Religion and Armed Conflict (RELAC) Data

Codebook, v.1.1

Compatible with UCDP Dyadic Dataset version 1-2018

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'Resolving Jihadist Conflicts? Religion, Civil War, and Prospects for Peace'

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1 Introduction

This codebook describes the Religion and Armed Conflict (RELAC) Data, 1975-2015, which has been developed within the research project 'Resolving Jihadist Conflicts? Religion, Civil War, and Prospects for Peace' at the Department of Peace and Conflict Research, Uppsala University. The data was first presented in Svensson & Nilsson (2018) and is available for download at (www.pcr.uu.se). RELAC version 1.0 presented in the Svensson & Nilsson (2018) article is compatible with version 1-2016 of the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) Dyadic Dataset.

The RELAC data version 1.1 (presented here) builds on the UCDP Dyadic Dataset and is compatible with version 1-2018. It focuses on dyads within each armed conflict in the world between 1975 and 2015. The RELAC data is a new dataset suitable for analyzing the causes, dynamics, and resolution of religious conflicts. It contains information about key religious dimensions of armed conflicts: whether the issue at stake is religious, the actors' religious identity, and fine-grained data about the type and salience of religious claims.

2 Definitions of key terms

Armed conflict

The RELAC data uses UCDP's definition of armed conflict: "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 in a calendar year." An in-depth discussion of all elements in this definition can be accessed in the codebook for the UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset (Gleditsch et al. 2002; Eck & Pettersson 2018; UCDP/PRIO 2018).

Conflict Dyad

The RELAC data uses UCDP's definition of a conflict dyad. A conflict dyad are two conflicting primary parties of which at least one is the government of a state. In interstate conflicts, both primary parties are state governments. In conflict dyads in intrastate and extrasystemic conflicts, the non-governmental primary party is an organized opposition organization.

The separate elements in the definition are operationalized as follows:

1. *Primary parties*: The parties that form the incompatibility by stating incompatible positions. The incompatibility (i.e. the conflict issue) must concern governmental power (type of political system, the replacement of the central government, or the change of its composition), territory (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) or both.

2. *Government*: The party controlling the capital of a state.

3. *State*: A state is an internationally recognized sovereign government controlling a specific territory or an internationally unrecognized government controlling a specified territory whose sovereignty is not disputed by another internationally recognized sovereign government previously controlling the same territory.

4. *Opposition organization*: Any non-governmental group of people that have announced a name for their group and used armed force to influence the outcome of the stated incompatibility. The UCDP only deals with formally organized opposition. The focus is on armed conflict involving consciously conducted and planned political campaigns rather than spontaneous violence.

Religious Identity

Religious Identity (RelID) captures whether the religious majority of the constituencies of the conflict actors – the government and the rebel group – are separated in terms of their religious

identities. Hence, religious identity conflicts are those in which the constituencies of each of the conflict actors come from different faith traditions, and here we consider all the major world religions: Judaism, Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Sikhism. In addition, for those cases where both sides are culturally part of a major world faith tradition, we also provide information on whether they belong to different sub-traditions, specifically Shia and Sunni Islam, for the Muslim tradition, and Orthodox, Roman-Catholic and Protestant for the Christian tradition. For example, in the conflict in Northern Ireland, the warring actors mobilized along such religious dividing lines, namely Protestants and Catholics (although the issues at stake did not concern religion). Thus, this variable measures whether the conflict is fought between or within religious traditions, and the basis for this data is UCDP's 'conflict descriptions' and 'warring party name' in the UCDP Encyclopedia, which includes information about the warring actors. In unclear cases, this has been complemented with additional conflict-specific material.

Religious Incompatibility

Religious Incompatibility (RelIncomp) captures whether there is a religious dimension in the original incompatibility as explicitly stated at the onset of the conflict by the representatives of the primary parties. This variable is based on the stated aspirations of the parties, originating in the coding of the original claims of the parties in conflict. The basis for this data is UCDP's coding of 'first stated incompatibility', which describes the nature of the incompatibility. In the coding of religious incompatibilities, we consider all cases where there is an explicit reference to religious aspirations and demands, without the religious incompatibility necessarily being the most important of the demands.

