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## **Conflict Sites 1946–2005**

The Uppsala Conflict Data Project (UCDP) defines an armed conflict as ‘a contested incompatibility that concerns government or territory or both where the use of armed force between two parties results in at least 25 battle-related deaths’ (Gleditsch et al., 2002: 618–619).

As one of the variables in the UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset, conflicts are classified by *Location*, which as a first approximation can be seen as the countries affected by the incompatibility the conflict is fought over. Some countries have several on-going internal conflicts (India being a prominent example), with all of these conflicts being classified as having the same Location.

More precisely, the Location of an armed conflict is defined in the codebook as ‘the government side of a conflict’ (Harbom et. al, 2006: 8). This is described in greater detail in the following terms (ibid, 8):

For internal and internationalized internal conflicts, only one country name is listed. This is the country whose government or territory is disputed. For certain conflicts, such as Kurdistan, the disputed territory is divided between different countries [... and] we have coded individual conflicts for each country. For interstate conflict, governments with a claim over the territory in dispute are listed in the Location field. Even if several governments are involved in the conflict, only the primary parties are listed. [...] For extra-state conflicts, Location is set to be the disputed area, not the government of the colonial power. [...]

The codebook specifically acknowledges that the identification of one or more countries as the Location ‘should not be interpreted as the geographical location of the conflict.’ (Harbom et. al 2006: 8). This document presents a set of complementary variables designed to alleviate this shortcoming.

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<sup>1</sup> The original coding of this dataset was made by Clionadh Raleigh in the fall of 2004. Some smaller adjustments were made by David Cunningham in the fall of 2005 and additional updates by Lars Wilhelmsen in the fall of 2006. We are grateful to Halvard Buhaug, Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, Håvard Hegre, and Håvard Strand for comments on earlier drafts

## Latitude, Longitude, Radius

First, the companion dataset includes more precise information on the conflict location, i.e. where the battle action takes place. In order to identify the geographic location of each conflict, every observation is assigned a conflict center point by its geographical coordinates (*Latitude* and *Longitude*). These coordinates represent general estimates of where battles have occurred. The center point is defined as the mid-point of all known battle locations, and was determined visually to the nearest 1/4<sup>th</sup> decimal degree by plotting identified battle zones on a map of the relevant region/country. To ease compatibility with GIS applications, the coordinates were in some cases adjusted to fall within the nearest landmass. For conflicts that took place in a single city or village, the exact coordinates for that particular location are used. In addition to latitude and longitude, we also code the radius of the conflict area (in 50 km intervals). Users should be aware of the limitations of this variable in that at a given point in time, the actual conflict zone might be more constrained than the maximum size that is recorded here. Furthermore, we define a circular zone of conflict whereas the actual shape is more likely to follow the contours of international boundaries, mountains, rivers, etc. The circular conflict zone might thus also cover territory not directly affected by the conflict, including the territory of a neighboring country. In some problematic cases (usually separatist activities), sporadic violence occurred at a considerable distance from the core area of incompatibility (e.g. IRA bombings in London). To prevent the conflict circle from assuming an unrealistic size and thus cover vast portions of unaffected territory, such events were generally ignored.

Another limitation of the geo-referenced variables is that the coded conflict zone often does not vary over time, regardless of the duration of the conflict. In particular for the earlier conflicts, where available information may be scarce, the Latitude, Longitude, and Radius variables may cover information aggregated over a longer span of the conflict, or over the complete conflict. For these observations the conflict center is fixed, so as to represent the geographic mid-point of all significant battle-zones during the conflict (including territory occupied by the opposition actors). In other cases, in particular for conflicts which have markedly altered character in the geographical sense, these variables may contain information gathered from a single conflict year. These data were originally coded by Halvard Buhaug for use in Buhaug & Gates (2002), and were previously – up to version 3-2005b – included with the annually released conflict list (Harbom & Wallensteen 2005).

## Conflict Site, Conflict Territory

The fit is not perfect between the parent dataset's Location variable and the data for the conflict zone. For instance, UK, France, Israel, and Egypt are all listed in the Location field for the 1956 Suez war, even though the fighting took place exclusively in Egypt (as indicated by the geographical coordinates and the Conflict Site variable). On the other hand, the US is not listed in the Location field of the interstate war in Vietnam after 1965, which is consistent with the data on the conflict zone.

