

Let's be Clear: Action-Actor-Motivation Conceptualisations in Research - Conflict Patterns and Brutalities in Armed Conflicts

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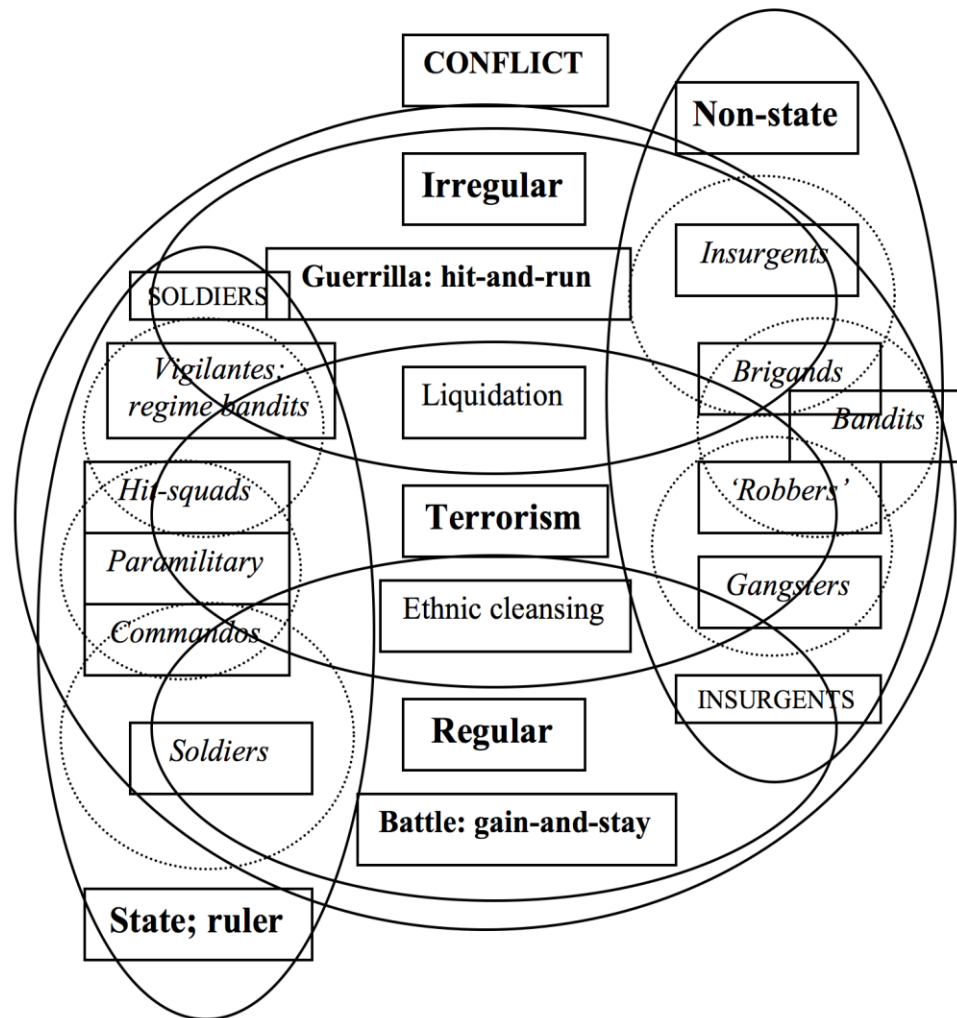
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Project A: Conceptualising Brutality and Violence *

See 'Let's be Clear: A Call for Tripartite Action-Actor-Motivation Conceptualisations in Social-Scientific Research' *Forum of EthnoGeoPolitics* Vol.3 No.1, Spring 2015, pp.5-18. *: Cambridge Scholars Press, forthcoming



Main arguments Conceptualisation (project A): It is best to ...

- a) base primary concepts on *observable actions* that may occur at any point in time;
- b) base secondary concepts on *observable actors* i.e. individuals and groups; and
- c) base tertiary concepts on more elusive and fluctuating *drives, motives and beliefs* of actors across certain points in time—even if these involve deeper analysis of the reasons why ‘action-phenomena’ occur (Ten Dam 2015: 7)

An example: how to define terrorism as a primary concept?

- Is this terrorism?



- Or this?



- Or this?

