Monitoring Trends in Global Combat: A New Dataset of Battle Deaths

Documentation of Coding Decisions III: Fearon & Laitin Data

Bethany Lacina¹

Centre for the Study of Civil War (CSCW)
International Peace Research Institute, Oslo (PRIO)

¹ Bethany Lacina (blacina@stanford.edu) is the John A. and Cynthia Fry Gunn Graduate Fellow of political science at Stanford University. She completed this project as a research assistant at the Centre for the Study of Civil War, PRIO.
Acknowledgements and a Note on Citations and Copyrights

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Users of this dataset should contact Bethany Lacina (blacina@stanford.edu) with comments or corrections.

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This document contains information on the adaptation of the Lacina & Gleditsch (2005) data to the Fearon & Laitin (2003) dataset. To obtain the Lacina & Gleditsch dataset, please visit www.prio.no/cscw/cross/battledeaths. A version of the Lacina & Gleditsch dataset is also available for use with the Correlates of War Dataset of Extra-State, Inter-State, Intra-State War 1900–97 (Sarkees 2000) and for the Uppsala/PRIO dataset.
Definition of Battle Deaths

Our definition of battle deaths closely follows from the definition of conflict used to create the Uppsala/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset (Gleditsch, et al; 2002, Eriksson et al., 2003). According to codebook for the Uppsala/PRIO dataset (Strand et al., 2005, 3–4):

‘An armed conflict is a contested incompatibility that concerns government and/or territory where the use of armed force between two parties, of which at least one is the government of a state, results in at least 25 battle-related deaths.

The separate elements of the definition are operationalized as follows:

(1) Use of armed force: use of arms in order to promote the parties’ general position in the conflict, resulting in deaths.
   (1.1) Arms: any material means, e.g. manufactured weapons but also sticks, stones, fire, water, etc.
(2) 25 deaths: A minimum of 25 battle-related deaths per year and per incompatibility.
(3) Party: A government of a state or any opposition organization or alliance of opposition organizations.
   (3.1) Government: The party controlling the capital of the state.
   (3.2) Opposition organization: Any non-governmental group of people having announced a name for their group and using armed force.
(4) State: A state is:
   (4.1) an internationally recognized sovereign government controlling a specified territory, or
   (4.2) an internationally unrecognized government controlling a specified territory whose sovereignty is not disputed by another internationally recognized sovereign government previously controlling the same territory.
(5) Incompatibility concerning government and/or territory: The incompatibility, as stated by the parties, must concern government and/or territory.
   (5.1) Incompatibility: the stated generally incompatible positions.
   (5.2) Incompatibility concerning government: Incompatibility concerning type of political system, the replacement of the central government, or the change of its composition.
   (5.3) Incompatibility concerning territory: Incompatibility concerning the status of a territory, e.g. the change of the state in control of a certain territory (interstate conflict), secession, or autonomy (internal conflict).’

The Lacina & Gleditsch dataset defines battle deaths as deaths resulting directly from violence inflicted through the use of armed force by a party to an armed conflict during contested combat. Contested combat is use of armed force by a party to an armed conflict against any person or target during which the perpetrator faces the immediate threat of lethal force being used by another party to the conflict against him/her and/or
allied fighters. Contested combat excludes the sustained destruction of soldiers or civilians outside of the context of any reciprocal threat of lethal force (e.g. execution of prisoners of war).

_Timeframe:_ We have collected annual battle deaths data which includes both deaths during combat and deaths from wounds received in combat. Some of those considered dead of wounds may have died in a year following that in which combat actually took place, especially in the case of battles taking place late in the calendar year. These deaths were included, however, if they were the direct and immediate result of injuries sustained during combat violence. Long term reduction in life expectancy because of wounds or disability was not included.
Turkey: Militarized party, 1977–80

