force. It is important to note that every event is assigned a single date. Incidences lasting longer than one day will be represented by as many events as days the incidence lasted.

Among others the location, the date, and participating actors of an event are indicated. To integrate the information on locations into a *Geographical Information System* (GIS), a location dataset will be established. This dataset contains information on the latitude and longitude of various cities and regions which are potential locations of violent events (for a similar approach see Raleigh & Hegre, 2005).

Two further datasets are part of the C4 data project, focusing on military actors and targets of violence. The actor dataset contains information on all military actors which have actively taken part in violent events. Military actors may include the government, rebel groups, warlords, militias, and external intervention forces (state and non-state). From our research perspective it seemed important not only to code military active groups, but also their targets. Especially in areas of limited statehood one-sided attacks seem to be a common phenomenon (Eck & Hultman, 2007) and target information therefore becomes a necessary measure for understanding the dynamics of (in)security. Graph 1 gives an overview of the data structure.

Graph 1: Data Structure



3. Advancing and accumulating the disaggregated study of civil war

Cases

In its first phase this project aims to collect data on any armed conflict in subsaharian Africa between 1990 and 2008. Not only violent conflicts between the government and non-state actors are part of our studies, but especially conflicts between two or more non-state armed groups (Chojnacki, 2006). This approach pays tribute to changing patterns of warfare *and* to areas of limited statehood, where governmental actors gradually lose or even lack the monopoly over the means of violence (Reno, 1998; Kaldor, 1999; Jackson, 2003). A prototype of this type is Somalia, but conflicts in the Democratic Republic of Congo or Nigeria show similar patterns. To account for armed conflicts between non-state actors, our definitions of armed conflict and war are less state-centric than the ones used by the Correlates of War (COW) project (Sarkees et al, 2003) or Uppsala Conflict Data Project (UCDP) (Gleditsch et al., 2002).[4] Beyond the cases included in the New List of Wars (Chojnacki 2006), all countries in Africa between 1990 and 2008 will be analyzed and searched for violent events.

Fighting and One-Sided Attacks

In order to satisfy the conditions of armed conflict in areas of limited stateshood, EDACS collects data on two types of violence: *fighting* and *one-sided attacks*. Fighting is defined as armed interaction between two or more organized groups. With the help of this definition the project underlines the imperative to leave behind the state-centric definitions of war (Sarkees et al., 2003) and armed conflict (Gleditsch et al., 2002) found in the leading datasets in the field of conflict studies. Especially when conducting research on areas of limited statehood, state-neutral definitions become necessary to account for the researched subject (Rotberg, 2004; Milliken & Krause, 2002). In addition to information on fighting between two or more armed groups we also collect data on *one-sided attacks*. We define one-sided attacks as direct unilateral violence by organized groups aimed at civilian or military targets. This definition is different to UCDP's concept of "one-sided violence" (Eck & Hultman, 2007). UCDP defines one-sided violence as

[4] Four core types of armed conflict and war result from this: 1. *inter-state wars* (between at least two sovereign states), 2. *extra-state wars* (between a state and one or more non-state groups outside its territorial boundaries), 3. *intra-state wars* (between a government and one or more non-state parties within the boundaries of an internationally recognised state), and 4. *sub-state wars* (between mostly non-state actors within or across borders). The fourth type of war reflects the debate about the changing patterns of conflict in the post-Second World War period and follows the underlying rule that a classification of war is best arranged according to the political status of the protagonists (for details see Chojnacki, 2006).

"the use of armed force by the government of a state or by a formally organized group against civilians which results in at least 25 deaths per year" (Eck, Sollenberg & Wallensteen, 2004: 136). The main difference is that one-sided attacks in our dataset can also be directed at military targets. The idea behind this concept is to keep the type of target and the type of violence separated from each other. In the following paragraph we will show how we differentiate between actors and targets. Road side bombings, suicide bombers, or massacres would therefore be one-sided attacks independently from who is targeted. Through this approach we hope to distinguish between tactics and strategies different actors use in conflict affected regions across time.

