

Introducing the International System(s) Dataset (ISD), 1816–2011

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We argue that the Correlates of War dataset on sovereign state membership has two weaknesses: a requirement that states maintain diplomatic relations with Britain and France, and a size inconsistency that disqualifies many mid-sized states in the pre-1920 period. As a consequence, entire state systems are excluded from the data, and the total number of states during the nineteenth century is undercounted. After reviewing two other approaches to identifying states, we offer an alternative set of criteria that identifies 100 completely new cases, and a total of 363 states between 1816 and 2011. These modifications reveal several previously overlooked patterns. Most importantly, the global trend in the number of states over time is concave. From a high of 134 in 1816, states declined precipitously in the mid-nineteenth century through the processes of accession, conquest, and unification. This pattern of state consolidation bottomed out in 1912, and states have proliferated since 1945. However, the pattern of state death and state birth varied by region in the nineteenth century. Whereas the state systems of South Asia and Southeast Asia experienced a steady reduction in the number of states, Africa underwent a more dynamic process of state formation, consolidation, and death.

KEYWORDS *Africa, Asia, data, geography*

A previous version of this paper was presented at the 2012 OCIS Conference in Sydney. We acknowledge financial support from the Department of Government and International Relations, University of Sydney, and the National Center for Peace and Conflict Studies, University of Otago. We thank Tanisha Fazal, Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, Ben Goldsmith, Vsevolod Gunitskiy, and Jason Sharman for their comments and assistance.

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As the basic unit of analysis in international relations, the sovereign state has received considerable attention and much effort has been put into identifying the set of states in the modern era. For some time now, the Correlates of War Project (COW) has maintained a list of states in the international system since 1816 (Correlates of War 2011; Small and Singer 1982). COW's catalogue has provided an important resource for various types of cross-national research and helped initiate a conversation about how sovereign states should be identified, one that has resulted in a number of suggested modifications (Bremer and Ghosn 2003; Fazal 2007; Gleditsch and Ward 1999).

This article highlights several conceptual weaknesses in the existing datasets, develops alternative criteria for state membership, and constructs a new list of states based upon those criteria. This project was motivated by several observations. First, the requirement that states prior to 1920 possess diplomatic relations with both Britain and France builds a Eurocentric bias into the COW data. A large number of states during the nineteenth century are excluded because they had not yet established sufficient relations with both of these states. Second, the COW dataset's size criterion is inconsistent across the pre-1920 era and the post-1920 period. Although there is reason behind the criterion—which we discuss below—one result is that many mid-sized states are excluded in the first period while many small states are included in the second. Third, we argue that, while neither of these criticisms is new, and attempts have been made to ameliorate them, the combined effect is a distorted picture of the international system(s) over time. As Figure 1 illustrates, existing datasets depict an international system that slowly increases in number between 1816 and 1945, and increases dramatically thereafter. After correcting for the problems listed above, our dataset identifies 100 previously unidentified cases and documents a concave, rather

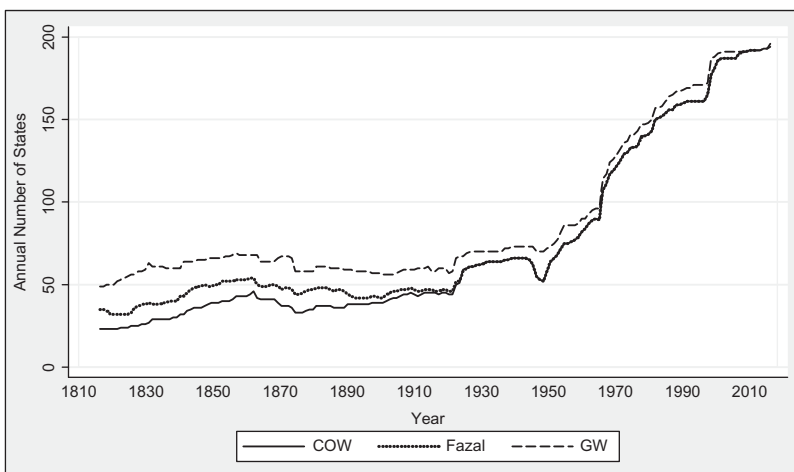


FIGURE 1 Graph of existing state membership datasets.



FIGURE 2 Graph of the new dataset.

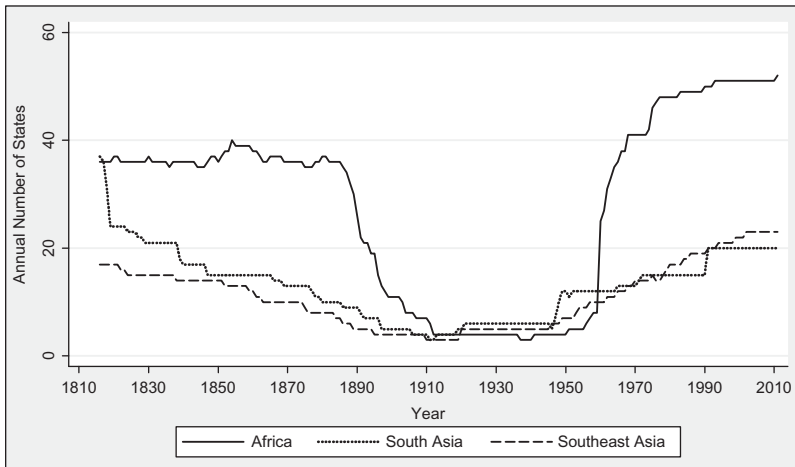


FIGURE 3 Regional patterns of state birth and state death.

than a mostly monotonically increasing, trend in the number of states over time (See Figure 2). From a high of 134 states in 1816, the total number is fairly stable until 1860 when the number falls sharply to a low of 51 in 1912, a reduction of roughly 60%. After 1945, the number of states steadily rises to the present high. Although this pattern has been hinted at elsewhere, no one has yet paid sufficient attention to it (Lake and O'Mahoney 2004). Our data also reveal regional variations in state consolidation and dissolution during the 19th century, as Figure 3 illustrates. The number of states in South and South East Asia steadily declined through the nineteenth century while Africa underwent a more dynamic process of state formation and death.