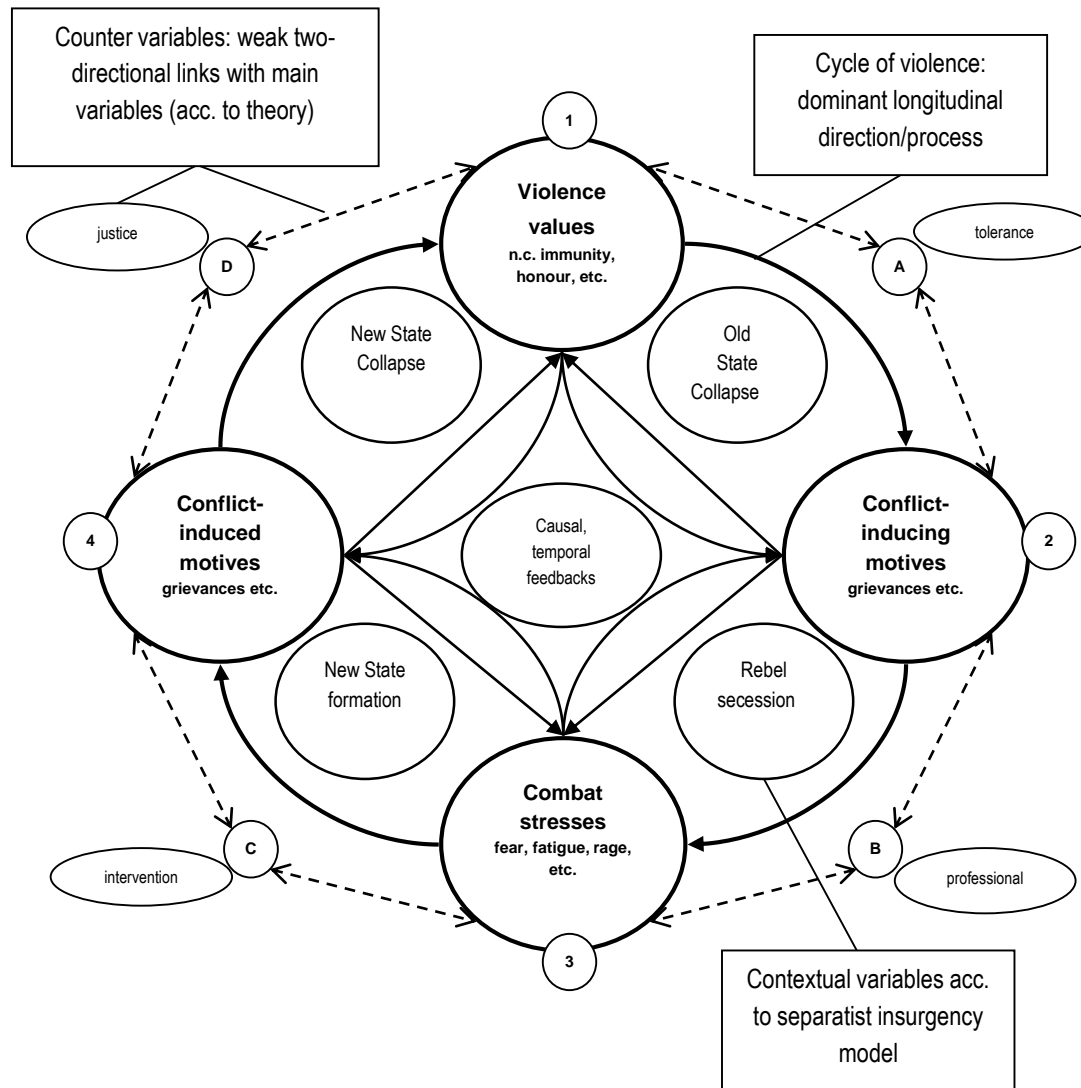


- To what extent? Under what circumstances? Etcetera, etcetera ...

