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**Mind the Gap:  
An Annotated Overview of Datasets in the Study of  
Institutions and Conflict in Divided Societies**

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# **Mind the Gap:**

## **An Annotated Overview of Datasets in the Study of Institutions and Conflict in Divided Societies**

### **Abstract**

This paper engages in a systematic overview of the existing datasets on institutions, conflict and peace, as well as divisions and diversity. This overview indicates that an enormous amount of data is unevenly distributed across different issue areas. There is a lack of data capturing specific sets of political institutions (e.g., centripetalism), dynamic changes in a country's relational demographics across identity groups, the ethnicization of political institutions (especially in the security sector), and security sector reform. Many datasets suffer from missing data and an alarming dearth of transparency. Our paper concludes with suggestions for yet unexplored research questions and avenues for further data collection.

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# **Mind the Gap: An Annotated Overview of Datasets in the Study of Institutions and Conflict in Divided Societies**

**Nadine Ansorg, Matthias Basedau, Felix Haass, and Julia Strasheim**

## **Article Outline**

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  - 4 Discussion: Potential Research Questions and Avenues for Future Data Collection
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## **1 Introduction**

Many scholars argue that formal state institutions are important for the regulation of violent conflict, particularly in societies characterized by divisions along lines of ethnic or religious identity or social disparity (Horowitz 1993; Lijphart 2004; Reilly 2001). Given the proliferation of datasets aiming to statistically capture these concepts over the last decades, it is time to take stock of the data at hand. What data on institutions, conflict and peace, and divisions

and diversity (and related subtopics) exist? Are they geographically or temporally disaggregated? Is information evenly spread across space, or are certain world regions overrepresented in the collection of data on some concepts? And which theoretically driven research questions can, at this point, not be answered with existing empirical data? In other words, where does an absence of data result in a lack of knowledge?

To answer these questions, this paper presents a systematic assessment of existing datasets on three thematic clusters (institutions, conflict and peace, as well as divisions and diversity) and provides an overview of current data gaps. The main purpose of this undertaking builds on the observation that the availability of existing data often seems to dictate research questions, rather than theoretical questions stimulating data collection. Our assessment identifies gaps and thus provides a starting point for new and innovative research questions and corresponding data collection efforts. Further, it has become increasingly difficult for researchers (as well as practitioners relying on academically produced information) to keep up with the stream of newly published data on the topics state institutions, conflict, and diversity/divisions. Our overview thus also provides a useful orientation for scholars and data-seeking practitioners.

Previous overviews of the existing data focus on a specific subset of data (e.g., conflict data overviews) and employ a textual and descriptive approach rather than a more systematic, quantifiable approach to assess the data (Eck 2005; Anderton and Carter 2011). By collecting and categorizing datasets and measuring components of three distinct but interrelated conceptual clusters, this paper contributes to a more quantitative approach of mapping related datasets.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to assess the validity and reliability of the datasets, although this would be desirable from a theoretical and methodological view point. Particularly evaluating validity requires a thorough investigation of each dataset or even indicator which would constitute an entire research program on its own right. We do, however, attempt a systematic assessment of the datasets' transparency, which gives at least some indication on the usefulness of the data at hand.

We found that there overall exists an enormous amount of data on the three thematic clusters (institutions, conflict and peace, and divisions and diversity). There is, however, a large variation regarding the substantial focus of most of the data. While there is a lot of statistical information, for instance, on state political institutions, we find less data on nonstate institutions, particularly in the security sector. In particular, we observe a lack of high-quality, comprehensive datasets that are able to capture multiple state institutions simultaneously, dynamic changes in relational demographics between identity groups, the ethnicization of political institutions (again, especially with regard to the security sector), as well as security sector reform (SSR).

The paper is structured as follows: First, we outline our universe of cases and sampling strategy as well as our approach to collecting, categorizing and quantifying information on existing datasets. Second, we present and discuss our findings, highlighting both general

trends in data collection as well as specific findings on the topics of institutions, conflict and peace, and divisions and diversity. Third, we provide potential theoretical research questions resulting from our analysis that we believe cannot be answered with the data at hand. Fourth, we conclude with options for further research and data collection efforts.