We believe that there is substantial theoretical value to the dataset presented herein. The chief benefit is that it provides a more accurate list of the set of sovereign states around the world since 1816. Critics may claim that our list adds states that were less important in international affairs and that it will be difficult to connect these states to existing data sets, particularly those that were constructed using the COW register. Although we concede that our data may be a marginal contribution for some research agendas, such as the study of great powers, it should be very useful for others. Our dataset, for example, provides a foundation for the systematic analysis of how processes of state formation and fragmentation, and aggregate practices of political authority, have varied across relatively disconnected and non-European international systems (Green 2012; Ringmar 2012). It provides a basis for investigating variation in the emergent characteristics of largely autonomous state systems by providing a set of units where the nature and intensity of interstate linkages can be measured, including aspects such as alliance formation, trade, war, and conflict resolution (Maoz 2012).

We argue that there is scientific value in developing a more complete list of sovereign states. Research in international relations shouldn't rely on existing data simply because it is already available and connected to other datasets. True progress in the field needs to continuously evaluate the foundations upon which its theories are tested. After all, the exclusion of 100 states may introduce bias in the resulting analyses, especially since those states are clustered in specific regions. Scholarly understanding of war-initiation by European powers in the nineteenth century may, for example, be systematically biased by the exclusion of "colonial" or "imperial" wars. Britain played a complicated game of alliance formation and war initiation on the Indian subcontinent in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and our data provide one means to explore the circumstances under which strategic interactions between Britain and local Indian states produced protection treaties and "peaceful" acquiescence, and those interactions that produced conflict. We hope that these data will open up a number of pathways for research and form the basis for further data development.

The remainder of this paper proceeds as follows. We first discuss the existing datasets, explicate the logic behind their coding criteria, and examine the implications. We then move to propose new criteria and discuss the resulting data collection. We end by detailing many of our coding decisions, and by pointing out several interesting observations about previously "uncounted" areas of the globe.

IDENTIFYING SOVEREIGN STATES

State registers are the backbone of much cross national research in international relations and accurately identifying the set of sovereign states in the

modern era is, therefore, an essential task. COW codes state membership via the following criteria and, in its most recent iteration, identifies 243 states over the period 1816–2011, of which 195 were still in existence as of 2011 (Correlates of War 2011):

1. Prior to 1920, the state must have a population of 500,000 or more *and* the establishment of diplomatic missions at or above the rank of *charge d' affaires* by Britain and France.
2. After 1920, the state must have membership in the League of Nations or United Nations *or* a population of 500,000 or more and establishment of diplomatic missions from any two major powers.

These criteria aim to ensure that states possess both a minimum size and a sufficient level of international recognition. Although COW did have to “make several exceptions,” which they detail in their Codebook (State System Membership List Codebook, Version 2011:7), their overall approach established criteria for statehood and connected state membership data to other useful datasets regarding conflict, material capabilities, alliances, etc.

The COW dataset, however, it is not without criticism (Adams 2000; Bremer and Ghosn 2003). One critique points to the size inconsistency between the pre-1920 and post-1920 periods. A 500,000 person threshold was used in the earlier period because a “minimum population . . . is always a basic requirement of survival; moreover, it frequently correlates with a number of other criteria of national power . . . [and] it is one of the variables for which adequate data have existed for a long time” (State System Membership List Codebook, Version 2011:5). However, small states can bypass the size requirement after 1920 provided they are members of either the League of Nations or the United Nations. From a practical perspective, these criteria are reasonable. It is easier to identify states with large populations, especially those that existed in the nineteenth century when census information was relatively sparse (Bremer and Ghosn 2003; Russett, Singer, and Small 1968). With the availability of both League of Nations and the UN membership rosters—organizations whose membership is theoretically given only to sovereign states—insistence on the size requirement became unnecessary after 1920.

But the downside is easy to see: many small and mid-sized sovereign states in the earlier period are excluded while some very small states in the second period are included. Thus, both Tuvalu and Nauru are currently coded as sovereign states though they each possess only 10,000 inhabitants, while the states of Bhutan and Hawaii did not make the list prior to 1920 though they had populations of roughly 250,000 and 150,000, respectively.¹ Aside from the question of consistency, this coding decision

¹For Bhutan, this population estimate was made in 1901; for Hawaii it was made in 1899.

inflates the number of states in the post-1920 period, and leaves the impression that there were relatively few states in the early 1800s.