My definition of terrorism *

- sudden lethal violence without preceding warning of the act for whatever purpose against (groups of) unarmed or weakly armed and thereby effectively defenceless civilians, unarmed off-duty security personnel, soldiers and policemen, and other defenceless non-combatants **
- * : under continuous development due to feedback etc.
- ** : Ten Dam 2015: 16 (Appendix 'Definitions of identity and violence')

Project B (which uses the definitions of Project A): my Brutalisation theory and research (also for a PhD)



Challenges of theory testability

- Operationalising/quantifying variables:
 - ‘yes’/‘no’ brutalisation (nominal/ordinal)*
 - ‘brutality degrees’ 1 to 5 (ordinal)**
 - Eg. degree ‘terrorisation’ by counting nr. ‘terrorist incidents’ per discrete event (interval & ratio statistics)
- Determining interrelationships: cyclical, independent, dependent, intervening, etc.
- * : qualitative description & argumentation
- ** : semi-quantitative tabulation

Why and how people revolt ... see e.g. my case studies on Kosovo and Chechnya

- *Brutalisation*, increasing violation of local and/or contemporary or current international norms
- Focus on Brutalisation variables like *violence-values*, *grievances*, other conflict motivations, and *combat-stresses*
- Focus on rebels: without rebels, no rebellions – yet regime forces and their brutalities analysed as well
- Do similar/different norms, grievances etc. account for similar/different degrees and types of brutality?
- *If we grasp causes & dynamics of brutality, can we prevent, curtail and extinguish it through e.g. conflict resolution?*

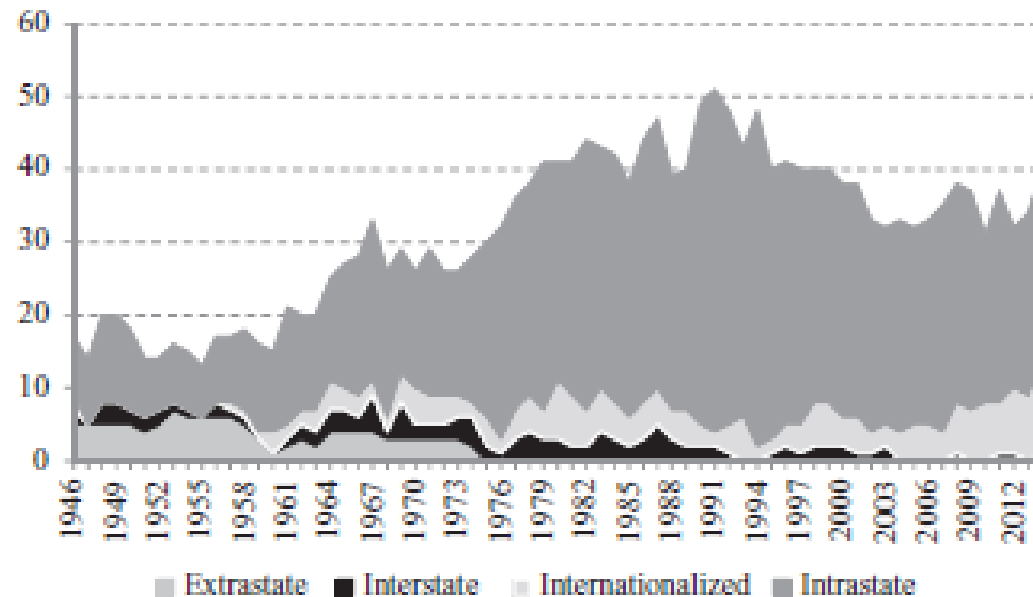
Project C: assessing global conflict patterns (by using concepts of projects A & B) *

- 1: Rebels and internal conflicts are predominant
- 2: overall *decrease* in esp. internal conflicts after 1990, after temporary peak during 1979-1989
- Arguably even structural decrease in all violence for centuries, even millennia (Pinker 2011)
- 3: yet many conflict datasets overlook aspects of violence that may be on the increase: e.g. violent incidents a/o battle-related deaths per conflict
- 4: many definitions of conflict and war (e.g. Singer & Small's) “ignore the relative amount of fatalities .. when compared to the entire population” (Ten Dam 1997: 7)

- *: see ‘Conflict Patterns Revisited: Trends, Frequencies, Types and Brutalities in both Ethnic and Non-Ethnic Conflicts’ *Forum of EthnoGeoPolitics* Vol.5 No.1, Summer 2017, pp.41-62.

