What's in a War?

Rob Williams

Washington University in St. Louis

January 29, 2020

- How many ongoing civil wars as of 12/31/2018?

- How many ongoing civil wars as of 12/31/2018?

- 52

- How many ongoing civil wars as of 12/31/2018?

- 52

- Where did I get this number from?

- How many ongoing civil wars as of 12/31/2018?

- 52

- Where did I get this number from?
  - Not Wikipedia!

- How many ongoing civil wars as of 12/31/2018?

- 52

- Where did I get this number from?
  - Not Wikipedia!

- A **dataset**

- How many ongoing civil wars as of 12/31/2018?

- 52

- Where did I get this number from?
  - Not Wikipedia!

- A **dataset**

- Data are the foundation of quantitative conflict analysis
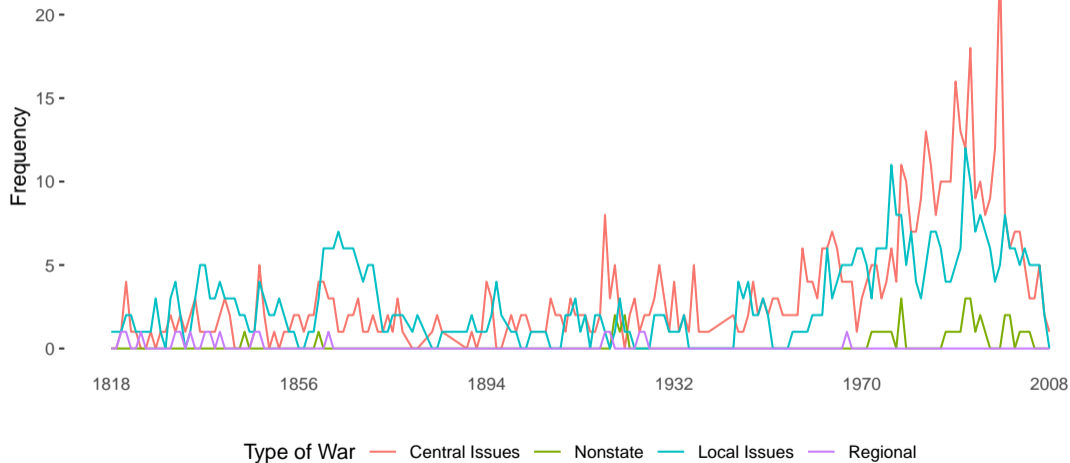
- How many ongoing civil wars as of 12/31/2018?

- 52

- Where did I get this number from?
  - Not Wikipedia!