(Clodfelter, 2002):
P. 468–469: “In the late 1970s Turkey was increasingly beset by political and religious violence… … The toll in 1977 of 262 killed…was but a prelude to the bloodshed of 1978, during which more than 1,500 people were killed. …by November 1979, a total of 2,444 people had been killed and more than 10,000 injured since January 1978. From November 1979 to July 1980 another 1,800 died …the Turkish military stepped in and deposed the parliamentary government of Suleyman Demirel on September 12, 1980. By that time more than 4,000 Turkish citizens had died in the right-left violence since 1976. … In the first six months following the coup a total of 366 people were slain…”

(Lewis 2004):
‘July 1978 – TURKEY … At a press conference on Sept. 2, 1977, the then Minister of the Interior, Professor Korkut Ozal … said that during the period Jan. 1–Aug. 31, 1977, a total of 164 persons had died in political strife (compared with 90 during the whole of 1976 and 34 during the whole of 1975) …on Jan.24, 1978, the Minister of the Interior, Mr Ozaydinli, gave detailed statistics of political violence between Jan. 1 and Dec.31, 1977: in 1,212 incidents 262 persons had been killed … Mr Ozaydinli further said that there had been 194 clashes already since Jan. 1, 1978, in which 32 persons had been killed and 360 injured, and that there had been 134 explosions during the same period.’
‘October 1980 – TURKEY …The political violence in Turkey which had resulted in some 1,500 deaths during 1979 continued during 1980 to escalate…’
‘January 1981 – TURKEY … The five-member National Security Council led by Gen. Kenan Evren, which had on Sept. 10–11 overthrown the minority Justice Party (JP) Government of Mr Suleyman Demirel… most of the political violence had ceased abruptly during the wave of arrests which followed the coup…’

Interpretation:

Estimated:

1977: 262 (Clodfelter and Keesing’s)
1978: 1,500 (Clodfelter and Keesing’s)
1979: 1,144 (Clodfelter: Total of 2,444 from 1978 to November 1979, plus one ninth of the 1,800 deaths estimated from November 1979 to July 1980)
1980: 1,966 (Clodfelter: Remainder of the 1,800 deaths estimated from November 1979 to July 1980 plus 366 slain after September 1980)

Zimbabwe: Ndebele guerillas, 1983–87


Keesing’s Record of World Events (Lewis 2004) contains reports on this conflict filed in June 1982; July and November 1983; April and October 1984; June 1985; February 1987; and January 1988. These reports were reviewed for information on battle deaths in specific incidents. The following is a summary of the deaths reported in Keesing’s by year:

1982:
6 dead by 4 April. 1 dead on 17 April.
Government alleges 200 civilians killed by the rebels between February 1982 and June 1983.

1983:
Government alleges 200 civilians killed by the rebels between February 1982 and June 1983.
Rebels allege 1,000 civilian deaths following the deployment of army in January 1983.
Western press and clerics and relief workers confirm at least 1,000 dead by late February. On 10 January 1984 church representatives claim that over 2,000 were killed between January and March 1983.
In November 1983, Nkomo alleged 3,000 or more had been killed in the government campaign against the dissidents.
Deaths mentioned explicitly include the following incidents, many of which could possibly be considered unorganized or one-sided violence:

- 4 dead on 18 March
- 3 dead on 3 April
- 1 dead on 12 April
- 1 dead on 1 May (robbers blamed)
- 1 dead on 14 May
- 2 dead on 28 May
• 1 dead on 13 June
• 1 dead on 24 June
• On 14 July three tourists were kidnapped. They were later found dead.
• 1 dead on 5 August
• 1 dead on 12 December

1984:
Some success by government forces reported by August but human rights criticism of the crackdown continues. Events specifically mentioned in Keesing’s include:
• 10 killed on 26 June
• 1–5 dead on 16 October
• 2 dead in rioting on 9 November
• 2 dead on 14 November
• 1 dead on 25 November

1985:
Police report 75 dissidents killed during the year, and 156 civilians killed by dissidents.
Clashes reported in late 1984 and early 1985 and the following fatalities data are specified:
• 3 dead 23–24 February after reports of pitched violence
• 5 dead 24 February in Hwange, allegedly murdered by members of ZANU
• 6 dead 7–9 July
• 72 people dead after elections are held