Example I dataset assessed in Project C: Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP), Sweden

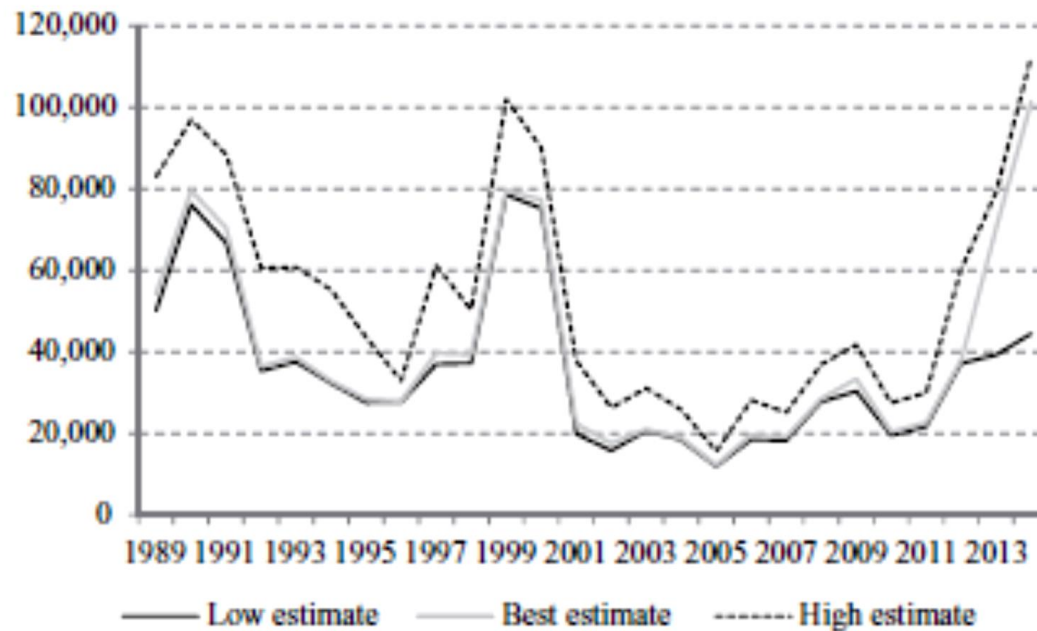
- Figure I Number of Armed Conflicts by Type, 1946–2014



- Source: Therése Pettersson, & Peter Wallensteen, 'Armed Conflicts, 1946-2014' *Journal of Peace Research* Vol.52 No.4, July 2015, pp.536 (note 1: "www.pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/definitions/"), 539.

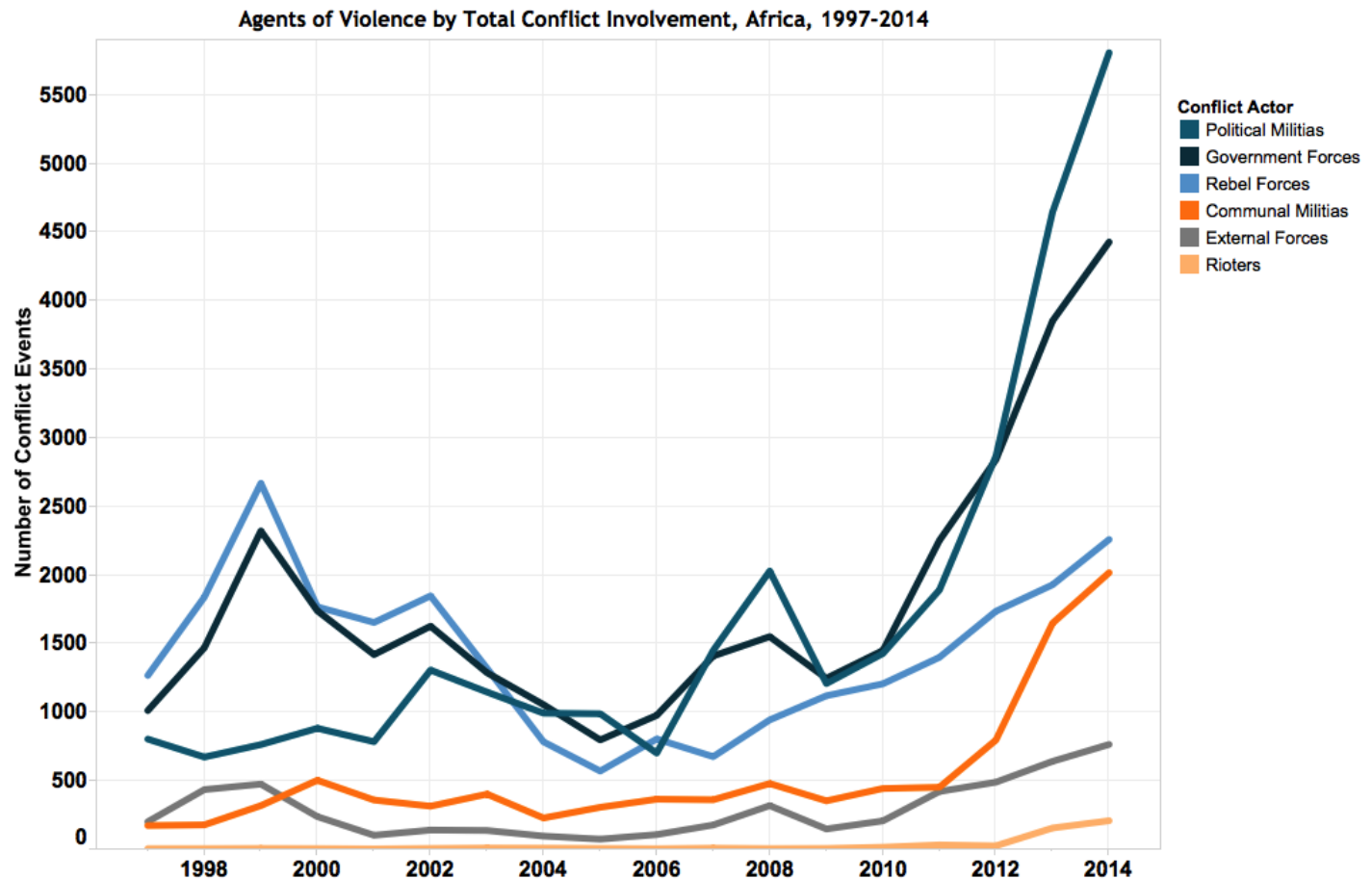
Example 2 dataset assessed in Project C: Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP), Sweden