- A **dataset**

- Data are the foundation of quantitative conflict analysis
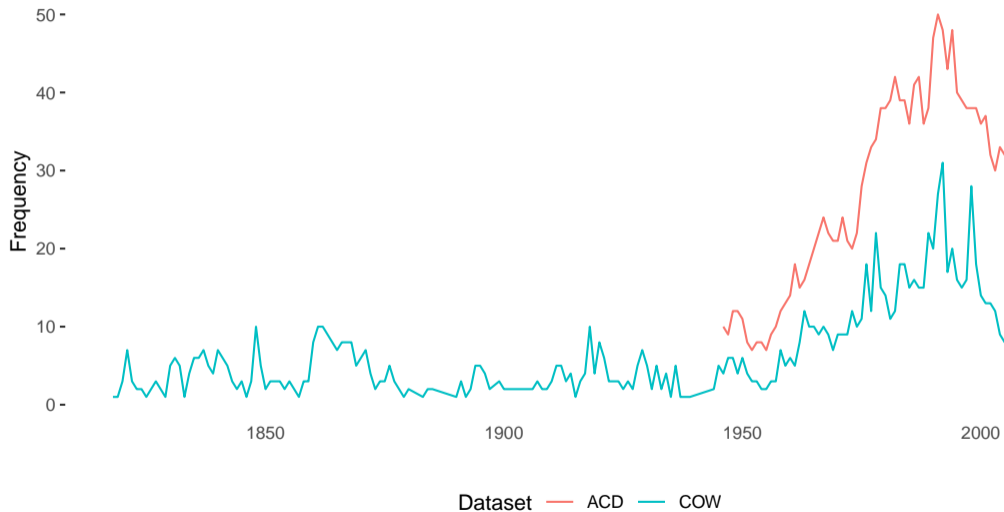 - But what do we really know about them?
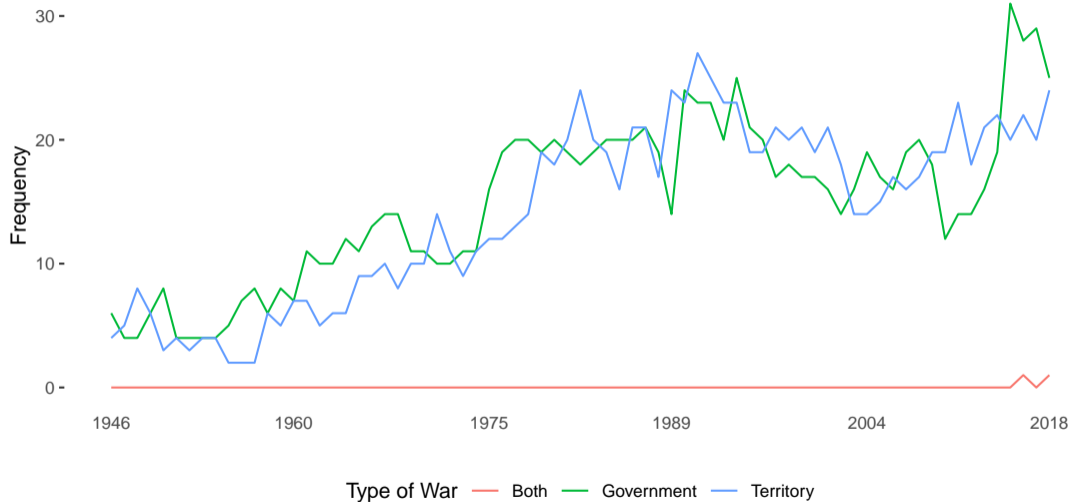
Two different stories

Interventions
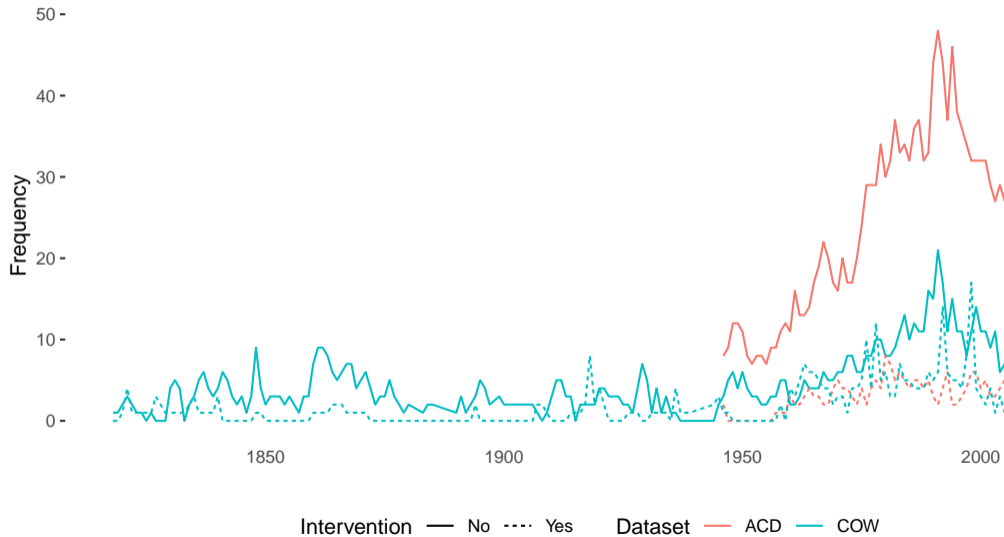
- Why do we have two (relatively) different stories about civil war?

- Why do we have two (relatively) different stories about civil war?

- We're using two different datasets!

What went wrong?

- Why do we have two (relatively) different stories about civil war?

- We're using two different datasets!

- Datasets aren't indentical

What went wrong?

- Why do we have two (relatively) different stories about civil war?

- We're using two different datasets!

- Datasets aren't indentical

- In fact, they can be very different!