A second, and more substantial, complaint is that the pre-1920 recognition criteria are too restrictive. Polities were required to possess a minimum level of diplomatic relations with both Britain and France to qualify as a member of the international system. Since historical records for Britain and France are available and reliable and these two “legitimizers” arguably constituted the core of the expanding European-based state system, diplomatic linkages were a clean and consistent method to identify mutual recognition and, perhaps, the best signal of sovereign recognition within the club of states (Singer and Small 1966:246).

The problem, however, is that large areas of the Earth are excluded from system membership during the nineteenth century because the lead states had not yet interacted at the level of *chargé d'affaires* with the local political units. The result is an incomplete list, one that omits a set of states that were sufficiently large and sufficiently recognized. This is particularly the case in Africa, the Pacific, and along the Indian Ocean rim in the dense state systems of South Asia and Southeast Asia. Moreover, the COW criteria do a better job of picking up European states that were more likely to have diplomatic relations with France and Britain, and the result is a European bias.

In truth, the nineteenth century is best described as several loosely connected state systems that were slowly integrating, and this is the reason for the singular/plural ambiguity when we refer to the “international system(s).” Many states had diplomatic relations with Britain and/or France below the rank of *chargé d'affaires*, and some achieved that level of recognition with one legitimizer but not the other. Moreover, many uncounted states possessed high levels of recognition with other core European states—for example, Portugal, the Netherlands—and were thus linked to Britain and France by two or more degrees through other recognized parties. For example, it was not until the 1840s that the Dutch expanded beyond their bases in Java, the Moluccas, and Minahasa, to incorporate the rest of the Indonesian archipelago into the larger system. Many of these states had been connected to one another, and with the Dutch diplomatically, but not to both Britain and France at the level of *chargé d'affaires*. Thus, they were not sufficiently connected to make the COW list, but the system they constituted was not completely cut off either. Similarly, episodes such as the end of the Third Anglo-Maratha War in 1818 and the creation of the British Raj in 1858 gradually brought in the uncounted landmass of South Asia, which encompassed a vibrant state system partially connected to the European core through Britain itself. Whether these regions should be counted as completely separate international systems becomes a definitional issue—that is, how highly and directly connected must they be to the so-called legitimizers? Although future work might determine these conceptual boundaries, our chief purpose

is to identify the previously excluded cases, a set that gradually decreased throughout the nineteenth century as the core system expanded to include and enclose the rest of the world through conquest, accession, or interstate diplomacy. Overall, it was not until the early 1900s that all of the available territory and supposedly unclaimed land—*terra nullius*—outside of Antarctica was connected at a high diplomatic level to both Britain and France.

Emphasis on British and French diplomacy also yields a large number of odd results. For example, coding an entry date of 1860 for China and Japan—the year that they each established sufficient diplomatic relations with both Britain and France—excludes these significant regions and gives the impression that new states were born at this time. Similarly, Costa Rica enters the COW dataset in 1920 when it joins the League of Nations, eighty years after it emerged from the dissolving United States of Central America and was recognized as sovereign by regional states (but not Britain and France). Such inconsistencies have been noted elsewhere (Bremer and Ghosn 2003; Gleditsch and Ward 1999), but less well-known is the omission of a large number of states in Africa, the Pacific, and along the Indian Ocean basin. Aceh and Manipur were thriving states for much of the nineteenth century, but they are not included in the existing datasets due to a lack of diplomatic relations with Britain and France.

One recent effort to remedy this shortcoming was provided by Tanisha Fazal, who modified the pre-1920 criteria by including states that had concluded treaties with either Britain or France, even if they did not receive diplomatic missions (Fazal 2007:14–17). Thus, a polity was a member of the state system if it had a “population of 500,000 or more, and *either* receipt of diplomatic missions from both Britain and France *or* conclusion of a treaty of commerce, alliance, or navigation with Britain or France.” Some 16 states were added as a result of this modification (all during the nineteenth century) and a new start date was recorded for 22 of the existing states in the COW dataset.² Fazal’s useful contribution highlights how quickly state membership expands by lowering the level of required diplomatic relations with the European core. Our point is that the list expands even more dramatically once we recognize that much of the world was much less connected to the core during the nineteenth century.

Overall, these two critiques—size inconsistency and Eurocentric recognition—combine to produce a distorted view of the international system(s). One would naturally conclude from Figure 1 that the number of states increased slowly from 1816 until the mid-20th century and then increased

²The 16 cases not found in COW include two cases noted by GW: Afghanistan (1816–1879) and Algeria (1816–1830); and 14 completely new cases: Annam (1875–1884), Bolivia (1836), Burma (1826–1885), Dahomey (1851–1895), Eastern Turkistan (1874–1877), Fouta Toro (1841–1888), Indore (1816–1818), Madagascar (1865–1885), Nagpur (1816–1818), Peru-Bolivia (1837–1839), Peshwa (1816–1817), Punjab (1816–1846), Sind (1816–1839), and Soudan (1886–1886).

quite dramatically thereafter. The three trend lines show slightly different patterns, but their overall shape is consistent. States have proliferated.