Actors and Targets

Besides the two types of violent events described above, the project accounts for two classes of groups: *actors* and *targets*. Actors are defined as armed groups using directed force in the course of an armed conflict. Targets on the other side are groups which are victims of one-sided attacks, but throughout the conflict never use directed force themselves.

Targets can either be members of organized groups or population based groups. Organized groups can be domestic (e.g. Parties, NGOs, or coalitions) or international (e.g. United Nations, International Red Cross, or humanitarian aid organizations) as long as they do not use directed force against actors or targets. Population based groups must have at least 100.000 members or, if fewer, exceed 1% of the national population they are part of (compare Minorities at Risk, 2005). We include population based groups which can be identified by language, religion, national or other territorial origin, clanship, or attachment to a certain territory. Different to the MAR project our definition includes refugees and displaced groups.

The motivation collecting information on actors and targets stems from the interest in identifying different patterns of one-sided attacks and against whom it is directed. The aim is to, spatially and temporal, identify secure and less secure groups. Information on the targets of violence may also be important to account for different strategies used by actors (Kalyvas, 2004; Azam & Hoeffler, 2002).

Number of victims

As a central objective, EDACS collects also event data on casualties of fighting as well as victims of one-sided attacks. This approach leaves behind the problem of defining thresholds (Sambanis, 2004) as we operate with continuous numbers of deaths. It is open to the users of the data which criteria they would like to apply in regard to thresholds of armed conflict and war. As we code every African country between 1990 and 2008, this can easily be done.

Nonetheless even when avoiding some contested issues within the domain of conflict studies there are still enough to be concerned about. During the pilot phase in 2006 an intensively discussed question was whether to code only intentional or also unintentional deaths which resulted from a direct use of violent means. Victims of cross-fire, 'collateral damage' of bombings, and similar cases were the starting point of discussions. We decided on coding unintentional killings for a practical and a theoretical reason. The practical reason being that it is almost impossible when coding events to distinguish whether some killings were intentional or not. Imagine an article reporting of six people killed in cross fire. It is hardly possible to decide whether these people were targeted or not, as it could also be part of a strategy to be especially ruthless sparing no lives whether civilian or part of an armed group.[5] The theoretical argument is closely related to the practical one. Differentiating between intentional and unintentional killing to some degree implies that we can infer motivational aspects from observed behavior. We doubt that, with the methodological approach taken in our and many other studies, this kind of inference can be made.

Another important aspect follows from our event definition. As already mentioned we assign a single date to an event. Therefore an incidence lasting for x days will be represented by x events. In case there is no information on the distribution of casualties over the x days, 1/x of the counted casualties will be assigned to every event. For example, if we can only obtain the information that a battle lasted for 5 days resulting in 100 people being killed, five events will be coded each with 20 casualties.

[5] Coders oftentimes approached us with difficulties coding theses kind of events, pointing to the fact that the differentiation of intentional and unintentional killings is highly difficult.

Localization of armed conflict

As it has already been pointed out, this project wants to contribute to the disaggregated study of civil wars. Concerning the spatial dimension – especially the spatial diffusion of armed conflicts – every event will therefore be coded in regard to its localization making spatial econometric analysis possible (Ward & Gleditsch, 2002; Beck et al., 2006). The coders will identify cities, villages, regions, and similar information on the location of violent events. With the help of a dataset on locations and their latitude and longitude, this information will be made available for *Geographical Information Systems*. At a later stage we will integrate and analyze spatial data such as natural resources, economic indicators, and population.

Temporal dimension

Disaggregating civil war data also in time, aims at identifying escalation and de-escaltion patterns in regard to the absolute number of casualties as well as the frequency of violent events. This data will be the starting point for time-dependent analysis of armed conflict (Box-Steffensmeier & Bradford, 2004; Hegre, 2004). We are especially interested in regional shifts of violence in areas of limited statehood over time and the effects of outside interventions on escalation processes.