The data

```
##    conflict_id gwno_loc year incompatibility type_of_conflict
## 1        13637      700 2015               1                4
## 2        13637      700 2016               1                4
## 3        13637      700 2017               1                4
## 4        13637      700 2018               1                4
## 5          333      700 1978               2                3
## 6          333      700 1979               2                3
## 7          333      700 1980               2                4
## 8          333      700 1981               2                4
## 9          333      700 1982               2                4
## 10         333      700 1983               2                4
```

The data

```
##    conflict_id gwno_loc year incompatibility type_of_conflict
## 1        13637      700 2015               1                4
## 2        13637      700 2016               1                4
## 3        13637      700 2017               1                4
## 4        13637      700 2018               1                4
## 5          333      700 1978               2                3
## 6          333      700 1979               2                3
## 7          333      700 1980               2                4
## 8          333      700 1981               2                4
## 9          333      700 1982               2                4
## 10         333      700 1983               2                4
```

- What does any of this even mean?

- We can find out with a **codebook**

Understand the data

- Codebooks are the secret key to understanding data

- Codebooks are the secret key to understanding data

- They tell us what those numbers in the previous slide mean

- Codebooks are the secret key to understanding data

- They tell us what those numbers in the previous slide mean

- Incompatiblity: the fundamental political disagreement at the root of the conflict

- Codebooks are the secret key to understanding data

- They tell us what those numbers in the previous slide mean

- Incompatiblity: the fundamental political disagreement at the root of the conflict

    - 1: government

- Codebooks are the secret key to understanding data

- They tell us what those numbers in the previous slide mean

- Incompatiblity: the fundamental political disagreement at the root of the conflict

  - 1: government

  - 2: territory

- Codebooks are the secret key to understanding data

- They tell us what those numbers in the previous slide mean

- Incompatiblity: the fundamental political disagreement at the root of the conflict

    - 1: government

    - 2: territory

    - 3: government and territory

Get the data

- UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset version 19.1

- UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset version 19.1

  - https://ucdp.uu.se/downloads/

- UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset version 19.1

  - https://ucdp.uu.se/downloads/

- COW Intra-State War Data

Get the data

- UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset version 19.1

  - https://ucdp.uu.se/downloads/

- COW Intra-State War Data

  - https://correlatesofwar.org/data-sets/COW-war

Get the data

- UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset version 19.1

  - https://ucdp.uu.se/downloads/

- COW Intra-State War Data

  - https://correlatesofwar.org/data-sets/COW-war

- Find the codebook on each site

Get the data

- UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset version 19.1

  - https://ucdp.uu.se/downloads/

- COW Intra-State War Data

  - https://correlatesofwar.org/data-sets/COW-war

- Find the codebook on each site

  - Download it at and see if you can figure out why the two datasets have such different war counts

- You can also download the actual data

No really, get the data

- You can also download the actual data
  - They come as a .csv file, but you can open this in Excel or Google Sheets

No really, get the data

- You can also download the actual data

  - They come as a `.csv` file, but you can open this in Excel or Google Sheets

- Find your civil war!

- You can also download the actual data
  - They come as a `.csv` file, but you can open this in Excel or Google Sheets

- Find your civil war!
  - Does it appear in both data sets?

No really, get the data

- You can also download the actual data

  - They come as a `.csv` file, but you can open this in Excel or Google Sheets

- Find your civil war!

  - Does it appear in both data sets?

- You don't have to do any quantitative analysis for your paper, but being able to describe your conflict can be useful

No really, get the data

- You can also download the actual data
  - They come as a `.csv` file, but you can open this in Excel or Google Sheets

- Find your civil war!
  - Does it appear in both data sets?