Islamist

This variable specifies whether at least one of the primary parties has made explicit and self-proclaimed Islamist political claims at the onset of conflict. Islamist claims refer to stated positions

by one or both of the conflicting parties that advocate an increased role of Islam in the society or the state. An example of Islamist claim is demand for the application of Sharia law in a country.

Salience of Religious Claims

To capture diversity in the importance of the religious claims, we also created a measure of the salience of the claims (SalienceRel). There is, for example, a marked difference in the salience of the religious issues in the conflicts with IS (high salience), compared to GAM in Indonesia (low salience). We use two key criteria in order to code the salience of the religious claim, one relating to the multiplicity of issues and the other to the multiplicity of actors. Firstly, we distinguish between religious claims where the religious issue represents the main question at stake for the rebel group, and claims where the religious issue is only one among several key issues at stake. Secondly, we make a distinction between those cases where the claim is made by one organization or a unified alliance, and cases where the rebel organization is represented by an alliance where only a few of the groups view the religious issues as the main question. In order to consider a claim to be of high salience both these criteria need to be fulfilled, thus a religious claim is of high salience when it represents the main issue at stake, and when the rebel actor making this claim is not part of a broader alliance including at least one secular rebel actor. For example, the Islamist party in Tajikistan was making religious claims that were the main issue of contention, but since this group was member of a broader antigovernment coalition, where not all groups shared this claim, we consider this to be a case of low salience. By introducing these new data on religious issues, we are able to capture important variations within the category of religious conflict.

Claim Type

This variable (ClaimType) specifies in what way the insurgents are demanding a greater or different role for religion in the society or in the state. As such, conflicts with no religious dimension in the incompatibility are not coded here. Since there is important variation within the category of

religious claims, we provide a further disaggregation of claims into territorial, revolutionary, and where applicable, transnational claims. Our categorization primarily draws on Wallensteen's (2015) distinction between armed conflicts that concern the government as a whole, and claims regarding a specific piece of territory – a distinction that underlies the two categories of armed conflict coded by the UCDP. We refer to these as territorial or revolutionary claims, and as we will show below we also draw on other work (e.g. Piazza, 2009 and Melander, Pettersson and Themnér, 2016) to develop a third category – transnational claims, which we observe empirically for the Islamist claims.

The various claims are categorized into four broader types of claims. *Islamist claims* refer to stated positions that advocate an increased role of Islam in the society or the state. *Secularist claims* refer to stated positions that advocate a decreased role of religious laws, parties, or constitutions in the state. *Evangelist claims* refer to stated positions that advocate an increased role of Christianity in the society or the state. And *Other religious claims* refer to claims that are of religious nature but which do not correspond to any of the three categories above, i.e. the claims made by the Sikh insurgents in the Punjab/Khalistan conflict in India. These broader categories are then divided into sub-categories depending on the religious nature of the claim and whether the claim concerns control over government or territory or whether they are transnational in character. Note that the latter sub-category is only applicable to Islamist claims.

Accordingly, Islamist claims are divided into three categories. First, *Revolutionary Islamist* claims are insurgency positions aspiring to change the nature and character of the state, without necessarily changing its territorial borders. This entails demands for a greater role for Sharia-based legislation over particular issue areas, or a re-definition of the foundational basis for the state, in a way that makes the character of the state Islamic. For example, GIA in Algeria has made such claims. Second, we capture *Separatist Islamist* claims, where the insurgents also have stated explicit Islamist

aspirations, but where the claims are territorially confined, and thus concern how a specific territory should be governed, rather than the rule of the whole state. Examples include the Kashmir insurgents in India, as well as the Pattani insurgents in Southern Thailand. The third category is *Transnational Islamist* claims, where the rebel group's Islamist aspirations go beyond the national boundaries and the group seeks to establish a transnational Caliphate. Cases in point are the armed conflicts involving Al-Qaida and the IS.