The third dataset illustrated in Figure 1 was developed by Kristian Gleditsch and Michael Ward (GW), who attempted to redress the issues discussed above by reducing the size threshold and relaxing the recognition criterion. Gleditsch and Ward required that a state have a relatively autonomous administration over some territory, be considered a distinct entity by local actors or the state it is dependent on, and have a population of at least 250,000 (Gleditsch and Ward 1999:398). Part of the purpose in constructing these criteria was to introduce greater consistency and pick up the previously uncounted cases.³

Although the GW dataset makes another important contribution to the overall project of identifying states, we object to it on two grounds. First, it still misses a large number of states during the nineteenth century that are autonomous, considered distinct by all relevant actors, and possess a population over 250,000.⁴ Second, there is no requirement that the polity be recognized as sovereign; it need only be relatively autonomous and regarded as a distinct entity. In effect, this opens the door to units with a high degree of autonomy but lacking formal sovereignty, or what Stephen Krasner refers to as International Legal Sovereignty.⁵ As a result, the entry and/or exit dates of a number of states are altered, and several protectorates are included during periods when their foreign policy was formally controlled by another power (for example, Oman between 1891 and 1971). The implementation of this broader definition of the state is useful for a range of projects, especially those that are interested in functional polities that possess domestic autonomy. However, by removing the requirement that states be recognized, Gleditsch and Ward's criteria include states that lack external sovereignty—they are not juridical equals.

A NEW LIST OF SOVEREIGN STATES

We propose a new list of sovereign states using the following criteria. A state is a recognizable political entity that possesses:

³Aside from removing many smaller states and modifying the entry and exit dates of others, GW identified five cases not found by COW or Fazal: Libya (1816 – 1835), the Orange Free State (1854–1910), Tibet (1913–1950), the Transvaal (1852–1910), and the United States of Central America (1823–1839).

⁴By our own conservative estimates—excluding any marginal or questionable instances—54 of the new cases had populations over 250,000. GW note in their codebook that a number of states, especially in Africa, may satisfy their criteria but have not been recorded (Gleditsch and Ward 2008:1, 20). We agree, and part of the effort here has been to formalize and quantify what has been noticed elsewhere.

⁵“The basic rule for international legal sovereignty is that recognition is extended to entities, states, with formal juridical autonomy” (Krasner 1999:14).

1. A population of at least 100,000.
2. Autonomy over a specific territory.
3. Sovereignty that is either uncontested or acknowledged by the relevant international actors.

The reasoning behind these criteria runs as follows. First, our conception of the sovereign state includes both a domestic and international dimension. Definitions of the state usually envision a political apparatus that is hierarchic, force-wielding, and in control of a given territory. In its purest form, the state possesses a complete monopoly on the use of physical force (Weber 1946:78), but since not all states possess this in full, the current understanding of the sovereign state allows for some latitude on this issue. We adopt this view of the state, but given our interest in states as part of international systems, we also emphasize recognition and formal control over foreign relations. As Fazal points out, one of the requirements in the Montevideo Convention on Rights and Duties of States is that states have the “capacity to enter into relations with other states” (Fazal 2007:14). We think that this external dimension of sovereignty, variously called juridical sovereignty or international legal sovereignty, is a crucial characteristic of a state system. Like COW and Fazal, but unlike GW, we include it in our conception of the state.

Second, we have lowered the population threshold to 100,000 and applied it across the entire range of years. In our view, a state with a population of 100,000 is just as viable as one with 250,000 or 500,000. In fact, viability was not the stated reason behind COW’s population criterion. Rather, the number 500,000 was selected because adequate data on smaller states is harder to find and because smaller states have less of an impact in international affairs (Bremer and Ghosn 2003:24; State System Membership List Codebook, Version 2011). We feel we have overcome the first issue regarding data collection, though, to be fair, our efforts were facilitated by these earlier datasets.

The issue of whether small polities should be included with larger polities depends on the purpose of the researcher. If one is interested in studying conflict among the Great Powers, the COW dataset should be sufficient. If one is interested in examining patterns of political order, how the state system(s) have developed over time, or the processes by which core states took control over peripheral states, then our data ought to be appropriate since it aims to provide the full picture. Having said that, our coding criteria arguably does a better job of preventing this small state/big state problem since we apply the 100,000 threshold to the entire period, unlike COW which requires a population of 500,000 in the first period and no minimum in the second.

The number 100,000 was chosen because the resulting research was manageable and because the number is focal in nature, like 250,000 or

500,000. The application of this threshold derives a larger, more consistent set of states. Like GW, we do not recognize states after 1920 simply because they are members of the League or the UN. Consequently, the following states that are found in COW and Fazal do not meet our criteria: Nauru, Palau, Tuvalu, San Marino, Monaco, Liechtenstein, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Marshall Islands, Dominica, Andorra, Antigua and Barbuda, Kiribati, and the Seychelles.⁶ That said, we are sympathetic to the COW/Fazal argument that UN membership is an important signal of sovereign recognition, so we still list these states but flag their low population sizes. Importantly, we do not claim that 100,000 is the lowest potential threshold, but think that future research should determine a minimum that is theoretically sufficient to form a state, and continue the nontrivial task of identifying these polities. Our contribution was to push the limit beyond the existing datasets and apply that limit consistently across the entire range of years.⁷

Third, we incorporated GW's requirement that the polity have autonomy over a specific territory. Although this requirement is implicit in the COW dataset, we felt it necessary to make explicit. Else, governments in exile, like Tibet, could potentially qualify. So might virtual membership organizations in the future.⁸ And the emphasis on territorial control can be useful for determining when a state enters or exits the system.

Finally, in regard to state recognition we tried to steer a course between COW and Fazal on the one hand, and GW on the other. We removed the emphasis on Britain and France and proposed criteria that should detect "sufficient recognition." Some states were relatively hermetic and possessed few diplomatic linkages with other states. Examples include Japan in the early years of the nineteenth century, and several African states like Urundi and Azande. Such states are included in the list when their sovereignty is uncontested, provided they are a recognizable political entity that meets the size requirement.