## 2 Dataset Selection and Categorization

We define a dataset as a systematic collection of quantitative or qualitative observations for a unit of analysis and geographical and temporal scope.<sup>1</sup> Given our thematic focus we limited our collection to the topical clusters of institutions, conflict and peace, and divisions and diversity (see Table 1), for a more detailed explanation of the concepts). We relied on a variety of sources to identify the universe of cases – that is, the datasets for which we collect information. First, we consulted existing data overview articles. Such articles are widely available in the study of conflict and – albeit to a lesser extent – in the study of institutions (cf. Anderson and Carter 2011; Eck 2004; Kauffmann 2008; on institutions see Munck and Verkuilen 2002; Hadenius and Teorell 2005). The latter primarily focus on data assessing aspects of political regime types such as levels of democracy or autocracy. To the best of our knowledge, there is thus far no dataset overview article that engages in a comparative assessment of datasets measuring divisions and/or diversity in a society.<sup>2</sup> Because dataset overview articles typically focus on one topic (e.g., either conflict data or institutional data), it remains difficult to identify matching datasets (e.g., in terms of units of analysis or level of [dis]aggregation) that can be used to study the relationship between the topical clusters.

Second, we reviewed leading journals in the field of peace and conflict research that publish specific data feature articles as well as original quantitative work.<sup>3</sup> Third, we examined metadatasets, such as *The Quality of Government Institute's data collection* (Quality of Government Institute 2013).<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, we relied on web compilations of datasets, inter alia Hensel's (2008) collection of international relations and comparative politics datasets or

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1 In light of our selection strategies (see below) we include predominantly quantitative datasets in our analysis, although we do find some datasets with more qualitative information, such as the *Global Risk Reports* by the World Economic Forum or the *Regional Guide to International Conflict and Management*.

2 But for an overview on data focusing on religious divisions, see Grim and Finke (2006).

3 We systematically assessed all volumes from the years 2007–2012 of the *Journal of Peace Research*, the *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, *International Interactions*, or *Conflict Management and Peace Science*. Due to our other sampling strategies (see above), we are confident that we capture datasets before 2007 as well. Also, our sample also includes databases presented in other political science journals, such as the *American Political Science Review* and others.

4 We define “metadataset” as dataset collections including a variety of independent datasets to analyze specific topics, usually without collecting their own data.

Eberhardt's (2013) MEDevEcon data overview. We also applied snowball sampling, by adding datasets that we found in the course of researching other datasets.<sup>5</sup>

### *Selection Criteria for Datasets*

Applying these techniques resulted in a collection of 609 datasets, which is available online.<sup>6</sup> From this universe of cases, we only kept datasets for further analysis for which we had sufficient information. This means that the datasets had to be available to us either online, in print format, or on request from the author.

A dataset had to meet a further set of criteria to be included in our final assessment. First, it had to contain originally collected or coded data on at least one of the three main topics of institutions, conflict and peace, or divisions and diversity. A dataset may cover several clusters. We excluded replication datasets that are used in novel analyses, since our analytical focus was on innovative data. We included, however, indices that are constructed on the basis of existing data such as, to name only one example, the *Failed State Index* published by the Fund for Peace (2013). Second, the dataset had to cover information within the period 1946 to 2012. Third, the dataset had to include information on several observations for the respective unit of analysis (that is, at least more than two, but usually more). We thus excluded qualitative single-case studies, but included subnational quantitative data (for instance survey data or data on subnational units within countries such as Indonesia or India). Fourth, the dataset must have been published before 31 December 2012 and at least one version of the dataset (for example an updated version) must have been published later than 1 January 1990. We excluded datasets that were still in the pilot phase and had only published preliminary results such as the *Varieties of Democracy* Project (Coppedge et al. 2011). Fifth, the dataset had to be published in English. Sixth, the dataset should not exclusively cover World Bank high-income countries, due to our interest in developing and conflict-affected countries.<sup>7</sup> Seventh, since we were interested in intrastate phenomena, such as civil war or aspects of domestic institutions, we did not include datasets that exclusively cover international relations data (for example on interstate wars).

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5 We most likely were not able to include all existing datasets using these strategies, especially since the availability of datasets has grown tremendously over the last decade. Nevertheless, we are confident that we captured most of the existing datasets on this topic published in the recent years.

6 See online: <<http://giga-hamburg.de/de/projekt/institutions-for-sustainable-peace-comparing-institutional-options-for-divided-societies-and>>.

7 The countries in question were identified by using the World Bank category and respective datasets were excluded from the sample. The World Bank's list of high-income countries includes: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States (list taken from online: <<http://data.worldbank.org/about/country-classifications/country-and-lending-groups>>). We included datasets on the Israel–Palestine conflict, however, due to its geographic location in a conflict-prone region and its political relevance.

