Main Assignment 3

Due 12.15 by 8:30pm

Overview

Trying to replicate another researcher's analysis is what good science is all about. If an analysis only supports certain conclusions when a certain researcher does the work, that's a problem. But if anyone can follow a researcher's analysis plan and come to the same conclusion, that lends extra credence to their findings. In this assignment you will work individually or in teams of up to three (your choice) and play the role of re-analyst for the work Bear Braumoeller did for his book *Only the Dead*.

I've created an online application that you will use to perform your analysis. With the results, you'll write a report that summarizes what you found. Your analysis will focus on replicating three key findings of Braumoeller's: (1) that rates of conflict over time don't support the decline of war thesis, (2) that sizes of conflicts over time don't support the decline of war thesis, and (3) that international orders provide the best explanation for who does and doesn't fight each other in international politics.

The main kicker in this assignment is that you won't try to replicate Braumoeller's findings with the dataset he used. Instead, your analysis will be supported by a new dataset that has only been published in the past few years. It's called the Militarized Interstate Events Dataset, and it contains corrections for the Militarized Interstate Disputes Dataset Braumoeller used in his research. It also is more granular. It offers day-level detail about militarized events between countries and it nests these events within a broader conflict. This is truly great data. Does it support Braumoeller's conclusions? It's your job to find out in this MA.

Submission Outline

Your submission for this MA should adhere to the following outline:

- **Introduction**: Introduce your research question (It's pretty obvious: Is there evidence to support the decline of war thesis?) and why it matters. Draw on Braumoeller and any other sources as you wish to provide background on this question.

- **Data and Design**: Describe how you'll find an answer. Briefly talk about the methods and data that Braumoeller uses in his book, and introduce the Militarized Interstate Events Dataset and how you'll use it to see if you can replicate Braumoeller's findings. You can read more about the MIE dataset, and why it is supposedly better, here: The Militarized Interstate Events (MIE) dataset, 1816-2014. You should not cite me or the app I've made for you as you discuss the data. Instead, cite the MIE dataset article in the previous link, for any other measures used in your analysis, use the relevant citations for those as well. There will be a "Metadata" tab in the app that will tell you where each variable in the data comes from. You should also avoid listing out variables with bullet points. Just talk about the variables you'll use in plain English and in broad brushstrokes.

- **Analysis**: Using the Trends in War app, put together data visualizations that summarize (1) trends in the rate of conflict, (2) trends in the size of conflict, and (3) trends in the rate of conflict between countries within, across, and outside of international orders. You must have at least one visualization for each trend, but you are free to include more. You may want to consider what happens when you adjust for opportunities for conflict or normalize by population, for example. For each of your visualizations, make sure that you include your summary of each in a paragraph *before* the visualization. Also focus on telling a story with the data visualization. Don't just start a paragraph with "This figure shows…"

- **Conclusion**: Write a brief conclusion that summarizes your findings. Did you replicate Braumoeller's findings? Did you find something different? What are the implications either way?

Keep your writing short and to the point. You shouldn't need to write more than 1,000 words. When citing sources, use any citation style you prefer. Just be consistent.

Grading Rubric

As per the syllabus, I will use a 0-5 point grading scale, which maps to six different possible grades:

- 5pts = 100% — A+
- 4pts = 93% — A
- 3pts = 85% — B
- 2pts = 75% — C
- 1pt = 60% — D-
- 0pts = 0% — F-

The only scenario where you get 0pts is by failing to make a submission. So as long as you turn in something, you're guaranteed to get at least a D-.

Here are some reasons why I'll dock points from your grade. You can lose no more than 4pts on a submission since you can't do worse than 1pt (D-).

- 4 or more typos, writing errors, or poorly worded sentences (-1pt)

- You didn't follow the submission outline instructions (-1pt)

- You clearly misunderstood Braumoeller's argument and analysis (-1pt)

- You misinterpreted trends in the data and/or the measures of interest (-1pt)

- Your submission exceeds 1,000 words (-1pt)

This rubric, on the one hand, sets a high bar for each item. On the other hand, it also means that you can't be penalized beyond the loss of a single point for failing to meet the standard set by each item as well. For example, say your submission is riddled with typos, but everything else is in place—you followed instructions, it's clear that you understood Braumoeller's argument and the data, and you kept your word count below 1,000. You'd get 4pts, which equates to 93%.