Private Military Actors

The SFB 700 is particularly interested "new" or "hybrid" forms of governance. Special attention with the all "C" projects is paid to the effects of privatising security in areas of failing or failed statehood. In order to improve their own military positions, both governments and non-state actors make use of today's mercenaries which are driven by corporate profit, rather than individual gain. In consequence, these developments do not only have consequences for the balance of power and conflict dynamics but also on the rationality of using violence for the pursuit of interests (Singer, 2001; Musah & Fahemi, 2002; Avant, 2005). In the context of this research project we therefore try to obtain information on private military actors in case they are part of violent events. Further information on the privatization of security will be collected by a related project within the Research Center[6].

[6] Project C2 in the Research Center "Governance in Areas Limited Statehood" (Sven Chojnacki & Željko Branović)

4. Data Collection

Sources

The pilot-phase 2006 has tested various news sources and evaluated them in regard to information on armed conflict and casualties. Additional criteria were practicability and especially in how far we could reconstruct how much information was available and how much of this information was actually coded. In regard to our project it is especially important to strike a balance between the autonomy of the individual coders and having control over the project. Newspapers (New York Times, The Guardian, and Washington Post), News services (Alertnet, IrinNews, CrisisWatch Database, Human Security Gateway, BBC Monitoring), and regional internet gateways, respectively news services (AllAfrica.com, Africa Confidential, Reliefweb) were looked at.

The advantage of using established newspapers is that information on past events is easily accessible and the download of searched material is possible. The first phase of our project also showed that the selected newspaper provided more information than expected, even though less than the news services. Nonetheless we decided to establish the New York Times, Washington Post, and The Guardian as the backbone of our data collection.

Most of the news services offer highly valuable information on local events and provide helpful insights to conflicts which do not make it into the newspapers. Nonetheless, a major problem using news services is the information management. Especially when using more than one news service the number duplicates and unnecessary information can become exceedingly high. Following from that it becomes very hard for the project leaders to reconstruct how many of the provided articles have been ignored, and on which basis they have been neglected. Additionally, downloading and saving information by news services can be very time consuming. Standing out from many other news services is BBC Monitoring. BBC Monitoring can be searched and downloaded through LexisNexis, thus providing an excellent source of information, especially when coding past events. Therefore BBC Monitoring was chosen as a mandatory source of information.

Search Criteria

In the pilot-phase of this project we also evaluated different keywords searching the news articles. Two criteria are especially important to us. On the one hand we want the coders to concentrate on a manageable number of articles, while on the other hand we do not want to miss relevant data. Simply searching for a country name often leads to a very high number of articles including many which are irrelevant to this project. Therefore we have selected seven keywords which are used in combination with the country name. These keywords are **victim!, casualt!, kill!, dead!, death!, die!, fatalit!**. They have proven to filter the relevant articles minimizing the ones which are of no concern for our project. All collected articles will be made available for reliability checks by researchers wanting to use our data.