As regards secularist claims, we distinguish between two types. *Secularist separatist* claims refer to challenges concerning the present state-formation of an existing state and aspirations to establish control over a territory, either through increased autonomy or outright separation. The claims are secularist in the sense that they aspire to establish an explicitly secular state or autonomy, in contrast to a religiously defined government that they are challenging. An example is the conflict between LTTE and the government of Sri Lanka, in which LTTE (defeated in 2009) originally demanded an explicitly secular state, and this demand was one of the contentious issues in the conflict with the Sinhala-dominated government. The goals of the insurgencies can be classified as *Revolutionary secularist* if the claims refer to demands for a new government or underlying ideology of the whole national territory, in which the religious character of the state would decrease. The challenge by MEK against the theocratic regime of Iran is an example of this type of conflict.

Furthermore, the evangelist claims can be divided into two types. *Separatist evangelist* demands entail aspirations for an increased role of Christianity in a specific territory, whereas *Revolutionary evangelist* claims, by contrast, refer to aspirations that concern an increased role of Christianity in the government of the whole state, rather than being bound to a specific piece of territory within the national territorial borders. An example is the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) – an armed group that stated explicit Christian demands at the onset of conflict (including that the Ten Commandments should govern the country). This results in eight sub-categories of claims:

Revolutionary Islamist; Transnational Islamist; Separatist Islamist; Revolutionary evangelist; Separatist evangelist; Revolutionary secularist; Separatist secularist; Other religious claims, i.e. Sikh insurgents (Punjab/Khalistan – India).

3   List of variables in the RELAC dataset

A-X are standard UCDP variables and are directly taken from the UCDP. Hence, when using these variables it is important to cite them and refer to the original UCDP references.

A   dyad_id

The unique identifier of all dyads. This coding is compatible with the UCDP dyadic version 1-2018.

B   conflict_id

Identifies which conflict in the UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset any given dyad is a part of, compatible with UCDP dyadic version 1-2018.

C   location

The name(s) of the country/countries whose government(s) have a primary claim to the issue in dispute.

D   side_a

Identifying the country/countries of side A in conflict. Always the government side in internal conflicts. Note that this is a primary party to the conflict.

E   side_a_2nd

Identifying the country/countries supporting side A in the conflict.

F   side_b

Identifying the opposition actor or country/countries of side B in the conflict. In an internal conflict, this includes a military opposition organization. Note that this is a primary party to the conflict.

G   side_b_id

The unique identifier of the actor on side B.

H   side_b_2nd

Identifying the country/countries supporting side B in the conflict.

I   incompatibility

A general coding of the conflict issue:

1. The incompatibility concerns territory

2. The incompatibility concerns government

3. The incompatibility concerns both territory and government

J   territory_name

The name of the territory over which the conflict is fought, provided that the incompatibility is territory.

K   year

The year of the observation.

L   intensity_level

The intensity level in the dyad per calendar year. Two different intensity levels are coded:

1. Minor armed conflict (25-999 battle-related deaths)

2. Major armed conflict or 'war' (at least 1,000 battle-related deaths)

M   *type_of_conflict*

The type of conflict that the dyad is active in:

1. Extrasystemic conflict

2. Interstate conflict

3. Internal conflict

4. Internationalized internal conflict

N   *start_date*

The date, as precise as possible, of the first battle-related death in the dyad.

O   *start_prec*

The level of precision for the initial startdate:

1. Day, month, and year are precisely coded; there is good information on the event.

2. Day is assigned; month and year are precisely coded. The assigned date can either be one of several events that can be classified as the first; it can be the last day in a period when several fatalities have been reported jointly or it can be an event that different sources claim occurred on different dates.

3. Day is unknown; month (or a period of 30 days, not necessarily a calendar month) and year are precisely coded. The day is known to be in a given month or 30-day period, but information on an exact date is missing. Day is then set to the last day of the period.

4. Month is assigned; year is coded precisely.

5. Day and month are unknown; year is coded precisely. Day and month are set as precisely as possible. For example, if an event is known to have taken place sometime between January and August, the date is coded as 31 August of the coded year, with a precision of 5.

6. Year is assigned. There is wide disagreement between different sources, so that not even year can be coded precisely. The start year is assigned based on subjective judgement. Day and month are set as the 31 December of the coded year.

7. Year is missing. No information on the start date is available; Start date is set to 31 December of the first year recorded in the conflict.

P   *start_date2*

The date, as precisely as possible, when fighting in the dyad in a given episode of conflict activity reached 25 battle-related deaths in a year.

Q   *start_prec2*

The level of precision for startdate 2.