- Figure II Battle-related Deaths by Type of Estimate, 1989–2014



- Source: Therése Pettersson, & Peter Wallensteen, 'Armed Conflicts, 1946-2014' *Journal of Peace Research* Vol.52 No.4, July 2015, p.540, Figure 2.

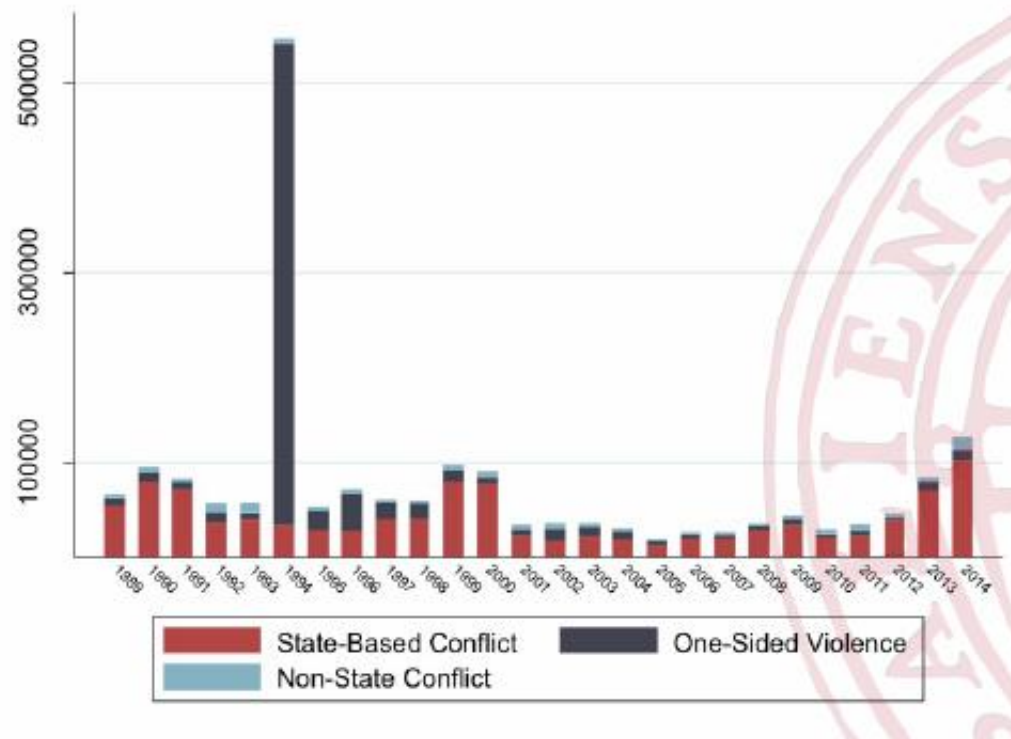
Example 3 dataset assessed in Project C: Armed Conflict Location and Event Data (ACLED)



Source: ACLED Project, 'Trend 2: Agents of Violence in 2014',
www.acleddata.com/agents-of-violence-in-2014 (last visited 4-04-2015).