Coding Procedure

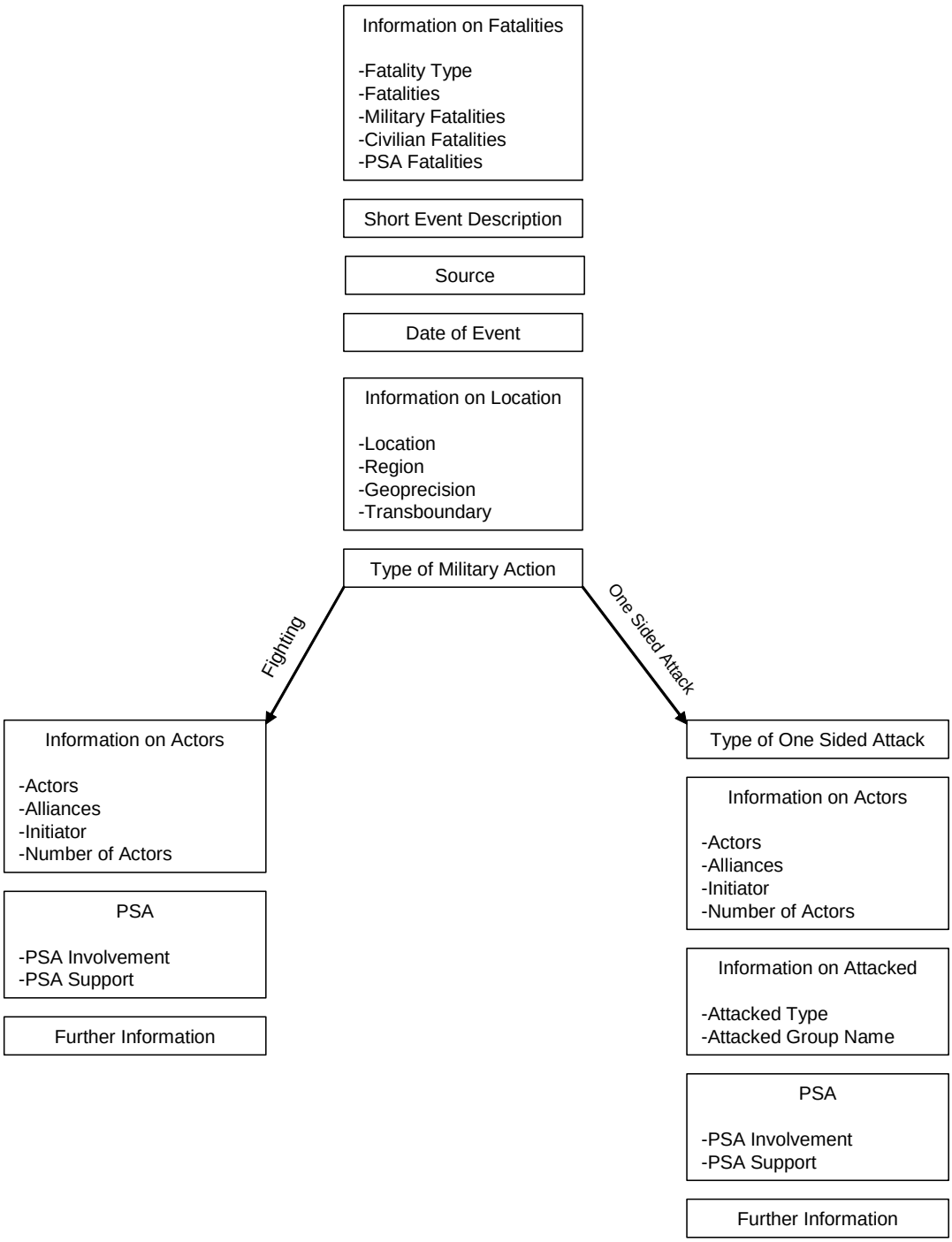
To guarantee high objectivity of data collection, standardization of the coding procedures is a main concern of this project. We have developed a coding tree guiding every coding of an event (Graph 2). The coders of our project were trained to use this tree, ensuring a highly identical coding procedure for every event across cases.

The first step is to identify how many casualties were reported for an event. In case the event has not resulted in fatalities it will not further be considered. This of course is due to our one-fatality-criterion. After the coding of fatalities a short qualitative description of the event should be given and the news source indicated. The next step is to identify the exact or estimated date of the event followed by the localization. Combining the information on fatalities, time, and space already gives us insights into temporal and spatial escalation patterns.

To get a better idea about the character of the events the coders have to decide whether the event has to be considered as fighting or one-sided violence. Is the event coded as fighting, it is necessary to code further information on the participating actors. In case the event is identified as a one-sided attack, not only information on the military active actors, but also on their targets has to be considered.

At the very end of the coding tree information on the Private Military Actors are to be given. Additionally, in case coders are uncertain about coding a specific event or want give other relevant information, they can indicate this under “further information”.

Graph 2: Coding tree



5. Event Data

The Event Dataset includes all violent events resulting in casualties in the course of an armed conflict. More precisely, *an event in the data set is defined as a violent incidence with at least one casualty resulting from the direct use of armed force*. In the following all variables and coding rules are listed (Table 1). Some of the included variables are similar to the ones used by ACLED (Raleigh & Hegre, 2005), while others have been developed to account for research questions concerning areas of limited statehood.