1986:
Police report 68 dissidents killed during the year, and 116 civilians killed by dissidents

1987:
Activity intensifies after talks break-down in April 1987. Specific incidents reported include the following deaths, many of which might be considered one-sided violence:
• 4 dead 9 May
• 1 dead 18 May
• 5 dead 1 June
• 3 dead 16 June
• 2 dead 18 August
• 1 dead 17 August
• 6 dead 7 September
• 1 dead 23 September
• 1 killed 18 November
• 16 killed on 25 November

Interpretation:

Data in Keesing’s implies that Leitenberg’s estimate of 2,000 killed in this conflict is approximately accurate. 1983: Estimated 2,000 deaths based on Leitenberg and church representatives’ report in Keesing’s 1984: Estimated 230 deaths, using 1985 as a representative year 1985: Estimated 231 deaths, based on government data 1986: Estimated 184 deaths, based on government data 1987: Estimated 40 deaths, based on Keesing’s reports

China: Xinjiang, 1991–99


Keesing’s Record of World Events (Lewis 2004) contains reports on this conflict filed in March 1992; May 1996; February, March, April, May, August, and October 1997; January 1998; February, March, and May 1999. The following is a summary of fatalities information in those reports:
1992:
- ‘March 1992 – CHINA … In a speech delivered on March 6, Tomur Dawamat, chair of the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous regional government, admitted that there had been a recent upsurge in Moslem separatist activity in the region.’

1996:
- In May, Keesing’s reports that 6–7 officials and police had been killed by rebels since February

1997:
- In early February, nine people were killed in riots and 130 summarily executed by the state: ‘February 1997 – CHINA… a riot on Feb. 5–6 in which at least nine people were killed … Yusupbek Mukhlisi, exiled leader of the separatist United National Revolutionary Front of East Turkestan, said that the rioting had been sparked by the execution of Uighurs … 30 people had been publicly executed by firing squad in early February. … The Agence France-Presse news agency reported on Feb. 13 that the Chinese authorities in Yining had … execut[ed] around 100 Muslim separatists after summary trials [following the riots].’
- On 25 February a bus bomb killed 9
- On 7 March a bus bomb killed 2 people, according to Reuters. The Chinese media denied that anyone had been killed
- On 24 April 2 people are killed when police fire on Uighur demonstrators
- On 13 May 8 Uighurs are executed for carrying out a series of bus bombings in February and western press report that a bomb killed 1 person in Beijing: ‘The Beijing newspaper Beijing Ribao reported … that the explosion had been the result of a man from Hunan province committing suicide “by blowing himself up at a quiet place”.’
- On 29 May eight Uighurs are executed in connection with February bus bombings
- The Far Eastern Economic Review reported on 7 August that 9 people were executed in connection with the anti-government riots in February and 3 more in connection with demonstrations in April
- On 3 October Hong Kong newspaper reports that ‘a comparatively large-scale armed rebellion’ had killed 9 government officials and people’s congress deputies
- On 29 December 16 people were executed in connection to clashes with the police the previous February, per announcement of the Chinese courts on 12 January 1998 and ‘at least 20 people had already been executed between April and July 1997 for their roles in the Yining riots and later bombings in Urumqi.’
1999:
- 2 Uighur leaders executed on 28 January
- On 27 February an attack on a missile base kills 21, per a report by the Istanbul-based Eastern Turkestan National Centre
- On 12 May 8 separatists were executed after summary trial

Interpretation:
Summary executions are not considered battle violence. Press reports indicate that the Uighurs have engaged in only fairly small scale terrorist attacks or battle with security forces.

The high estimate is 1,000 deaths, Fearon & Laitin’s criterion for inclusion of a conflict in their dataset. No trend was coded.