However, where contestation does exist it is almost always a former metropole or a conquering state that disputes the territory and contests the sovereignty. Exceptions include those rare cases where a former metropole recognizes a state despite international opposition. Examples here include Manchukuo during World War II and the South African Bantustans. In these instances, condemnation by the international community followed from the feeling that the new states were illegal and puppet states in one form or

⁶These five states crossed the 100,000 threshold after they were sovereign: Saint Vincent and the Grenadines in 1980; Micronesia in 1992; Grenada in 1995; Tonga in 2004; and Sao Tome in 1983 (World Development Indicators, The World Bank). Entry dates in Appendix 1 reflect when these states would have entered the system were they to have had a population over 100,000.

⁷Russett, Singer, and Small (1968) made some headway by identifying all national units with populations over 10,000, but their data begins in 1900.

⁸For a discussion on virtual sovereignty, see The Economist, "The Future is Another County," July 22, 2010.

another. Here we followed the custom of the other datasets and did not include these states.

Contests over sovereignty have been a common feature of international life and determining the moment when a state enters and/or exits the system is the real challenge in this type of data collection. For state exit, we employed Fazal's definition that a state dies when it loses formal control over foreign policy to another state (Fazal 2007:17). This can happen when a state is conquered, as Korea was in 1905. It can happen by treaty, as with Zanzibar in 1964. And it can happen when a state dissolves into its component parts, as the United States of Central America did in 1840, and there is no continuous core state.

Conversely, we coded state entry when a seceding polity acquired both *de facto* autonomy and recognition either by its former metropole or by the relevant international actors. Whereas the COW dataset accorded membership to polities that conducted sufficient diplomatic relations with the international community, we felt that this sometimes awarded sovereignty too late and left large gaps between a state's birth and its inclusion in the dataset during the nineteenth century—for example, Nicaragua was sovereign for 60 years before inclusion in COW—and somewhat smaller, but important gaps in the latter 20th century—for example, Samoa in 1962 versus 1976. In cases where the polity in question was not yet recognized by the international community, we imputed sovereignty if it had tacit recognition by its former metropole. The state's sovereign position, in this context, was essentially uncontested. However, in the great majority of contested cases, it is the former metropole that opposes sovereign recognition (for example China *vis-à-vis* Taiwan). In these instances we included the state if there was no ongoing conflict with the opposing unit and the relevant international actors accepted the state.

We define the relevant international actors as those states which, for all practical purposes, are the key legitimizers of the state in question. This definition follows from our conviction that the disconnectedness and changing nature of the international system(s) makes an emphasis on any particular actor problematic. France and Britain were simply not the relevant actors in all regions at all times. But while the relevant actors can vary, they are always identifiable. Regional states were the relevant actors for Nicaragua in 1840, especially the four republics—Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, and Costa Rica—that had just emerged from a common state. Portugal, Belgium, Kazembe, and Luba were the relevant actors for the Lunda Empire in 19th century Central Africa. The Netherlands was more relevant for the Karangasem kingdom of Bali and Lombok than Britain or France. Cases like contemporary Kosovo where the relevant actors are torn on the issue of sovereign recognition are quite rare. But for our rendering of borderline cases, see the online Codebook.

Aside from the overarching criteria listed above, we employed several coding rules. We stuck with the COW policy regarding foreign occupations. If the state in question was conquered and lost its sovereign status, we coded the state as exiting the system. This stands in contrast to GW, who retained the state if its sovereignty was restored within ten years. This choice has a number of consequences; perhaps, most notably, the death and subsequent rebirth of states such as France and Belgium during World War II.

Coding for the unification of states can be challenging. At what point do you code for a new state versus the continuity of a core state that has merely brought in the territory of others? In general, we agreed with the COW/Fazal coding decisions—such as the coding of a new Germany in 1990 and the corresponding demise of East Germany and West Germany—but we recognize that these decisions often come down to judgment calls.

Coding for the division of states is equally challenging. In the case of Austria-Hungary, we kept with the accepted wisdom that this was a state death from which a number of new states emerged. In the case of the Soviet Union, we agreed with COW and GW that there has existed one core state from 1816 until 2011, and that the dissolution of the Soviet Union should be regarded as secessions from the core (Russia).

We relied upon many sources to identify new states. Please refer to our online case description list for a detailed discussion of individual cases. Some of the main sources, however, included Harding (1998), the Imperial Gazetteer of India, Dodge (1980) and the Cambridge Regional Histories Series—especially Tarling (1992), Flint (1977), Oliver and Sanderson (1985), Ramusack (2004) and Gordon (1993).

The product of our labor is a new dataset listing a total of 363 states between 1816 and 2011 (see online Appendix 1⁹). One hundred are completely new cases (each new state is flagged in the Appendix). Figure 2 charts the number of states over time. Compared to Figure 1, our list of states is much higher in 1816—135 states versus 23 in COW—but the trends gradually converge over the next 100 years. The COW, Fazal, and GW datasets depict an international system in which the number of states increases slowly for the first 130 years and then rapidly after 1945. In contrast, our data show a concave trend: the number of states decreases after 1816 (especially after 1860) and then increases again after 1945. Indeed, it was not until 1970 that the number of states exceeded the number that existed in 1816.