Table 1: Event Data Variables

Name	**Description**
DESCRIPTION OF EVENT	Brief description (2-4 words) of the event (which is often taken from the headlines of an article)
DATE	**Exact date:** Date of event will be coded **day.month.year** (e.g. 2.2.2006) Incidences which last for a longer period of time will be represented by as many events as days the incidence lasted. If for example, an incidence lasts for 3 days it will be represented by three events. In case there is no information on the distribution of casualties over the x days, 1/x of the counted casualties will be assigned to every event. **No exact date:** In case no exact date is given in the article the publication date of the article will is coded indicating the publication name separated by an underscore: **publication_date** (e.g. NYT_2.2.2006). **No exact date with estimate:** In case no exact date is given but there is some estimate when the event took place this information will be integrated. For example we would find information in the 2.2.2006 NYT that the event took place "…about two weeks ago…" This will be coded as follows NYT_2.2.2006_two_week In more general form estimate information will be coded as follows: **publication_date_estimate** estimates are: - days - n_week - n_month - n_year

LOCATION	Geographic location of the event (town, village). If the location is not clearly identifiable please give all geographical information provided in the news article (including mountains, rivers, lakes, city districts, point of compass etc.)
REGION	Region of the event Indication of the region (administrative district) where the event took place
PRECISION	Precision specifies to which extent the indicated region is affected by violence 1 = Village 2 = Part of region 3 = Region
ACTOR	Involvement of actor 0 = no 1 = yes Every actor taking part in a military event will represented as a dummy variable. This variable indicates whether the actor took actively part in the particular event. For actors which can not clearly be identified we will provide predefined categories. These are given in the actor list.
TOTAL NUMBER OF ACTORS	Total number of conflicting (armed) parties taking part in the event. These **do not** include military or civilian targets in case of one-sided violence.
ALLIANCES	Existence of alliance or coalitions In this variable alliances and coalitions will be coded, which take part in the event. Alliances will be coded by comma separating actors taking part in the alliance (e.g. LRA, ADF). Further alliances will be separated by semicolon (e.g. LRA, ADF; Government, Militia).
INITIATOR	Actor/s initiating the event Abbreviation of actor in case a clear initiator can be identified in the event. Please give alliances comma separated.

FATALITIES TYPE	1 = civilian 2 = military 3 = civilian and military 4 = unclear
FATALITIES MIN	Lowest number of deaths indicated in the sources
FATALITIES MAX	Highest number of deaths indicated in the sources
CIVILIAN FATALITIES MIN	Lowest number of civilian deaths indicated in the sources
CIVILIAN FATALITIES MAX	Highest number of civilian deaths indicated in the sources
MILITARY FATALITIES MIN	Lowest number of military deaths indicated in the sources, including victims of government forces (including police forces), rebels, warlords, paramilitary, local militias, self-defense-units, PSAs.
MILITARY FATALITIES MAX	Highest number of military deaths indicated in the sources, including victims of government forces (including police forces), rebels, warlords, paramilitary, local militias, self-defense-units, PSAs.
PSA FATALITIES	Number of contractor deaths indicated in the sources. We do not expect very much information on this variable and also not very much variation on the victim estimates. In case you find differing information on PSA fatalities please indicate the maximum number in parentheses behind the minimum number.
TYPE OF MILITARY ACTION	We differentiate between two major forms of violence: One-sided attacks and fighting. One-sided attacks are defined as unilateral violence aimed at military or civilian targets Fighting is defined as armed interaction between two or more actors Type of military action is coded as follows: 1 = one-sided attacks 2 = fighting 3 = unclear

TYPE OF ONE-SIDED ATTACK	Identification of one-sided attacks. Type of one-sided attacks are coded as follows: 1=Unconventional use of force 2=Kidnapping 3=Massacre 4=Bombing/Shelling 5=Shooting 6=Other 7=Unclear 'Unconventional use of force' are acts of violence aimed at civilian or military target resulting in fatalities using unconventional tactics (such as suicide bombers, road side bombings). „Kidnapping" is only coded if a kidnapping of military personnel or civilians leads to casualties. ‚Massacre' is coded if a large number of civilians (in some cases also military personnel) are target of killings (especially in the context of genocides or politocides). „Bombing/Shelling": Bombing and shelling of civilian and military targets, which do not take place in the context of fighting. 'Shooting': Killings of individuals or a small number of people through hand held weapons, which do not take place in the context of fighting.
ATTACKED TYPE	0 = unclear 1 = civilians 2 = armed Civilians are defined as persons who are not members of an armed group
ATTACKED GROUP NAME	Name of attacked group Please give abbreviation of attacked group Abbreviations can be taken from the **TARGET GROUP LIST** or the **ACTOR GROUP LIST**!