The low and best estimate was made as follows:
1991–95: Estimate of 12 killed per year (The mean of 0 and 24, which is the range of fatalities per year Uppsala/PRIO estimate in this conflict)
1996: 23 killed (from Keesing’s)
1997: 29 killed (deaths when police fire on demonstrators excluded)
1999: 21 killed

Central African Republic: Factional Fighting, 1996-7

Keesing’s Record of World Events (Lewis 2004) contains reports on this conflict in April, May, and June 1996; January, February, April, May, June, July, August, September and October 1997; and April 1998. The following is a summary of fatalities information contained in those reports:

1996:
- Up to 12 were killed in an army mutiny in Bangui on 18–20 April
- 43 people killed (11 soldiers and 32 civilians) between 18–28 May. (Fighting restarted on 18 May and French troops were deployed on 19 May)
• On 6 June a government of national unity was formed
• On 15 November an army mutiny took place at the Kasai camp and French forces were deployed; the reports do not specify whether fatalities occurred

1997:
• On 4 January three Africans and two French were killed in street disturbances
• On 5 January French troops killed 10 army mutineers at Kasai
• On 17 January further fighting between rebels and French troops killed one mutineer
• In February African peacekeepers arrived and a new government of national unity was announced on 18 February
• On 21–22 March fighting between mutineers and peacekeepers killed twenty
• Reports of possible clashes on 6–7 April
• On 10–11 April there was a renewed outbreak of fighting; the reports do not specify whether fatalities occurred
  ‘The apparent murder of a sergeant in the presidential guard and the mysterious deaths of three former army mutineers led to a tense situation in Bangui, the country’s capital, in the early days of May.’
• On 20 June a Senegalese peacekeeper was shoot by ex-mutineers
• On 20–24 June renewed fighting in Bangui killed up to 100, ‘including civilians apparently executed summarily by the ex-mutineers.’ A ceasefire was signed on 2 July. Leaders of the ex-mutineers return to Cabinet on 1 September.
• On 4 October French troops began to withdraw from the country

**Interpretation:**

There is no complete account of this conflict available.

Low and best estimate: Based on only those deaths reported in Keesing’s: 55 dead in 1996 and 141 dead in 1997, including some incidents that may not be battle deaths (such as the murder of a presidential guardsman).

High estimate: 1,000 deaths (Fearon & Laitin’s criteria for inclusion of a conflict in their dataset).

Best estimate:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Low Estimate</th>
<th>High Estimate</th>
<th>Best Estimate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Notes on the Adaptation of the Lacina & Gleditsch Data

Fearon & Laitin’s dataset requires that a conflict have at least 1,000 battle deaths and an average of 100 deaths per year. There is no minimum number of fatalities per year, however. As a result, they code continuous conflicts where other datasets note discontinuous or separate wars. This was the most common reason for the adjustments required to the Lacina & Gleditsch data:

Afghanistan, 1992: In the Fearon & Laitin data one conflict ends and another begins when Kabul was conquered by the Mujahideen in April 1992. The estimate of fatalities in 1992 was divided between these conflicts based on an approximately constant rate of fatalities through the year.

Angola, 1992–99, civil war in Cabinda: No reliable fatalities information is available for this conflict. Yearly estimates were based on Uppsala/PRIO’s intensity scores for this conflict.

Angola, 1996–97, civil war with UNITA: No fatalities are noted in SIPRI Yearbooks, Project Ploughshares (2003), or IISS (2003). A review of Keesing’s Record of World Events (Lewis 2004) uncovered allegations of attacks by UNITA and the government but no confirmed reports of battle violence. The UCDP database (Uppsala Department of Peace and Conflict Research 2004) coders estimate less than twenty-five deaths per year. 24 deaths were estimated in each year as a high estimate, 12 as a best estimate, zero as a low estimate.


Burundi, 1993–94: Not included in the Uppsala/PRIO data. Estimated as low intensity conflict years: low estimate of 50 deaths per year, a high estimate of 200 deaths per year, and 100 deaths per year as a best estimate.

