

UCDP One-sided Violence Codebook¹

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Introduction

This document describes the One-sided Violence Dataset, a project within the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) at the Department of Peace and Conflict Research, Uppsala University. Funding for the UCDP One-sided violence project is provided by the Human Security Centre at the University of British Columbia.

Definition of One-sided violence

One-sided violence is the use of armed force by the government of a state or by a formally organized group against civilians which results in at least 25 deaths. Extrajudicial killings in custody are excluded.

The separate elements of the definition are operationalized as follows:

¹ The UCDP One-sided violence was started in 2002 by the Uppsala Conflict Data Program. This is the first version of the Codebook. When using the data, please cite UCDP One-sided violence Dataset, the address of the UCDP website, and (when appropriate) this codebook. Please always include the Version number in analyses using the dataset.

- (1) *Use of armed force*: use of arms in order to exert violent force, resulting in death
 - (1.1) Arms: any material means, e.g. manufactured weapons but also sticks, stones, fire, water, etc
- (2) *25 deaths*: a minimum of 25 civilian deaths per year and per actor
- (3) *Government*: the party controlling the capital of the state
- (4) *Formally organized group*: any non-governmental group of people having announced a name for their group and using armed force
- (5) *State*: a state is
 - (4.1) an internationally recognized sovereign government controlling a specified territory, *or*
 - (4.2) an internationally unrecognized government controlling a specified territory whose sovereignty is not disputed by another internationally recognized sovereign government previously controlling the same territory.
- (6) *Extrajudicial killings in custody*: when the government of a state kills a person in its custody
 - (5.1) *custody*: when the person is located in a prison or another type of governmental facility

Summary of variables in the Dataset

No	Variable	Label	Description
1	Actor ID	Actor identifier	The unique identifier of all actors
2	Location	Country name	The name of the country where the actor responsible for the one-sided violence is based.
3	Actor	Name of actor	The name of the actor responsible for the one-sided violence; may be either a government or non-governmental organized group.
4	Year	Year of observation	
5	Fat_best	Estimate of deaths	UCDP Best estimate of deaths caused by one-sided violence.
6	Fat_low	Estimate of deaths	UCDP Low estimate of deaths caused by one-sided violence.
7	Fat_high	Estimate of deaths	UCDP High estimate of deaths caused by one-sided violence.
8	Gov_actor	(dummy)	Whether the actor was a government
9	Cnfl_active	(dummy)	Whether the actor also was involved in an armed conflict in the same year according to the UCDP-PRIO dataset
10	COW_location ²	COW numbers of location	COW numbers of location country
11	Region	Region of Location	The region of the location; UCDP classifies the world into 5 regions.
12	Version	Version number	The current version of the dataset.

² COW= Correlates of War project

One-sided violence Dataset

Actor ID. For some purposes it may be necessary to follow the same actor which is responsible for one-sided violence over several years. Thus, each actor recorded in the dataset is given a unique Actor ID. All government actors are given IDs which end in -00.

Location. The country where the actor responsible for the one-sided violence is based. While some incidents may occur in an adjoining country, the majority of one-sided violence is reported in the location given.

Actor. The government of a state or the name used by a formally organized group according to the UCDP One-sided violence definition. A directory for actor names is available at http://www.pcr.uu.se/research/UCDP/HumSec_index1.htm.

Year. The calendar year of observation. UCDP employs a threshold for inclusion of at least 25 deaths caused by one-sided violence for each actor in a calendar year. Cases which do not meet the threshold are coded as absence of one-sided violence. This does not mean that the dataset is free from uncertainties; for a discussion of unclear cases, see http://www.pcr.uu.se/research/UCDP/HumSec_index1.htm

Best, Low and High fatality estimates.

The general rule for UCDP's estimation of one-sided violence is moderation. All incidents are ideally verified by two independent sources, and all estimates reported are grounded in UCDP's expertise of each particular country. Due to the varying certainty of fatality reports, the project provides three estimates concerning one-sided violence for each year.