### *Categorizing Datasets*

Applying these criteria to our full collection of 609 datasets resulted in a final sample of 257 datasets. We systematically categorized them by capturing in a first step the following nominal information: dataset name and its commonly used acronym, author name and institutional affiliation, funding source, first and last date of publication (i.e., most recent version), and a category describing the dataset content.<sup>8</sup>

In a second step, we collected information on the substantive topics that the datasets cover using a number of categories. We assigned to each database the topical cluster(s) it collects innovative information on, and fine-grained our categorization to a number of thematic sub-clusters, depending on a dataset's specific substantial focus (summarized in Table 1). We assigned each cluster several dimensions of differentiation. The institutions cluster distinguishes between state and nonstate institutions, on the one hand, and political, socioeconomic, and security institutions, on the other. We also added a subcluster for peace institutions, delineating those institutions that regulate the existence or implementation of peace such as peace agreements. In the conflict cluster, we distinguished between state- and nonstate- conflict as well as low-, medium-, and high-levels of casualties and organization. Peace, conceptualized as more than the absence of direct, physical violence, is categorized as a special subcluster. Here we gathered information on databases that include aspects of positive peace such as intergroup forgiveness as in the *Intergroup Forgiveness Dataset* (Neto, Pinto, and Mullet 2007) or education and well-being as in the *Global Peace Index* (Institute for Economics and Peace 2013). The cluster on divisions and diversity differentiates between attributed and acquired divisions, as well as the demographic constellation and the quality of intergroup relations.

Third, we gathered information on more practical as well as methodological aspects of the datasets. We ascertained whether codebooks and data feature articles were available, assessed whether datasets were available in a file format ready to use for statistical analysis (for instance .cvs, .dta) or if they would need to be processed first (e.g., PDF or HTML files), and collected the sources on which the datasets' authors relied for coding the data. We also gathered information on the type of data. We distinguished between subjective data (e.g., based on survey polls), objective data (i.e., data that has been gathered through transparent coding of news reports, for instance, or national statistics) and expert assessments. We also assessed whether datasets include originally collected data, or whether their respective novelty lies in the construction of a new index based on existing data. Furthermore, we systematically looked at the transparency of datasets, asking whether codebooks were available that clearly documented the coding rules for variables included in the dataset as well as the sources of information. We also assessed whether datasets were readily available online or only on request from the author. Given the primarily descriptive and stocktaking goal of this paper and the resulting large number of datasets we categorized, we did not include a sys-

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8 A codebook is available online: <<http://giga-hamburg.de/de/projekt/institutions-for-sustainable-peace-comparing-institutional-options-for-divided-societies-and>>.

tematic and comparable assessment of validity, reliability and missingness of the data. Although our assessment of a given dataset’s transparency might be taken as a rough indicator for its reliability, we would caution the reader to solely infer from this information to assess a dataset’s reliability. In-depth study of the validity, reliability and missingness of a smaller subset of datasets is therefore a fruitful avenue for further research.

**Table 1: Clusters and Subclusters for Categorizing Datasets**

Cluster		Subclusters	
Institutions		State Institutions	Nonstate Institutions
	<i>Political Institutions</i>	Information on institutions of the formal political organization within a modern state, including territorial state structure, electoral system, party system, form of government, or regime type	Information on institutions outside the formal political organization of a modern state (e.g., informal ethnic coalitions, village agreements, elders)
	<i>Socioeconomic Institutions</i>	Information on institutions of the formal socioeconomic organization within a modern state (e.g., property rights, land reform, wealth sharing, or welfare systems)	Information on institutions outside the formal socioeconomic organization of a modern state (e.g., NGOs or unions)
	<i>Security Institutions</i>	Information on institutions of the formal security sector of the state or of state actors (e.g., military, police, customs, judiciary, or peacekeeping missions)	Information on institutions outside the formal security sector of the state (e.g., private security providers or local defense groups)
	<i>Peace Agreements</i>	<i>Peace-related institutions such as peace agreements, negotiations, or mediation</i>	
Conflict and Peace	State/Nonstate	State-Centered	Nonstate-Centered
	Level of Casualties and Organization		
	<i>Low</i>	Information on violence resulting in less than 25 battle-related deaths (BRD)/year, where the state is one side to the conflict	Information on violence resulting in less than 25 BRD/year, where the state is not a side to the conflict
	<i>Medium</i>	Information on violence resulting in 25–999 BRD/year, where the state is one side to the conflict	Information on violence resulting in 25–999 BRD/year, where the state is not a side to the conflict
	<i>High</i>	Information on violence resulting in more than 1,000 BRD/year, where the state is one side to the conflict	Information on violence resulting in more than 1,000 BRD/year, where the state is not a side to the conflict
	<i>Peace</i>	Information on peace beyond only the absence of violence such as justice or intergroup forgiveness	
Divisions and Diversity		Attributed	Acquired
	<i>Demographic Constellation</i>	Information on the demographic constellation of characteristics attributed by birth (e.g., ethnicity, religion, linguistics, cultural fractionalization, gender, or age)	Information on the demographic constellation of characteristics acquired throughout life (e.g., ideological, political, social, or economic differences)
	<i>Quality of Intergroup Relations</i>	Information on the political salience of attributed identities or any other information beyond demographic constellations (e.g., level of confrontation between groups; or their access to power)	Information on the political salience of acquired identities (e.g., level of confrontation between ideological groups or supporters of political parties)

Source: Authors’ own compilation.