In order to identify the country or countries where the fighting took place, we have defined two new variables called *Conflict Site* and *Conflict Territory*. Conflict Site contains three-digit country codes (based on the system membership definition of Gleditsch & Ward, 1999) representing the country or countries within which the conflict occurred, whereas Conflict Territory records the name of these countries. Only states that are primary parties to a conflict can be listed in the Conflict Site and Conflict Territory variables. See Harbom et al. (2006) for definitions and distinctions between primary and secondary parties. If the conflict is determined to have taken place wholly within one country, only that country will be listed. This is, by definition, always the case in intrastate conflicts.<sup>2</sup> In interstate wars, the coordinates are close to the borders of the countries engaged in fighting. In such situations, both countries are listed in the Conflict Site and Conflict Territory variables.<sup>3</sup> In other interstate conflicts (such as the one between China and India in 1962), all the fighting occurred within one state (in this case, India), which means that only that state's country code and name is provided. For colonial (extrasystemic) conflicts, the Conflict Site variable contains the country codes of both the colonizer and the territory after independence. For example, the Conflict site in the French colonial war in Cambodia in 1946 is coded as '220,811'. The Conflict Territory records 'French colony of Cambodia.' This coding is necessary to comply with the consistency of our system membership description (Harbom et al. 2006: 13), as Cambodia was not an independent country at the time of the war.

Four websites were used to cross-reference battle locations within countries to their geographical coordinates:

- [gnswww.nga.mil/geonames/GNS/](http://gnswww.nga.mil/geonames/GNS/)
- [maps.google.com](http://maps.google.com)
- [www.confluence.org/search.php](http://www.confluence.org/search.php)
- [www.fallingrain.com](http://www.fallingrain.com)

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<sup>2</sup> In intrastate conflicts, only the country whose government is challenged by a non-state party is considered a primary state actor. Intervening countries are secondary parties.

<sup>3</sup> In a few ambiguous cases, the choice of Conflict Site was made for us by Halvard Buhaug, who has coded the conflict zone data.

## Notes on particular cases

Conflict 16 (between the United Kingdom and Albania) in 1946 has coordinates that place the conflict at sea. The armed action did in fact take place at sea in the Corfu channel and did not result in any deaths on land. The Conflict Site and Conflict Territory variables record this conflict as having taken place in Albania.

Conflict 59 (between French Colony of Mauritania, France, and Spain) in 1957–58 was fought in Morocco, which was independent at the time of the war. However, Mauritania is listed in the Location field because the conflict involved Mauritanian border interests. The variable in the parent dataset notes country number 435 to match the Location field (Harbom et. al 2006: 8, 13) although Mauritania was not an independent country at the time. The Conflict site variable contains number 600 to match the Conflict Territory variable, which records Morocco as the place where the conflict took place.

Conflict 79 (between India and Pakistan) involved fighting in both India and Pakistan along the border with Nepal. The Latitude/Longitude variables identify the center of the conflict as ‘Nepal’. However, no conflict occurred within Nepal. This coding is the product of the ‘conflict zone’ being measured as a circle that incorporates the areas of fighting on both sides of Nepal. The Conflict Site and Conflict Territory variables identify India and Pakistan, which are the correct locations for where the fighting took place

Conflict 166 (between Chad and Libya) is a case that presents some coding difficulty. Fighting took place over the Aozou Strip, a part of Chad that had been annexed by Libya in the 1970s. No fighting took place within Libya proper. However, there is a question of how to treat the Aozou Strip since it was territory in dispute. In this dataset, the Conflict Site and Conflict Territory variables only include Chad, since Libya’s control over the Aozou Strip was never recognized and no conflict took place within Libya’s internationally-recognized borders.

## Variable Descriptions

### ID

The conflict identifier of the conflict to which the observation belongs, as defined by Harbom et al. (2006).<sup>4</sup>

### Year

The year of the observation.

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<sup>4</sup> For a conversion table to facilitate compatibility with previous versions of the parent dataset, see [www.prio.no/cscw/armedconflict](http://www.prio.no/cscw/armedconflict).

**Latitude**

The latitude and longitude variables indicate the geographical midpoint of the conflict zone. The coordinates are given as decimal degrees where southern latitudes and western longitudes have negative values. For larger conflict zones, the coordinates are rounded to the nearest 1/4<sup>th</sup> decimal degree. For conflicts that took place within a single spot (military base, village, city, etc.), the variables provide coordinates exact to the nearest decimal.

**Longitude**

See Latitude.

**Radius**

The radius variable indicates the largest geographic extent of the conflict zone from the center point during the course of conflict. The radius variable is measured in 50-kilometer intervals. For conflicts that took place within a single spot (military base, village, city, etc.), the radius variable is set at 50 km.

**Conflict Site**

Gleditsch & Ward (1999) country code as defined by the parent dataset's system membership definition for the country/countries within which the conflict took place.

**Conflict Territory**

Name(s) of country/countries listed in the Conflict Site variable.

**Version**

Version number of the corresponding UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset. The data are currently updated through 2005 (Version 4-2006b), based on the data presented in Harbom, Högbladh & Wallensteen (2006). This dataset is uniquely referenced to the parent data on the combination of ID and Year.

## References

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