Example 4a dataset assessed in Project C: once more (UCDP), Sweden

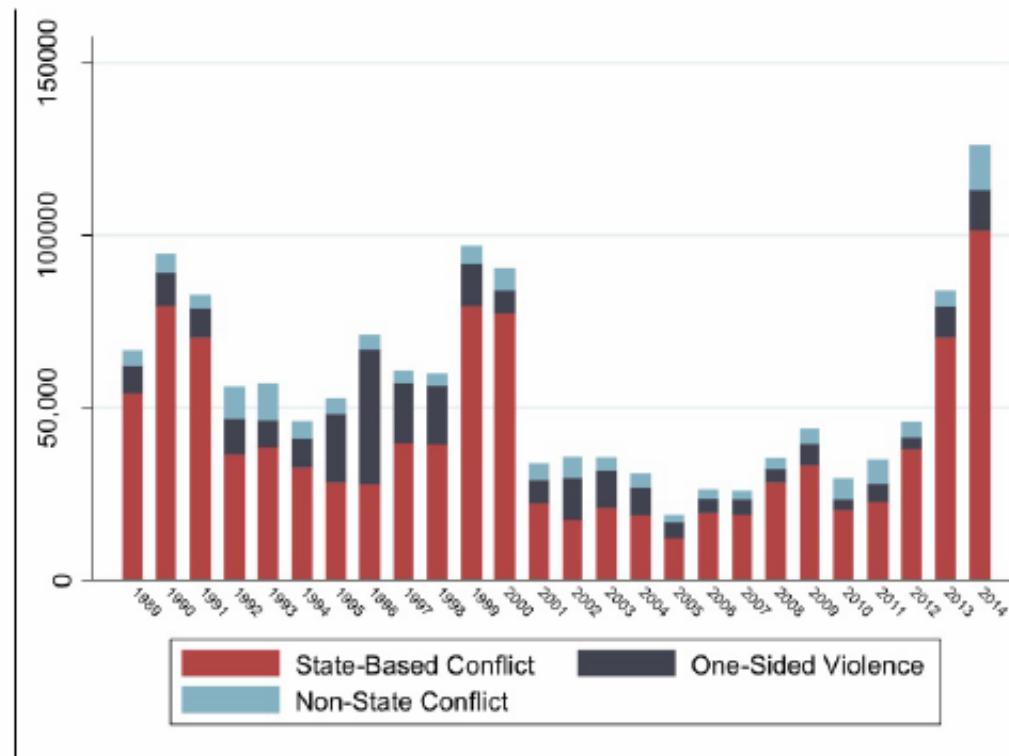
- Figure IVa Yearly fatalities in organized violence (1989-2014) including the Rwandan Genocide



- Erik Melander, *Organized Violence in the World 2015* UCDP Paper No. 9, 2015, p.3, Figure 2; www.pcr.uu.se/digitalAssets/61/61335_1brochure2.pdf.

Example 4b dataset assessed in Project C: once more (UCDP), Sweden

- Figure IVb Yearly fatalities in organized violence (1989-2014) *excluding* the Rwandan Genocide



- Erik Melander, *Organized Violence in the World 2015* UCDP Paper No. 9, 2015, p.4, Figure 3; www.pcr.uu.se/digitalAssets/61/61335_1brochure2.pdf.

Conclusion part I: main arguments and findings

- Be clear and explicit about the concepts one uses – no matter how self-evident these may seem
- The Action-Actor-Motivation conceptualisations should at least offer food for thought – and hopefully contribute to improved datasets and (other) quantitative and qualitative research
- Thus one could also use a reverse triad and hierarchy of Motivation-Actor-Action conceptualisations – that's fine by me ...



Conclusion part II: methodological challenges

- Can my concepts and Brutalisation theory & its variables truly or at least sufficiently be tested i.e falsified by any analysis?
- Quantitative analyses (later stages):
Well-operationalised variables, actions & actors?
- Qualitative analyses (present and future stages):
Well-described variables, actions & actors?

Be as it may, war / history is made -

- By 'Great' (wo)men



- And 'Ordinary' (wo)men