Finally, we collected information on the scope and level of (dis)aggregation of the datasets. We assessed both the temporal scope – whether a dataset covers more or less than 25 years – and the geographical scope – whether or not the information is available globally or to a restricted set of country cases (e.g., only for Africa). We captured the level of (dis)aggregation and distinguished between three forms of (dis)aggregation:

- 1) time – whether information is available on a temporal level of (dis)aggregation shorter than one calendar year;
- 2) geography – whether information is available on a geographical unit below the country-level; and
- 3) actors – whether the information available on actors is more detailed than including only the state as an actor.

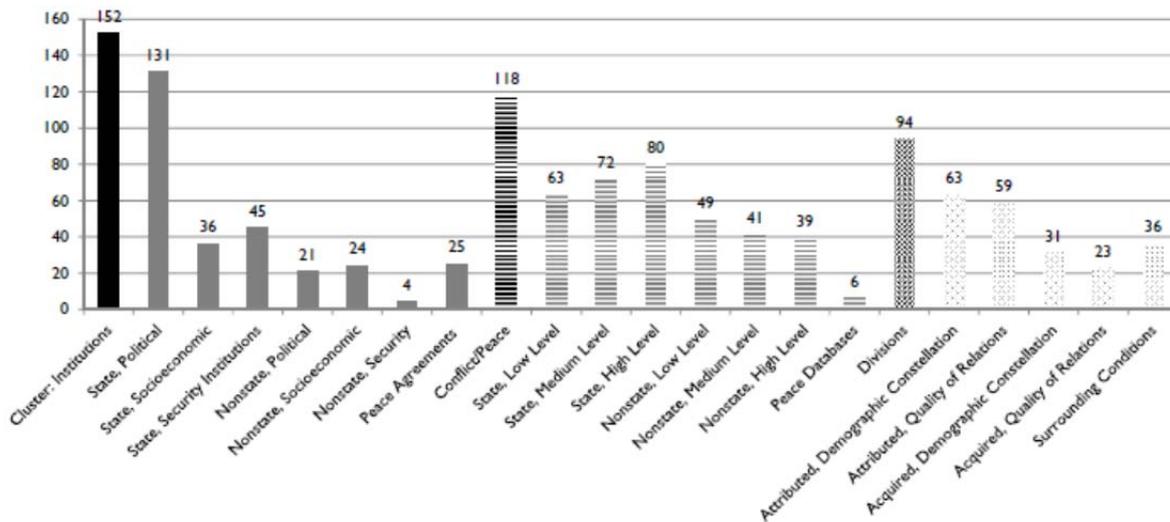
### *Identifying Dataset Gaps and Assessing Quality*

Data gaps were identified by employing two distinct strategies: First, we translated available information on the topic of the dataset into binary variables by assigning the values of 1 and 0. Second, we then checked absolute and relative frequencies and correlated topical information with evidence on the dataset's scope and level of disaggregation. We were then able to systematically look at several interrelated issues in three steps: First, we assessed the frequency of topics, determining which topics were more or less covered than others. Second, we considered the scope and (dis)aggregation of datasets, focusing on what kind of information is only available for specific regions and how levels of (dis)aggregation correlate with the topics covered. Third, we evaluated how transparent datasets are in offering their employed sources and coding strategies.

## **3 Findings**

Based on the classification scheme presented above, Figure 1 summarizes our descriptive results. While on a first view the amount of datasets seems enormous and does not leave any subclusters empty, on closer inspection our results turned out to be more nuanced. Our assessment revealed four general findings and several cluster-specific observations.

**Figure 1: Substantial Coverage of Datasets**



Source: Authors' own compilation.

