UCDP Violent Political Protest (VPP) Dataset Codebook Version 20.1

Uppsala Conflict Data Program

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When using this data, please always cite:

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When appropriate, also cite this codebook: Allansson, Marie, Susanne Schaftenaar, and Isak Svensson (2020) UCDP VPP Dataset Codebook v 20.1 (https://ucdp.uu.se/downloads/).

Always include the Version number in analyses using the dataset. When referring to the dataset, make sure to use the correct name: the UCDP VPP Dataset.

Contents

1 Introduction

This codebook describes the Violent Political Protest (VPP) Dataset, which was developed within the framework of the Battles without Bullets project and the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP), both at the Department of Peace and Conflict Research, Uppsala University.

This dataset was first presented in:
Svensson, Isak, Susanne Schaftenaar & Marie Allansson (2022). Violent Political Protest: Introducing a New Uppsala Conflict Data Program Data Set on Organized Violence, 1989-2019. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*. https://doi.org/10.1177/00220027221109791

VPP is a new, stand-alone category of violence, which complements and is compatible with UCDPs three main categories of organized violence (state-based, non-state, and one-sided). The cases found in the data are mutually exclusive with other UCDP data on organized violence. Questions regarding the definitions and the content of the dataset can be directed to ucdp@pcr.uu.se.

2 Definition of Violent Political Protest

A Violent Political Protest is defined as *"a contested incompatibility that concerns government and/or territory where the use of armed force in civil protest between two parties, of which one is the government of a state and the other an informally organized protest group, results in at least 25 deaths in one calendar year."*

The separate elements of the definition are operationalized as follows:

(1) *Use of armed force:* use of arms, resulting in deaths.
>   (1.1) *Arms:* any material means, e.g. manufactured weapons but also sticks, stones, fire, water etc.

(2) *Civil protest:* A manifestation of active opposition that is non-military organized, including demonstrations, riots, boycotts, sit-ins, strikes, looting etc. that occur within the context of a political conflict. There is no threshold of inclusion regarding the number of protesters.

(3) *25 deaths:* A minimum of 25 deaths per calendar year and per dyad (two conflicting primary parties of which at least one is the government of a state, see section 2.1 for further description).

(4) *Government:* The party controlling the capital of a state.

(5) *State:* a state is:
>   (5.1) an internationally recognized sovereign government controlling a specified territory, *or*
>   (5.2) 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) *Informally organized protest groups:* any group without a formally organized structure, which uses force in civil protest and that is organized around a common goal.

(7) *Incompatibility concerning government or territory:* The incompatibility, as stated by the parties, must concern government and/or territory.
>   (7.1) *Incompatibility:* The stated general incompatible positions.
>   (7.2) *Incompatibility concerning government:* Incompatibility concerning type of political system, the replacement of the central government, or the change of its composition.
>   (7.3) *Incompatibility concerning territory:* Incompatibility concerning the status of a territory, e.g. secession or autonomy.

2.1 Comment on dyad

The VPP definition of a dyad corresponds to the concept of a dyad described in the UCDP Dyadic Dataset [1]. A dyad is made up of two primary parties and includes a contested incompatibility. In VPP, the primary parties are made up of a government and opponents of the government, or supporters of a territory.

Different time periods of protests

VPP deals with protest violence during one calendar year and within one dyad. This means that deaths that occurred as part of a wave of protests against the government for example in the spring are counted together with deaths that occurred as part of demonstration violence in the autumn the same year, as long as they have the same stated incompatibility.

Different geographical locations

The protests do not have to take place in the same geographical area of the country. They do, however, need to be clearly linked to the same incompatibility (see section 2.3). For example, demonstrations can be held in two different parts of the country, both against the government. Events [2] taking place in the different locations will then be included in the same dyad. If, however, demonstrations in one place fulfill the incompatibility criterion but not in the other (for example, the demonstrations simply focus on food prices but do not demand the government's resignation), events in the latter location will not be included.

An example of this is the case of Egypt and the Port Said football violence in 2013. In early 2013, two years after President Mubarak was ousted, violent demonstrations against President Morsi were held in Cairo. Many protesters were dissatisfied with the progress in the country so far and claimed that the president had let the revolution in 2011 down. Around the same time, violent clashes erupted in Port Said when the verdicts in the football trials, following the deadly football violence the previous year, were announced. In some instances, protesters voiced both demands for the president's resignation and demands concerning the trials. Deaths that occurred during such instances were included in VPP. Events where no demands (relating to the incompatibility) were reported to have been raised were not included in VPP.