PSA INVOLVEMENT	Involvement of Private Security Actors (PSAs)/Private Military Firms (PMFs) in the event 0 = no 1 = yes
PSA SUPPORT	Please give abbreviation of the armed Groups supported by Private Security Actors (PSAs)/Private Military Firms (PMFs)
TRANSBOUNDARY VIOLENCE	Indicator whether violent events taking place across national borders. 0 = no 1 = yes This variable is especially important to let coders of neighboring countries know that violence is taking place in their country
SOURCE	All considered news sources in the event. In case only one source is used this will be indicated as follows: **publication_day_month_year** (e.g. NYT_12_4_1999) In case more than one source is used these will be separated by comma: Publication_date, publication_date, … (e.g. NYT_12_4_1999, WP_13_4_1999)
FURTHER INFORMATION	Information considered as relevant for the research Any further qualitative or quantitative information that may be useful understanding the onset, escalation, and termination of violence can be given. **Especially, in case you are unsure how to code a certain information or have coded an information but are unsure if it is coded correctly, this information should be given in this variable**

6. Actor List

The actor list includes every group using directed armed force in a conflict. Every actor appears as a dummy variable in the event dataset. During the coding process information on the different groups will be collected (e.g. information on ethnic affiliation, group size, and origin of the group). Among others information on ethnic affiliation, group size, and origin of the group is collected. In the following all variables are listed. A challenge to the collection of actor information is that it is often impossible to exactly name the group taking part in an event. We therefore established categories which account for groups that are not clearly identifiable. These categories are also presented in the Table 2 below.

Table 2: Actor List

ActorID	Three or four letter abbreviation ID given in consultation with heads of project
ActorNAME	Name of the actor **Identifiable actors** In this variable the name of the armed group should be given. Actors can be rebel groups (e.g. UNITA, LRA, or AFDL), government forces (Algerian Government, Sudanese Government), external states (e.g. France, USA), international (e.g. UN, EU, or NATO) or regional organizations (e.g. AU) **Unidentifiable actors** In some articles actor names will not be available. The following predefined categories will be provided to account for these actors. **Non-state actors:** Defined as organized non-state groups using directed force. **Protest groups:** Special category for ad hoc groups using directed force during demonstrations and public events.

ActorDESCRIPTION	Qualitative description of actor In case a group of actors has a common ActorNAME this information has to be given. (e.g. Sunnite rebels)
ActorPREDECESSOR	Name of a possible predecessor
ActorSUCESSOR	Name of a possible successor
ActorETHNIC	Ethnic affiliation of actor if applicable Name of ethnic group
ActorALLIANCES	Alliances of actor during conflict
ActorSTRENGTH	Military strength of actor Give number of personnel and include source of particular strength
ActorORIGIN	Country/Region/City of origin

7. Target List

The target list includes all groups which are targeted by one-sided attacks and do not appear in the actor list. Note that also armed actors can appear in the target list as long as they themselves do not use directed armed force. This can be especially true for international peacekeeping forces (primarily UN). Nonetheless as soon as a group uses directed armed force it is moved to the actor list.

Table 3: Target List

TargetID	Three or four letter abbreviation ID given in consultation with heads of project
TargetNAME	Name of target group Please include only groups which are solely targets of violence. Armed groups which themselves use violence against other groups are included in the actor list and do not appear in the target list. Please Note! Some Groups may be targets in the first part of the conflict and later arm themselves. These groups then move from the target list to the actor list.
TargetDESCRIPTION	Qualitative description of target group
TargetETHNIC	Ethnic affiliation of target if applicable Name of ethnic group
TargetORIGIN	Country/Region/City of origin

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