### General Findings

Concerning topic frequencies, the thematic cluster of divisions and diversity is much less covered than the clusters of institutions or conflict. While we identified 152 datasets containing institutional data and 118 containing data on conflict and peace, we only found 94 original datasets on divisions and diversity. Only two subclusters include less than 10 datasets: First, the subcluster on “peace,” covering datasets that aim to measure peace as more than the absence of violence, such as the *Global Peace Index* (Institute for Economics and Peace 2013) or the *Water-related Intrastate Conflict and Cooperation* (Bernauer et al. 2012) dataset. Second, the “nonstate security institutions” subcluster, covering datasets on security providers outside the formal security sector of the state, such as private security companies or local defense groups. A notable example in this category is, for instance, the newly released *Pro-Government Militia Database* (PGMD) (Carey, Mitchell, and Lowe 2013).

Out of 257 datasets, 179 (69.6 percent) have a global scope, although microstates (usually defined as countries with a population of less than five hundred thousand) are often excluded. This may indicate a bias in our knowledge on institutions, divisions and conflict, showing that common beliefs about the peacefulness of microstates compared to other polities cannot yet be proven with the data at hand. In turn, some relationships – especially those that rely on per capita or territorial characteristics – may not hold water or grow stronger once data on microstates is included.<sup>9</sup>

Regarding the frequency of different types of data, we found that 44.7 percent of our sample (115 out of 257 datasets) are available in the traditional country/year format, whereas 19.1 percent of the datasets (49 out of 257) provide data on a subnational geographical level.

9 One example is the relationship between the survival of democracy and population size, see Dahl and Tufte (1973). Population size is also a robust correlate of armed conflict onset, see Hegre and Sambanis (2006).

Meanwhile, 51 percent of the datasets (131 out of 257) cover a time period of more than 25 years, and 2.3 percent of the datasets (6 out of 257) only cover one country (i.e., administrative units or events within this country). This is particularly true for conflict data, where the research community has experienced a recent trend in the disaggregation of conflict data on subnational units (Eck 2012; De Juan 2012).

Transparency was an issue for 28.4 percent of datasets (73 out of 257). Hence, in nearly one third of the datasets, codebooks were neither readily available online nor on request from the authors, or they consisted only of a descriptive list of variable names. Frequently, datasets and their respective codebooks or articles do not provide any information about the coding process (e.g., whether reliability tests were used). Often,

- 1) there is no codebook online: all;
- 2) the authors provide no or only vague information on the sources used for data collection – take, for instance, the statement that “[the] analysts used a broad range of sources of information” (Freedom House 2013);
- 3) detailed information on the operationalization of variables is lacking; or
- 4) there are no formulas or even guidelines for calculating indices.

We may have even underestimated the transparency issue in our analysis as we only admitted datasets which contained a minimum of specific information (i.e., were available to us for closer examination).

### *Institutions Data*

Moving on to more specific findings on each topical cluster, we begin with datasets covering information on institutions. We define “institutions” as “humanly devised constraints that structure political, economic and social interaction,” including “both informal constraints (sanctions, taboos, customs, traditions, and codes of conduct), and formal rules (constitutions, laws, property rights) (North 1991: 97).” We distinguish between state and nonstate institutions, as well as between political, economic, and security institutions and we add a specific subcluster on peace institutions such as peace agreements.

We present four main observations regarding data on institutions. First, classic political institutional data is predominantly available on the country-level, meaning that the trend of disaggregated data that we find in recent conflict datasets has not yet reached institutions data. More specifically, only 9.2 percent of the datasets (12 out of 131) that cover “state – political institutions” provide information on a geographical level of disaggregation below the state level. Most of these cover elections or individual attitudes toward political institutions, such as the *Constituency-Level Elections (CLE) Dataset* (Brancati 2013), the *World Values Survey* (2009) or the *Afrobarometer* (Bratton, Mattes, and Gyimah-Boadi 2005). Data on local institutional phenomena, such as local conflict resolution mechanisms like village councils or a community ombudsperson, remain – to the best of our knowledge – missing.

Second, precise information on the ethnic or ideological character of substate actors and political institutions, such as political parties or unions, is mainly available only for OECD countries; in total, only 37 out of 131 datasets on state political institutions provide information on actors below the state level – for example, the *Parliament and Government Composition Database* dataset (ParlGov) (Döring and Manow 2011), the *New Europe Barometer* (2013), and the *Archigos* dataset on political leaders (Goemans, Gleditsch and Chiozza 2009).