Note that the trend line splits in 1968 and widens further in the 1990s. This difference represents UN-member states with populations of less than 100,000, beginning with the birth of Nauru in 1968. The solid line represents all states with populations over 100,000. The dashed line includes the microstates mentioned earlier.

⁹Appendix available at http://sydney.edu.au/arts/government_international_relations/staff/profiles/ryan.griffiths.php.

Figure 2 alerts us to several important trends. First, states have proliferated since the mid-twentieth century, a phenomenon not found in the earlier periods. This pattern stands in contrast to the phase of consolidation that began in the 1860s, first on account of the unifications in Italy and Germany, and then as a result of the expansion of the core states into Africa, South Asia, Southeast Asia, and the Pacific. The decline had bottomed out by World War I, and the core state system had come to encompass all landmass outside of Antarctica. However, even with our additions, the identified states during the nineteenth century do not account for all non-Antarctic land area. Some geographic areas, especially in Africa, simply did not possess an identifiable organized state, and there was not a concerted attempt by the community of states to delimit and claim these regions. Moreover, some areas were composed of small states (and small-state systems) with populations under 100,000. Balinese states are a prime example; these were sovereign states until the Dutch consolidated power in the latter 1800s, but unlike Nauru or Tuvalu a century later, they could not apply to an international institution like the United Nations for wider recognition.

The period between 1816 and 1860 was relatively stable, and the rates of state death and state birth were about equal. Whether this balance was characteristic of the pre-1816 years is beyond our ability to say. The wider literature, scant though it may be, suggests that states had been expanding (and decreasing in number) for some time in regions like Western Europe and Southeast Asia, but such phases of consolidation may have been offset by state proliferation elsewhere.¹⁰

MAJOR CHANGES SUMMARIZED BY REGION

Africa

We coded 40 new cases in Sub-Saharan Africa and adjusted the start and end-dates of two.¹¹ In West Africa we coded 16 new states: Ashanti (1816–1896), Dahomey (1820–1895), Kaarta (1816–1854), Kanem-Bornu (1816–1893), the Mandinka Empire (1878–1898),¹² Segou (1816–1862), Tokolor (1848–1893), Sokoto (1816–1903), Yatenga (Mossi) (1816–1895), Cayor (1816–859), Saloum, (1816–1887), Zinder (1851–1889), Massina (1820–1865), Fouta Djallon (1816–1896), Oyo (1816–1835) and Wadai (1816–1906). The number

¹⁰Lieberman (2003) notes that between 1340 and 1820, 23 independent Southeast Asian kingdoms collapsed into three. Similarly, Tilly (1975) records that between the 16th and the 20th centuries, 500 Western European political units condensed into 25.

¹¹State identification numbers were sourced from COW, especially the COW Colonial/Dependency Contiguity Data. Using the COW numbering system we suggested codes for four new states: Bharatpur (7589), Chamba (7590), Cutch (7591), and Kongo Kingdom (4911).

¹²Also known as Wassulu or “Samory’s State.” See Harding (1998:268).

of new states may have been considerably higher before 1816 as Nigerian city states were conquered in the Fulani Jihad of 1808.¹³

In East Africa and the Horn we coded nine new states: Buganda (1816–1884), Funj (1816–1821), Zanzibar (1816–1890), Darfur (1816–1874), Shoa (1865–1889), Jimma-Kakka (1830–1885), Kaffa (1830–1887) and Enarya-Limmu (1830–1849). We adjusted the start-date of Ethiopia back to 1816 (Sanderson, 1985:648). And we removed the Seychelles because the population is less than 100,000.

Eleven additional states were coded in Central Africa: Azande (1816–1895), Kuba (1816–1910), Ruanda (1816–1890), Urundi (1816–1890), Kazembe (1816–1890), Luba (1816–1889), Lunda Empire (1816–1889), Kasanje (1816–1911), Kongo Kingdom (1816–1888), Ovimbundu (1816–1903), and the Yeke kingdom (1880–1891).

In Southern Africa we coded five additional cases. Basotoland (Lesotho) enters the system in 1816 and departs as the kingdom requests and receives British protection in 1843. Lesotho reenters in 1854 when Britain abandons the protectorate until it is reestablished in 1868. We also coded Zululand (1816–1887), the Gaza Empire (1837–1895), and Madagascar (1816–1885). Transvaal's exit-date has been adjusted to 1881, with the culmination of the Second Boer War and the establishment of suzerainty.

South and Central Asia

We coded 25 new cases in South and Central Asia. An important question that emerged was the sovereignty status of the Maratha Confederacy in relation to its constituent states. We have taken the view that the confederacy was (at least) a two-tiered system composed of core states (Pune, Indore, Gwalior, and Nagpur),¹⁴ which, by 1816, we consider to be independent, and the vassals of core states, which we do not. To the existing Maratha states we have added only Gwalior (1816–1818). By the early 19th century, however, Maratha power was crumbling and a large number of states on the periphery of the empire merit inclusion.

From modern day Rajasthan we have added seven states: Jaipur (1816–1818), Jodhpur (1816–1818), Udaipur (1816–1817), Kotah (1816–1818), Bikaner (1816–1818), Bharatpur (1816–1828), and Sirohi (1816–1823). In Central India, we have coded three states: Bhopal (1816–1817), Cutch (1816), and Sawantvadi (1816–1838). Around the Punjab and modern-day Pakistan we have coded an additional seven states: Khaipur (1816–1838), Kalat (1816–1876), Swat (1816–1896), Dir (1816–1896), Kapurthala (1816–1826), Bahawalpur (1816–1838), and Chamba (1816–1846). In north-eastern India we have coded four states: Assam (1816–1817), Bhutan

¹³This may have included Biram, Daura, Gobir, Kano, Kaysina, Rano and Zazzau.