R   *gwno_a*

GW numbers of all countries on side A, separated by semicolons.

S   *gwno_a_2nd*

GW numbers of all countries supporting side A with troops.

T   *gwno_b*

GW numbers of all countries on side B, separated by semicolons.

U   gwno_b_2nd

GW numbers of all countries supporting side B with troops.

V   gwno_loc

GW numbers of all location countries, separated by semicolons.

W   region

Identifying the region of the location:

1. Europe

2. Middle East

3. Asia

4. Africa

5. Americas

X   version

The current version of the dataset.

Y   SideARel

This variable specifies the religious identity of side A in the conflict dyad, i.e. the government side.

Z   SideBRel

This variable specifies the religious identity of side B in the conflict dyad, i.e. the rebel side.

AA   RelID

This variable specifies whether the primary parties to the conflict belong to the same or different

religious identity.

0. The conflicting parties belong to the same religious identity

1. The conflicting parties belong to different world religions or religious sub-traditions

AB   RelIDComm

This variable includes any necessary clarification or additional information on the coding of the RelID variable.

AC   RelIncomp

This variable specifies whether the conflict incompatibility includes a religious dimension.

0. There is no religious dimension in the original incompatibility

1. There is a religious dimension in the original incompatibility

AD   RelIncompComm

This variable includes a specification and description of the claim which represents the religious dimension in the incompatibility as it was explicitly stated by the primary parties at the onset of armed conflict.

AE   Islamist

This variable specifies whether at least one of the primary parties has made Islamist claims at the onset of conflict.

0. Neither of the primary parties have made Islamist claims

1. At least one of the primary parties has made Islamist claims

AF   IslamistRebel

This variable specifies which of the conflicting parties is making the Islamist claims.

0. The Islamist claims are made by the government side

1. The Islamist claims are made by the rebel side

AG   SalienceRel

This variable specifies the salience (high/low) of the religious claims.

0. The religious dimension to the incompatibility has low salience, i.e. the religious claim is (i) one of several key issues at stake and/or (ii) made by an alliance where only a few groups view the religious issue as the main question at stake

1. The religious dimension to the incompatibility has high salience, i.e. the religious claim is (i) the main question at stake and (ii) made by one organization or a unified alliance

AH   Demand

This variable specifies which of the conflicting parties that is making the claims or taking action with regards to altering the *status quo*. This is normally the rebel side, but in some cases armed conflicts have started because the government side has taken measures to change the basic character of the state. For example, the Sri Lankan government's efforts to turn Sri Lanka into a Buddhist state initiated an armed conflict in which the government's actions were resisted by LTTE, which demanded an explicitly secular state.

0. The government side demands a change to the *status quo*

1. The rebel side demands a change to the *status quo*

AI   BdBest

This variable specifies the UCDP's best estimate of the number of battle-related deaths for each conflict-dyad-year.

AJ   ClaimType

This variable specifies the type of claim.

1. Revolutionary Islamist

2. Transnational Islamist

3. Separatist Islamist

4. Revolutionary evangelist

5. Separatist evangelist

6. Revolutionary secularist

7. Separatist secularist

8. Other religious claims, i.e. Sikh insurgents (Punjab/Khalistan – India)

AK   FewToManyDemands

This variable specifies whether the religious claim is one of several key issues at stake or the main issue of contention. As such, it is one of two variables used to determine the salience of the religious dimension in the incompatibility.

0. The religious claim is one of several key issues at stake

1. The religious claim is the main issue of contention

AL   Unitytodivision

This variable specifies whether the religious claim is made by a pluralistic movement (including both religious and secular actors) or by a unified religious/ideological movement. As such, it is one of two variables used to determine the salience of the religious dimension in the incompatibility.

0. The religious claim is made by a pluralistic movement

1. The religious claim is made by a unified religious/ideological movement

AM   WBRegion

This variable offers a more disaggregated coding of the world region location of the country in which the armed conflict takes place, compared to that offered by the UCDP (see **'Region'**). The world region location coding is based on the World Bank's categorizations.

1. East Asia and Pacific

2. Europe and Central Asia

3. Latin America and Caribbean

4. Middle East and North Africa

5. North America

6. South Asia

7. Sub-Saharan Africa

4 References

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