Third, and as indicated above, there is very little data on nonstate security institutions and actors – for example, groups like private security companies or local defense groups – outside of the formal security sector of the state. Only four datasets (1.5 percent of the total population of datasets or 3.1 percent of the institutions datasets) cover information on such actors. Two of these four datasets are geographically aggregated at the state level, so we continue to mostly lack comparative data on the differences of nonstate security provision between distinct regions or provinces within countries and nonstate alternatives to state policing – for instance by vigilante groups; although we do have more information on classic security institutions such as the state military.<sup>10</sup> One example is the *Dataset on Security Forces, Domestic Institutions and Genocide* (Colaresi and Carey 2008). Comparative data on the composition or capacity of the police as one central institution of the formal security sector is however still missing. There is, furthermore, little data on post-war security institutions and their reform – such as security sector reform (SSR) or disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR). Post-war data on security institutions is usually limited to information on national-level military power-sharing as negotiated in peace agreements (see for instance Hoddie and Hartzell 2003, 2008), making it difficult to conduct a global, quantitative study on the impact of other features of the security sector, such as the more specific composition of such institutions on peace in post-conflict societies.

Fourth, a large number of datasets on state political institutions deal with regime types, including well-known datasets such as *Freedom House* (2013), the *Polity* data series (Marshall and Cole 2011), *Bertelsmann Transformation Index* (Bertelsmann Foundation 2012), or *Vanhanen's Polyarchy Index of Democracy* (Vanhanen 2000). In contrast, there are few entire-system indices that combine existing institutions data to an aggregated measure of a political system's specific type, such as a consociationalism or centripetalism index, which may be of particular importance for the empirical study of the effectiveness of institutional engineering. Four datasets stand out in this respect and deserve mentioning. While Lijphart (1999) mainly applied his model of consociational democracy in *Patterns of Democracy* to OECD countries, Linder and Bächtiger (2005) as well as Selway and Templeman (2012) assess levels of consociationalism on a number of countries beyond Europe and North America. There are, however, some methodological and empirical drawbacks to these datasets: Linder and Bächtiger only pro-

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10 There are two exceptions: the Pro-Government Militia Dataset (Carey, Mitchell, and Lowe 2013) and the Rebel Organizations and Conflict Management in Post-Conflict Societies (Ishiyama and Batta 2011) dataset both collect data at the actor level as well.

vide data for Asia and Africa, while Selway and Templeman create a simple additive index that directly captures consociationalism in the original sense.<sup>11</sup> Although Horowitz's opposed concept of centripetalism has been highly influential in the debate on constitutional and institutional engineering, we only found one dataset by Gerring, Thacker and Moreno (2005; see also Gerring 2008) that uses the label "centripetalism," but has a completely different understanding than Horowitz.

### *Conflict and Peace Data*

Focusing on armed or violent conflict, we used the *Uppsala Conflict Data Program's* (UCDP) definition of armed conflict as the starting point for our assessment, that delineates armed conflict as "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 one calendar year" (UCDP 2013). As Table 1 shows, we also included nonstate conflict, defined as the "use of armed force between two organized armed groups, neither of which is the government of a state, which results in at least 25 battle-related deaths in a year" (UCDP 2013).<sup>12</sup> We further take into account data that captures violent conflicts below the threshold of 25 battle-related deaths. Again, we report four observations regarding conflict data.

First, and similar to data on institutions, many datasets on conflict and peace use the traditional country-year format as their unit of observation. Although there has been a trend of developing temporally and geographically disaggregated data, such as event and georeferenced conflict data, these datasets are usually not global, but restricted to a small number of – or even single – countries. We found that 24.8 percent of all conflict datasets (28 out of 113) included conflict information on a subnational level of (dis)aggregation – a rather high percentage compared to 9.87 percent of disaggregated datasets (15 out of 152) on institutions. Many of these datasets with subnational conflict data are single-country datasets (10 of the 28 datasets).<sup>13</sup> We thus found 18 disaggregated datasets that provided comparative data beyond the single country, with 8 of these having a global scope. Disaggregated datasets with a global scope include the *PRIO Conflict Site Dataset* (Halberg 2012), the *PRIO GRID Dataset* (Tofsen, Strand, and Buhaug 2012), and the *Global Terrorism Dataset* (National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism 2012).

Second, only six datasets aim to capture a more positive understanding of peace. Johan Galtung has prominently distinguished between "negative peace" and "positive peace" (Gal-

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11 Selway and Templeman use PR electoral systems, decentralization and parliamentarism as indicators. More specific elements of Lijphart's concept such as grand coalitions and mutual vetos are not measured.

12 One example of nonstate conflict data that also captures conflicts below the 25 battle-related-deaths threshold is the Social Conflict in Africa Database (SCAD), see Hendrix and Salehyan (2013).