Different incompatibilities

If a new incompatibility is stated, for example when protesters target another level of power, a new dyad is created. One notable example is the case of Iran. In 2009, protesters demand the resignation of President Ahmadinejad but he remained in office until President Rouhani succeeded him in 2013. In 2017, a new round of protests begun. This time the protesters focused on the Supreme Leader of Iran, Khamenei, rather than the President. Both rounds of protests have an incompatibility over government, but the protests are directed at different levels of power in Iran.

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[1] Harbom, Lotta, Erik Melander & Peter Wallensteen (2008) Dyadic Dimensions of Armed Conflict, 1946-2007. Journal of Peace Research 45(5): 697-710.; Pettersson, Therese & Magnus Öberg (2020). Organized violence, 1989-2019. Journal of Peace Research 57(4).; Pettersson, Therese (2020) UCDP Dyadic Dataset Codebook v 20.1 (https://ucdp.uu.se/downloads/)

[2] UCDP defines an event as "An incident where armed force was used by an organized actor against another organized actor, or against civilians, resulting in at least 1 direct death at a specific location and a specific date". For more information see Sundberg, Ralph, and Erik Melander, 2013, "Introducing the UCDP Georeferenced Event Dataset", *Journal of Peace Research*, vol.50, no.4, 523-532.; Högbladh Stina, 2020, "UCDP GED Codebook version 20.1", Department of Peace and Conflict Research, Uppsala University. It should be noted, however, that the UCDP VPP dataset is not an event dataset.

2.2 Comment on informally organized protest groups

The informally organized protest groups correspond to organizational level 2 in the UCDP Non-State Conflict Dataset.[3] The non-state actor in this dataset is a group without a formally organized structure.

Group names are assigned according to a set of rules. Protesters demonstrating against a government are assigned the name "Opponents of [name of president/prime minister/monarch]". Group names thus depend on towards whom the protesters direct their demands. An example of this can be found in Egypt 2013. During the first half of 2013, demonstrations against the government were coded as "Opponents of Morsi" and then as "Opponents of Mansour" following the military's ouster of President Morsi.

If the incompatibility concerns territory, protesters are assigned the name "Supporters of [name of territory]". In line with UCDP practice, the name used by the opposition organization is used in the event that there are different names for the disputed territory. There are three reasons for this. First, the opposition group is the one that states the incompatibility. Second, this is most often the name that the general public recognises. Third, there are cases where the disputed territories do not have an official name.[4]

The way the groups are assigned names gives that, in contrast to UCDP's other categories, the name of the non-state actor is the same regardless of its members.

2.3 Comment on incompatibility

The definition of incompatibility in VPP draws on the definition used in the UCDP state-based category. One vital difference, however, can be found in the type of group stating the incompatibility. In the state-based category, the stated goal of incompatibility has to be declared by a formally organized group. In VPP, the opposition group is an informally organized group without a clear hierarchical structure. Since such groups have no clear leadership who can announce the incompatibility, the focus is on demands made during protests. For example, some demonstrators might call for the resignation of a president, while others might call for more jobs. There is no threshold regarding the amount of protesters calling for e.g. the resignation of a president, rather if such a demand is raised, the requirement of a stated goal of incompatibility is seen as fulfilled.

However, protests that are focusing only on for example higher wages, better infrastructure, or subsidies, and where no stated demands regarding government and/or territory are raised (as defined in section 2), are not included in VPP data.

2.4 Comment on the use of violence

The events included in VPP are not included in the state-based category since they do not fulfill the organizational criterion for the UCDP state-based category. Furthermore, the events are not included in the UCDP one-sided violence category since the non-state actor is armed.

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[3] Sundberg, Ralph, Kristine Eck and Joakim Kreutz (2012) Introducing the UCDP Non-State Conflict Dataset. *Journal of Peace Research* 49(2).; Pettersson, Therese (2020) UCDP Non-state Conflict Codebook v 20.1 (https://ucdp.uu.se/downloads/).

[4] Harbom, Lotta, Erik Melander & Peter Wallensteen (2008) Dyadic Dimensions of Armed Conflict, 1946-2007. Journal of Peace Research 45(5).; Pettersson, Therese (2020) UCDP Dyadic Dataset Codebook v 20.1 (https://ucdp.uu.se/downloads/).

Not all of the protesters need to be armed in order for an event to be included in VPP data. For instance, if a group of protesters, at a certain time and location, contain both unarmed civilians and stone-throwers the group is seen as armed. See section 2 for definition of "arms". There is no threshold on the number of armed protesters; rather as soon as armed violence is used by a protester, it is included in VPP. In other words, one instance of for example stone throwing from a protester is enough for inclusion. If none of the protesters are armed, the event is included in the one-sided category, provided that all other criteria for inclusion for that category are fulfilled.