¹⁴Sartara and the Gaekwad were under British protection by 1816.

(1816–1910), Sikkim (1816–1890) and Manipur (1816–1891). In Central Asia we have coded three: Khiva (1816–1873), Kokand (1816–1865) and Bukhara (1816–1868), all of which became Russian protectorates.

Southeast Asia and the Pacific

We coded 16 additional cases in South East Asia. Along the Malay peninsula we coded: Perak (1816–1874), Selangor (1816–1875), Pahang (1816–1874), Johore (1816–1885), Terengganu (1816–1862), Kedah (1816–1821), and Kelantan (1816–1909). In Indonesia we coded: Siak (1816–1858), Minangkabau (1816–1837), Palembang (1816–1823), Benjermassin (1816–1860), Karangasem (1816–1894) and Aceh (1816–1874). In the Philippines we code the Sultanate of Sulu (1816–1851) and add the period 1816–1888 to the Sultanate of Brunei. In the Pacific Islands we coded Hawaii (1816–1898). We included Vanuatu (1980–2011), Samoa (1962–2011), Micronesia (1992–2011), and Tonga (2004–2011),¹⁵ and noted these modern microstates: Kiribati, Tuvalu, Palau, Nauru, and the Marshall Islands.

East Asia

In East Asia we included Myanmar from 1816–1888 and adjusted the end date of Annam/Vietnam to 1883 when the kingdom acceded to French sovereignty.

Middle East and North Africa

In the Middle East we coded eight new cases, all on the Arabian peninsula: Asir (1818–1872, 1914–1926), Hejaz (1916–1926), Nejd/Saudi Arabia (1816–1818, 1824–1838, 1843–2011), the Kathiri Sultanate (1816–1888) and the Qu'aiti Sultanate (1816–1888).

Europe

In Europe we included 10 new states, mostly German duchies that now qualify with our lower population threshold. We coded: Bremen (1816–1866), Hamburg (1816–1867), Lippe (1816–1867), Nassau (1816–1867), Oldenburg (1816–1867), Saxe-Altenburg (1816–1867), Saxe-Coburg-Gotha (1816–1867), Saxe-Meiningen-Hildburghausen (1816–1867), Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach (1816–1867), and Montenegro (1878–1918). We coded Luxembourg as starting in 1890 when the personal union with the Netherlands ended and

¹⁵Micronesia only passes the population threshold in 1992; Tonga passes it in 2004.

the state acquired control over foreign policy. We flagged those cases where the population did not exceed 100,000: Andorra, Liechtenstein, Monaco, and San Marino.

North and South America

We code one new state in the Americas, Texas (1836–1846), and adjust the start and end dates of a handful of cases. We code the Dominican Republic from 1844 to 1861 and Spanish annexation. Spanish troops left the Dominican Republic in 1865 and we re-include the state from this year (to 1916). For the Peru-Bolivian Confederation, we used Fazal's approach and coded an independent Peru and Bolivia prior to 1836, a unified state from 1836–1839 and separate states thereafter. We coded Columbia and Gran Columbia as the same state; thus Venezuela and Ecuador were secessions from Colombia. Meanwhile, the United States of Central America was a state that ceased to exist in 1840 when the five constituent units broke away. Finally, we flagged the states with populations less than 100,000—Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, and Saint Kitts and Nevis.

GENERAL PATTERNS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Our main finding is that the global pattern of state birth and death since 1816 is concave, not (mostly) monotonically increasing, but our data also uncover important regional variations. Figure 3 displays the number of states in the African, South Asian, and South East Asian state systems from 1816–2011.

Africa experienced a period of net state growth from 1820–1880 in contrast to the gradual decline in South Asia and South East Asia. In fact, Africa's state system was in a moment of considerable *dynamism*—in addition to the 13 new cases that are coded, there were 12 state deaths. By comparison, there was one new case coded between 1820–1880 in South Asia (Eastern Turkistan) while 15 states exited the system. Likewise, in South East Asia, there were 11 state deaths with no state births. Certainly this reflects the reluctance of Europeans to extend their colonial administrations beyond coastal enclaves until after the Conference of Berlin in 1885, where Africa was divided between the British, French, Belgians, Portuguese, and Spanish. The British in India had either conquered or extended treaties of protection to most of the southern and eastern Indian states by 1816, including the militarily powerful states of Travancore, Hyderabad, and Mysore, and most of the remaining states in Western India and Rajasthan would follow suit by 1818. Although the Dutch influence in Indonesia was more marginal, the Javanese kingdoms of Surakarta and Yogyakarta had (re)acceded to Dutch sovereignty by 1812 (Ricklefs 2001:144). This period between 1820 and 1880, therefore, offers a glimpse of state formation in Africa where Europeans were not yet

the primary political and military force on the continent. It is possible that a stronger European presence “froze” state systems in Asia as colonial powers reinforced the existing states through recognition, financial and military assistance, and trade.