13 Countries with subnational conflict data include: Sierra Leone, Kenya, Mexico, Rwanda, Guatemala, Iraq, Nigeria, Egypt, China. Again, we do not assume to have covered subnational datasets in their completeness.

tung 1969). While the former concept denotes an absence of physical violence between social groups and is a conceptualization widely applied in quantitative studies of peace and conflict—as it can easily be operationalized in the number of battle-related deaths—positive peace is defined as the absence of both physical and “structural violence”, including the presence of social justice, equality, or forgiveness. Its quantitative assessment is regarded as inherently problematic, not least because an inclusion of injustice (or any other potential source of war) makes it impossible to examine the causal relationships between peace and its causes. Thus, very few datasets actually assess peace as a global and universal aspect (e.g., the *Global Peace Index*). Most of them focus on peace (processes) in post-conflict or conflict-affected countries – the *War and Peace Index*, for example, tracks public opinion toward a peaceful settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict (Yaar and Hermann 2013).

Finally, most conflict data focus on organized armed violence. Thus, we have comparatively few datasets that capture specific forms of violence, such as electoral violence. An exception is, for instance, Kelley’s *Quality of Elections Data*, which captures pre- and postelectoral violence (Kelley 2011). There is a trend, however, to remedy this dearth of data – indicated by the recent rise of datasets on nonviolent movements or human rights violations and exemplified by Chenoweth’s and Stephan’s (2011) dataset on nonviolent resistance campaigns or the *Armed Conflict and Location Event Dataset* (ACLED) which includes riots and protest events alongside classical conflict events (Raleigh et al. 2011).

### *Diversity and Divisions Data*

We define a “divided society” as a society that is not just culturally or otherwise diverse, but that features an antagonistic and politically salient segmentation along acquired or attributed identity lines. Such identities can include ethnic, religious, linguistic, and other cultural traits, as well as gender, age, ideology, or a group’s political or socioeconomic status. While theoretically distinct, these identities can overlap in reality. When these identities are combined, political salience and antagonism can increase.<sup>14</sup> Concerning data on diversity and divisions within a society we present four main findings.

First, we found that even more sophisticated datasets on ethnicity often use only snapshot or outdated sources, most notoriously the Soviet *Atlas Narodov Mira* from 1964. In addition to most likely being out of date in many cases, the *Atlas* does not provide a clear list of sources of its information or definitions of ethnic groups.<sup>15</sup> To be sure, many studies that use the *Atlas* as a source of information openly reflect its shortcomings (Weidmann, Rød, and Cederman 2010). Nevertheless, it is no exaggeration that large parts of the literature on eth-

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14 This claim has been made by several authors, most recently empirical substantiated by Gubler and Selway (2012).

15 A country’s ethnic composition is most likely to change due to population movements precisely where conflict has happened or is about to happen (see Weidmann, Rød, and Cederman 2010).

nicity rely on information gathered around the 1960s.<sup>16</sup> Reliable and detailed cross-sectional data on the dynamics of divisions or changes in a country's composition of identity groups is virtually missing.

Second, most datasets in the divisions cluster cover ethnic demographic data (63 out of 94 datasets), while there is much less information on other identities attributed by birth (such as religion or gender), and even less on acquired identities such as ideological convictions and their distribution in society (29 out of 94 datasets). Yet theoretically, it is not necessarily the nominal features (that is whether a group is based on common ethnic or other features) of a social group that is relevant for social conflict, but rather a group's strength of identity or its political salience.<sup>17</sup>

Third, and connected to the point made when we illustrated our findings on institutions, there is little information on the ethnicization of actors or groups (such as in political parties or unions). Most of this data covers the ethnic character of violent actors (see for instance Cederman and Girardin 2007). Only the *Minorities at Risk Dataset* offers additional detailed information on the political organization and activities of respective minorities. However, the dataset has been criticized, inter alia, for its focus on minorities and the fact that it looks at mobilized and discriminated groups only (Cederman, Weidmann and Gleditsch 2011: 484).<sup>18</sup> The *Ethnic Power Relations Dataset* (EPR) and related datasets fix some of the problems as EPR looks at the power relations at the centre of political power (Cederman, Min, and Wimmer 2009). However, it does not include any information on the ethnicization of institutions and organizations beyond the groups's political relevance and involvement in conflict.

Finally, there is no comprehensive dataset that holds information on all societal divisions in a country. Joel Selway's (2011) data collection on parallel or cross-cutting cleavages (such as ethnicity, geographic region, religion, income) is the most advanced dataset in this regard, but relies on census and other poll data, which is difficult to obtain for a number of countries. Otherwise, most data focuses on specific types of divisions (most often ethnic divisions) in a country, while lacking information on all lines of divisions combined.