Chad, 1993 & 1995–96: The case name of a new conflict beginning in 1993 is identified by Fearon & Laitin only with a question mark. Deaths in this conflict were coded as unknown. All deaths recorded in Chad are included in the ongoing civil war, as in the Uppsala/PRIO data. In 1995-6, conflict in Chad is not included in Uppsala/PRIO’s data. The UCDP Database (Uppsala Department of Peace and Conflict Research 2004) estimates less than twenty-five deaths each year. Estimated 24 deaths in each year as a high estimate, 12 as a best estimate, zero as a low.
China, 1950: The final year of the Chinese civil war in the Fearon & Laitin data is interpreted as the first year of a new conflict between Taiwan & China in the Uppsala/PRIO coding.


Columbia, 1963–64: These years are not included in the Uppsala/PRIO data. Estimated based Giraldo (2003).

Ethiopia, 1974–92: The Uppsala/PRIO data estimate a much longer time period for this conflict. The data for the years 1974–92 were rounded slightly to avoid spurious accuracy.

Haiti, 1992–95: The UCDP database estimates (Uppsala Department of Peace and Conflict Research 2004) that there were fewer than 25 battle deaths in Haiti in this years. A review of Keesing’s Record of World Events (Lewis 2004) found records of political violence but no reports of battle deaths. 24 deaths were coded in each year as a high estimate, 12 as a best estimate, zero as a low.

India, 1952–99: Fearon & Laitin record a continuous insurgency in northeast India is coded from 1952 to 1999. During years in which the Uppsala/PRIO dataset records no active conflicts in India we have estimated: 0 battle deaths as a low figure, 24 as a high, and 12 as a best estimate.

Indonesia, conflict in West Papua, 1965–99: This conflict is coded continuously between 1965 and 1999. During periods when Uppsala/PRIO estimate less than 25 battle deaths occurred each year (1966–75 & 1979–95) we have made estimates were made of 0 deaths per year (low), 24 deaths per year (high) and 12 deaths per year (best). From 1996–99 estimates based on Project Ploughshares (2003) were used.

Indonesia, 1990–91, 1993–96 & 1999, conflict in East Timor: The UCDP database (Uppsala Department of Peace and Conflict Research 2004) was used to fill in years omitted from the Uppsala/PRIO conflict list:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>UCDP Database Information</th>
<th>Low Estimate</th>
<th>High Estimate</th>
<th>Best Estimate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>Estimate less than 25 dead; Fretilin claims up to 63 killed</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>UCDP Database Information</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Best</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>2-130</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>6-16</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>0-7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>4-23</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The SIPRI Yearbook (Seybolt and Uppsala Conflict Data Project 2000) estimate of 50 deaths in 1999 was also coded.

Indonesia, 1992–98, conflict in Aceh: High estimate based on an estimated total of 5,000 dead (Clodfelter 2002: 694). The low and best estimate are based on the Lacina & Gleditsch fatalities data and the UCDP conflict database (Uppsala Department of Peace and Conflict Research 2004) estimate of fewer than 25 battle deaths in 1992–98. The conflict was estimated with 0 deaths in these years as a low estimate, 12 in these years as a best estimate.


Mozambique, 1993–95: Coded as peace years in most datasets, and no fatalities are recorded in SIPRI. A search of Keesing’s Record of World Events (Lewis 2004) did not uncover incidents of battle violence, although there were reported allegations of desertions and mutiny during the demobilization process. 24 deaths coded in each year as a high estimate, 12 as a best estimate, zero as a low.


Papua New Guinea, 1988–89, 1991, & 1997–98: For 1988–89, an estimate of total deaths was divided between these years based on the months of active conflict. Further estimates based on UCDP Database (Uppsala Department of Peace and Conflict Research 2004):
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Estimate</th>
<th>Estimate</th>
<th>Estimate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>9-15</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>0-24</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Rwanda, 1995–96: Uppsala/PRIO estimate fewer than 25 deaths in armed conflict in these years. Estimates of 0 (low), 24 (high) and 12 (best) deaths per year were coded.


USSR, 1946: Fearon & Laitin note four simultaneous conflicts. The numbers assigned to each conflict were: 1=Ukraine; 2=Latvia; 3=Estonia; 4=Lithuania.
References