It should be noted that in some cases, where detailed reporting is available, it has been possible for UCDP to disaggregate events into different categories during e.g. demonstrations where some protesters were armed while others were unarmed. Furthermore, since there is often a lack of sufficiently detailed information, it is possible that what is in fact a one-sided violence event is included in a VPP-dyad. However, it should be noted that events can never be included in more than one category and steps have been taken in order to avoid any double counting.

Furthermore, the accounts of the character of the protests sometimes differ. There might, for example, be different accounts as to whether the demonstrations were violent or not. In those cases, efforts are made to find independent reports detailing the events. If no independent reporting stating that the protesters were unarmed was found, the event is generally included in VPP, provided that all other criteria are fulfilled.

Involvement by other actors
In some cases, actors loyal to the government support the government forces in clashes with protesters (i.e. they are actively involved in the clashes). Such events are included in the VPP category, given that other criteria are fulfilled, since the main actors (Side A and Side B) are part of a state or an informally organized group. In the case of Government of Egypt – Opponents of Morsi, members of the non-state group "Supporters of Morsi" support the Egyptian security forces in its clashes against "Opponents of Morsi". These events are excluded from the non-state conflict "Opponents of Morsi – Supporters of Morsi", since a state actor is involved. [5] Furthermore, these events are not included in the state-based category since the organizational criterion is not fulfilled.

2.5 Data collection
The data in the VPP dataset mainly builds upon previously unpublished UCDP data. Cases included in this dataset have previously been coded as unclear or lacking sufficient organization, and have thus not been included in other UCDP datasets. This method was chosen since UCDP's data has global coverage and goes back to 1989. Throughout the years, cases relating to violent protests have been coded for reference. After having gone through this vast amount of data, we feel confident that the coverage of such cases has been very high. This approach does open up of for bias against inclusion of conflicts in earlier years and in the less-developed world. Cases relating to violent protests in recent years are more likely to have been reported and recorded than events in a less developed country in the early 1990s. However, it is likely that demonstration violence with 25 or more deaths would have been reported. Furthermore, the inclusion of several cases during the early part of the 1990s strengthens this assumption.

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[5] In some cases, external states can be involved as secondary warring parties in non-state conflicts (with formally organized non-state actors). For more information, see Pettersson, Therese (2020) UCDP Non-state Conflict Codebook v 20.1 (https://ucdp.uu.se/downloads/).

In addition to existing UCDP data, additional searches have been made when there have been indications of violent protests with more than 25 deaths.

3 Variables in the VPP Dataset

3.1 Dyad
The dyad name consisting of the two primary parties in the conflict.

3.2 Dyad ID
Dyad identifier.

3.3 Side A
The party that constitutes Side A in the conflict. Side A is always a government.

3.4 Side A ID
The unique ID of the group that makes up Side A. This ID corresponds to all other data from UCDP.

3.5 Side B
The party that constitutes Side B in the conflict.

3.6 Side B ID
The unique ID of the group that makes up Side B.

3.7 Location
The name of the country in which the VPP activity takes place.

3.8 GWNOLoc
This field contains the country code for the state listed in the Location variable.

3.9-10 Region ID and Region
Region of location:
       1. Europe
       2. Middle East
       3. Asia
       4. Africa
       5. Americas

3.11 Incompatibility

The stated incompatibility is what the parties are (or claim to be) fighting over, but it says nothing about why the parties are fighting. In other words, possible underlying incompatibilities are not considered. The incompatibility can concern either government, territory, or both.

3.12 Year

The year of observation of the conflict.

The calendar year is the basic unit of every observation. Thus, if a conflict during the period June–September results in 30 casualties, that year will be included in the dataset. However, if the same number of casualties occurred in the period November–February and the violence did not result in at least 25 deaths in either calendar year, neither year will be included.

3.13 Intensity

The intensity variable is coded in two categories:
   1. Low intensity: between 25 and 999 deaths in a given year.
   2. High intensity: at least 1,000 deaths in a given year.

3.14 Outcome

The outcome variable is divided in four categories:
   1. Demands fulfilled
   2. Demands partially fulfilled
   3. Demands not fulfilled
   4. Not applicable

The demands of Side B regarding the incompatibility (government and/or territory) must be met within twelve months after the civil protests in order for the outcome variable to be coded as "demands fulfilled". This can take the form of for example the head of the government resigning or an achieved autonomy. If some of the demands are fulfilled, but not all, the outcome variable is coded as "demands partially fulfilled". One example of this could be when substantial constitutional changes are made, but the state leader does not resign. The final category, not applicable, is assigned to the cases with civil protests that have taken place in less than twelve months prior the release of the dataset.

3.15 Version

This codebook corresponds to Version 20.1 of the VPP dataset.

4   References

Harbom, Lotta, Erik Melander & Peter Wallensteen (2008) "Dyadic Dimensions of Armed Conflict, 1946-2007". *Journal of Peace Research* 45(5).

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