- (a) **Best estimate.** The best estimate is constructed by aggregating the best estimates for each individual event. If reports provide conflicting estimates, an examination is made as to what source is most reliable. If no such distinction can be made, UCDP employs the lower figure given.
- (b) **Low estimate.** The low estimate is constructed by aggregating the low estimates for each individual event. If different reports provide different estimates and a higher estimate is considered more reliable, the low estimate is also reported if deemed reasonable. (make same changes as for best)
- (c) **High estimate.** The high estimate is constructed by aggregating the high estimates for each individual event. If different reports provide different estimates and a lower estimate is considered more or equally reliable, the high estimate is also reported if deemed reasonable. If there is uncertainty about exactly which party was involved in a given incident, it may also be included in the high estimate.

Government Actor. This variable records if the actor is the government of a state.

Conflict Active. This variable records if the actor is involved in an armed conflict – according to the UCDP-PRIO dataset – in the same year.

COW location. The Correlates of War code for the location of the one-sided violence.

Region. The geographical region of the location. UCDP use the following regions:

- (1) **Europe.** Geographic definition, including Russia and the states in the Caucasus, corresponding to the COW numbers [200-395]

- (2) ***Middle East.*** Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Syria, Turkey, and the states of the Arabian peninsula, corresponding to the COW numbers [630-698]
- (3) ***Asia.*** Geographic definition, including Oceania, Australia, and New Zealand, and excluding the states in the Middle East, corresponding to the COW numbers [700-990]
- (4) ***Africa.*** Geographic definition, excluding Egypt, corresponding to the COW numbers [400-625]
- (5) ***Americas.*** Geographic definition, including the states in the Caribbean, corresponding to the COW numbers [2-165]

Sources

The data presented by UCDP is based on information taken from a selection of publicly available sources, printed as well as electronic. The sources include news agencies, journals, research reports, and documents of international and multinational organizations and NGOs. Global, regional and country-specific sources are used for all countries.

Both the independence and the transparency of the sources are deemed crucial. Each source is judged according to the context in which it is published, that is, according to the potential interests of the source in misrepresenting political or violent events. Since most sources are secondary sources, UCDP attempts to trace reports back to the primary source in order to decide whether they are reliable. In cases of biased sources or in situations where there is unreliable information, the events are normally only included in the high estimate.

Little information on the exact number of one-sided deaths is usually available, and media coverage varies considerably from country to country. It is important to emphasize that the fatality estimates given by UCDP is based on publicly accessible sources. Due to the lack of available information, it is possible that there are more fatalities than the UCDP high estimate, but it is very unlikely that there is fewer than the UCDP best estimate. One important caveat is that the precision of the numbers belies the uncertainty of the estimates; while UCDP estimates are based on aggregated totals of all incidents recorded in our sources, we acknowledge that numerous events is not reported in the media. Figures are revised retroactively each year as new information becomes available.

Methods

The data on one-sided violence is compiled by calendar year. The Factiva news database (previously known as the Reuters Business Briefing)³ is indispensable for the collection of general news reports. To extract the relevant articles from Factiva, the project uses an automated events data search using VRA® technology.⁴ This software makes it possible to retrieve all reports which contain information about individuals killed or injured. Each news report is then read by UCDP staff, and every event that contains information about

³ Factiva is a news and information service database which contains over 8,000 sources.

⁴ The VRA software system automatically generates specific events data and displays them in summary form. For more information on automated events data and coding, see Bond et al. (2003).

individuals killed is coded manually into an events dataset. For every event, the following information is recorded: the date of the event, the reporting source, the primary source, the actors involved, where the event took place, what occurred, and an estimate of fatalities. Ideally, these individual figures are corroborated by two or more independent sources. These fatalities are later aggregated into a low, high, and best estimate for every calendar year.

The aggregated figures are also compared to total figures that appear in official documents, special reports and the news media. This serves as a contribution to clarify the context in which events occur, thus facilitating proper interpretation of the reporting in published sources.

References

Bond, Doug; Joe Bond; Churl Oh; J. Craig Jenkins & Charles Lewis Taylor, 2003. "Integrated Data for Events Analysis (IDEA): An Event Typology for Automated Events Data Development", *Journal of Peace Research* 40 (6): 733-745.