Africa’s new states are the result of three processes: declining empires, the rise of territorial conquest states, and the encroachments of British and Boer settlers in Southern Africa. Shoa and Jimma-Kakka emerge as the largest fragments of the crumbling Gondarine empire (modern day Ethiopia), while the decline of Oyo in the Niger delta led to the declaration of Dahomean independence and the fall of Kanem-Bornu left the sultanate of Zinder independent. Five states that emerged in West, Central, and Southern Africa were based heavily on military conquest and managed to physically control large land areas, trade routes, and populations (Tokolor, Mandika Empire, Yeke Kingdom, Gaza Empire, and Massina).¹⁶ Toure’s Mandinka Empire, for example, was probably the largest single state in terms of land area that had existed in West Africa for many centuries (Person 1989:659). Three states emerged from the encroachment of the British on territory claimed by Boer settlers and Africans (Transvaal, Orange Free State, and Lesotho). Liberia stands as a unique case, created as a country for freed slaves from the United States.

Processes of state death in Africa were also varied. Oyo collapsed amid an externally supported secessionist struggle that evolved into a general civil war (Law 1975:13).¹⁷ Although the Gondarine Empire disappeared during this period, we code a rump Ethiopian state as remaining in existence. Kaarta, Segou, and Massina were conquered—not by Europeans, but by the Tokolor Empire in 1858, 1860, and 1862 respectively. Darfur and Funj were conquered by Egyptian military forces, while Cayor was absorbed into the French West African Empire. Enarya-Limmu in Ethiopia exited due to famine in the 1840s. Lesotho and Transvaal became British protectorates. By comparison, all 15 states that exited the South Asian system from 1820–1880 were conquered or signed treaties of protection with the British or Russians. The British or Dutch extinguished all nine states in South East Asia.

State dynamism in Africa, when compared with South and South East Asia, is an intriguing finding. We are not the first to note the trend, but may be the first to quantify it. Ajayi (1989:775) argues that nineteenth century Africa was a period of institutional experimentation potentially converging upon a more militarized and centralized state. Slave-trading probably undermined the economic base of older African states and displaced the political

¹⁶Zululand could also be included in this list as it emerged only in the early 1800s and shared many of these characteristics.

¹⁷Specifically, the Ilorian region of the Oyo Kingdom rebelled in 1817 and was able to control the city by the 1820s. Ilorian then became an “outpost” for the expansion of the Sokoto Caliphate, which sacked the capital of Oyo in 1835–1836.

elite, leading to the decline of some states and increasing the ability of others to accumulate wealth and consolidate power (Person 1989:611). The Yeke Kingdom, for example, used European weapons to control copper mines and trade in ivory and slaves in modern-day Katanga, enabling a more direct form of physical control than the fragmented Luba and Kazembe empires had previously exercised (Vellut 1989:322). The importance of slave-trading was declining, however, as slavery was progressively abolished in the early 1800s. Other factors such as demand for palm oil, ground nuts, and minerals in Europe, or the rise of Islam, may have been more important (Person 1989:661). European weapons and slave-trading seem to have played a smaller role in West Africa as a succession of Muslim jihads created polities that maintained large, centrally controlled and multi-ethnic armed forces and attempted to integrate their subjects under Islam (Ajayi 1989:780) and provide rudimentary forms of social security, especially for war veterans (Ly-Tall 1989:621, 629).¹⁸ The inhabitants of Tokolor (1848–1893) “resided in a clearly defined geographical sphere limited by natural frontiers,” much like European states (Wills 1989:24–25). Ly-Tall believes that if West Africa’s Islamic empires were left to consolidate their control, uninterrupted by European expansion, they “would have brought about national cohesion” to the territories they controlled (Ly-Tall 1989:635).

We believe that the variety and dynamism of political structures in Africa is an important area for future research that might be profitably contrasted with the “frozen” state systems of South and South East Asia. It is likely that states in India, or in South East Asia, experienced a similar period of flux before European powers advanced beyond their coastal enclaves. In Southern India, for example, Mysore and Travancore emerged in the eighteenth century as militarily strong, centralized states. Metcalf and Metcalf describe Mysore as a “Muslim conquest state” that directly taxed peasant agriculture instead of relying upon local political elites or tax farmers to generate wealth (Metcalf and Metcalf 2006:39). Examining rates of state growth in Asia and Africa before European colonialism, along with variations in how political authority was exercised and distributed, may reveal important theoretical insights regarding processes of state formation and death in differing and unconnected international systems. The framework presented in this paper offers one method for delving further into these state systems.

CONCLUSION

Registers of system membership form the core of much important cross-national and comparative research and we have, with this dataset, attempted

¹⁸Slaving was limited in these states by the prohibition on holding Muslim believers as slaves. Non-Muslims could be sold as slaves. These polities include: Fouta Toro, Fouta Djallon, Massina, Tokolor, and Wassulu.

to fix what we see as several weaknesses in the existing datasets. We have removed the criterion that states be highly connected to the European core, and we have modified the size criterion. Our coding criteria allow for a great many non-European states to be included and, we believe, provide both temporal consistency in the identification of states and an important redress to what was an unbalanced picture of the set of sovereign states over time.

We do not claim that our list is the final judgment on state membership during these years. Indeed, any dataset of international system membership will rely, to an extent, upon arbitrary coding criteria as the theory and practice of sovereignty change across time and space. Measuring the number of states over such a long period of time is, therefore, always going to be a challenge. However, we do claim that this list makes an important contribution to the ongoing effort to map out the international system(s).

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