- You don't have to do any quantitative analysis for your paper, but being able to describe your conflict can be useful
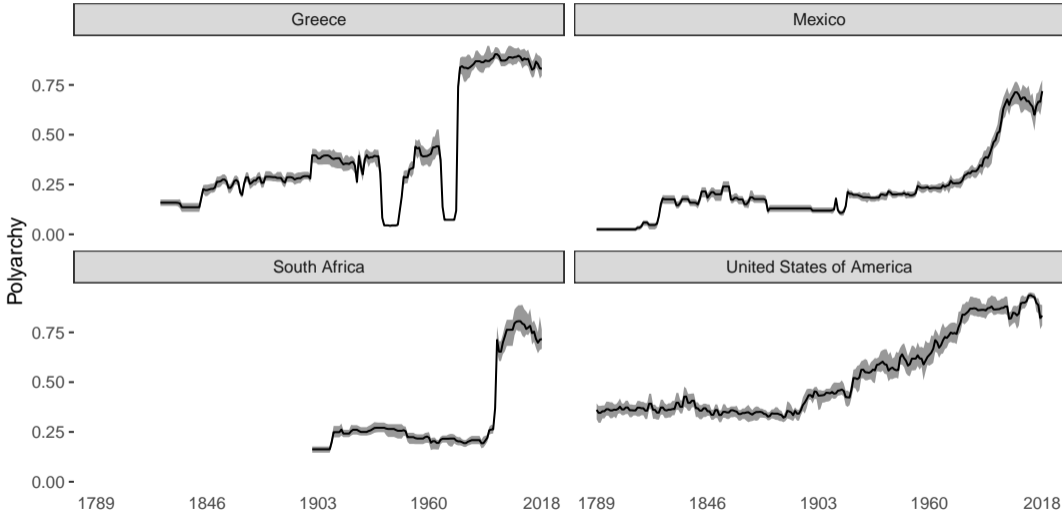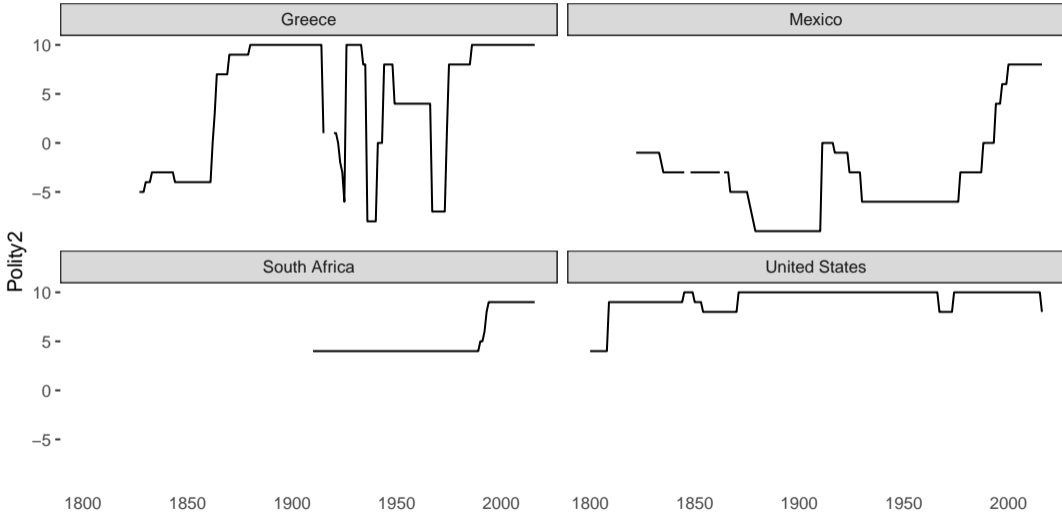 - e.g. there were two other conflicts ocurring simultaneously in the country during your conflict
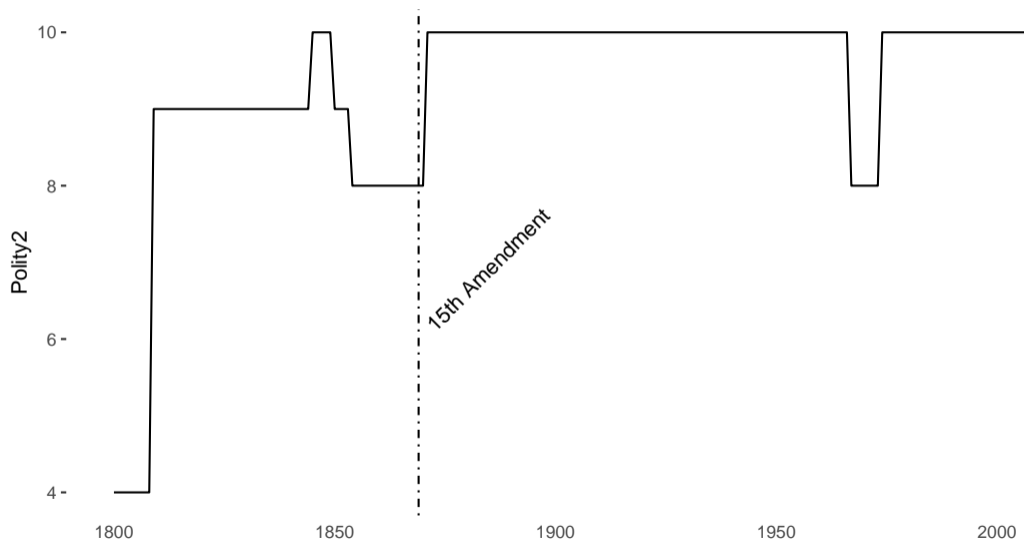
Or is it?