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16 Data based on the Atlas includes for instance all measures on ethnic fractionalization, but also more sophisticated datasets such as GEO-EPR, the georeferenced dataset on ethnic power relations; see Wucherpfennig et al. (2011).

17 Even if we wanted to challenge this conjecture – for example by hypothesizing that ethnically divided societies are more likely to experience civil conflict than divided societies based on another type of division – we would still need sufficient data to compare ethnic groups with other groups; but at present, this data is not available.

18 For a supplement to the MAR data that specifically focuses on minorities not at risk, see Öberg (2002). At the time of writing, the MAR team is finalizing a version of 'minorities at risk' including politically inactive minorities.

#### 4 Discussion: Potential Research Questions and Avenues for Future Data Collection

The identified data gaps point to a number of potential research questions that – with the existing data captured by our analysis – cannot yet be answered in a cross-country comparison. We therefore discuss four potential research questions that are, in our view, of particular interest for the study of institutions, conflict and peace, and divisions and diversity.

First, the lack of cross-sectional and recent data on divisions and diversity and the representation of divisions in a country's institutional setup make it still difficult to systematically assess for a broader sample of cases, for instance, how a change in a country's ethnic or other composition influences the risk of conflict onset. In theory, strong differential dynamics are likely to cause conflict because relatively shrinking groups may develop threat perceptions. Also, the exact composition may have direct implications for political institutions. The importance of such dynamic-divisions data becomes visible if we look at the empirical example of Lebanon. Here, a fixed power-sharing agreement between the various Christian and Muslim communities was established after the country's independence in 1943. Over time, demographics between the religious communities shifted. The former Christian slight majority became a minority, whereas the Shiite community became the largest. At the same time, the confessional quotas in the power-sharing arrangement were not adjusted according to the changing dynamics in the country's demographic structure. The resulting grievances contributed to the onset of the civil war (1975–1990).

Second, with existing data we cannot comprehensively answer how the ethnicization of politically important institutions and organizations (such as political parties) affect conflict occurrence or peace. This is no small challenge given that the more prominent theories in the study of institutions in divided societies expect the causal chain between ethnic diversity and ethnic conflict to run through ethnified institutions (Horowitz 1984; Wimmer 2012). If we want to find out whether ethnic parties, for instance, are harmful to interethnic relations or not, we need information on the actual ethnic character of political parties. Exact data on the ethnicization of political parties and other societal organs is only available, if at all, for a small number of countries in a comparative format, mainly in sub-Saharan Africa (Basedau and Moroff 2011).

Third, ethnic and group identities are also relevant in the context of other institutions, most notably security-sector institutions such as the police and the military. Thus, it is important to know how the ethnic character of a country's security sector influences the duration of peace after civil war. Theoretically, we can expect that a group's under- or overrepresentation in the military or the police lead to an increased risk of war occurrence or recurrence, either because it provides an overrepresented group with the opportunity to use its domination in the armed forces to oppress other societal groups, or because it raises grievances in underrepresented identity groups.

Fourth and finally, the absence of data regarding the security sector is not confined to ethnic or group composition. More generally, there is a shortage of datasets that capture other

conflict-relevant features of a country's security sector such as qualitative features of civil-military control; the presence of other, nonstate security providers in a country; and information on whether SSR has taken place and to what extent. While data has recently been collected on security provision by nonstate actors (cf. Carey, Mitchell, and Lowe 2013), the SSR literature, on the other hand, is still very much policy-oriented and not driven by theoretical considerations or data collection efforts. Questions on SSR remain, therefore, addressed largely by small-N research designs, while the lack of quantitative data on different SSR designs, different international and local stakeholders involved in SSR, and different sequencing approaches to SSR and other institutional reforms make it impossible to answer research questions regarding SSR in a comparative, cross-country or time-series approach.

## 5 Conclusion

At first glance, the overall amount of data available for the study of the relationship between institutions, conflict and peace, as well as divisions and diversity is enormous. However, in a detailed overview and assessment of 257 datasets, we found large variations in the substantive coverage of data, which pointed to data gaps and related unanswered research questions. We also found some evidence indicating that many existing datasets suffer from transparency problems. Future data collection efforts should therefore strive to maximize transparency to ensure reliability and encourage reproduction of analysis.

Our overview and analysis point to several avenues for further data collection. Those include particularly properties of a state's security sector, which seem to belong to the more neglected bodies in the "institutional concert" of a state when it comes to data collection efforts. Other neglected fields inviting future data collection include aspects of SSR and the change of divisions over time as well as the quality of relations between identity groups. In many instances, it may be possible to integrate existing data to map the interaction effects of different institutions and their relation to the outbreak of war or peace.

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