13 / 18
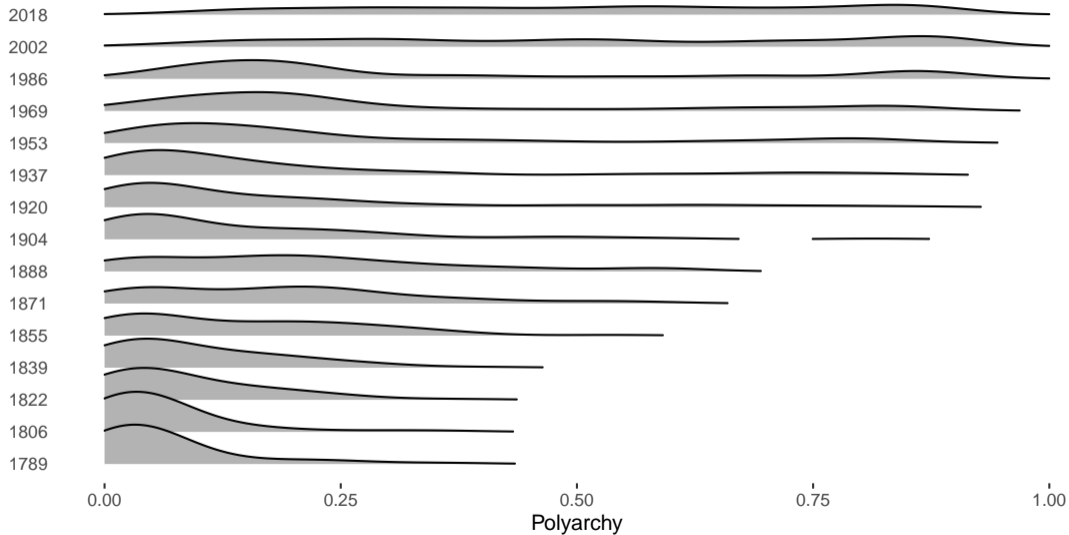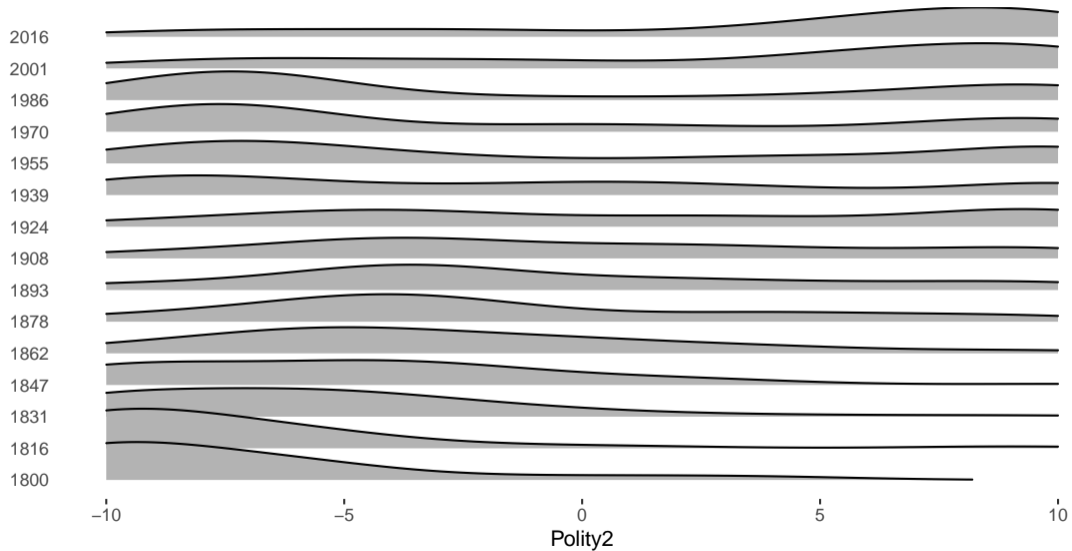
V-DEM Polyarchy

Polity Scores

United States Polity Score

United States Polity Score