

# Global Terrorism Database & Varieties of Democracy Datasets 2002-2020

Jason Keiber  
Assistant Professor, Politics and Global Citizenship  
Baldwin Wallace University  
jkeiber@bw.edu

The Excel and .CSV documents contain merged **2002-2020** data from the University of Maryland's START Global Terrorism Database (GTD) from<sup>1</sup> and v13 of the Varieties of Democracy (VDem) Project from the University of Gothenburg's Varieties of Democracy Institute.<sup>2</sup> GTD's event data was reworked to create country-year level data. This data was then merged with v13 of "V-Dem Full+Others" data.

Data sorting, editing, merging conducted by Jason Keiber and the Politics of Terrorism class<sup>3</sup> at Baldwin Wallace University in Spring 2023. Our hope is that other students and scholars can use this merged dataset.

## Background

Periodically I teach an upper-level course on terrorism, and one of the pieces we read is the "Fighting Terrorism: The Democratic Advantage" by Amichai Magen.<sup>4</sup> It is approachable and gives students exposure to both some data and theory. Magen's piece gives a fairly straightforward comparative analysis of terrorism incidents and fatalities experienced across different regime types. My students and I decided to repeat Magen's analysis using more current data. We focused our collection on data since 2002 with the understanding that terrorism/counterterrorism is different after 9/11. We initially merged 2002-2020 GTD data with data from Skaaning's "Lexical Index of Electoral Democracy"<sup>5</sup> (LIED), but LIED's categories of regime type didn't fit well with Magen's categories. We decided, instead, to marry some of the basics from the GTD with the data in VDem. Student work was used a quality check on my own. Ultimately any errors are mine.

---

<sup>1</sup> START (National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism). (2022). Global Terrorism Database 1970 - 2020 [data file]. <https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd>

<sup>2</sup> Coppedge, Michael, John Gerring, Carl Henrik Knutsen, Staffan I. Lindberg, Jan Teorell, David Altman, Michael Bernhard, Agnes Cornell, M. Steven Fish, Lisa Gastaldi, Haakon Gjerløw, Adam Glynn, Ana Good God, Sandra Grahn, Allen Hicken, Katrin Kinzelbach, Joshua Krusell, Kyle L. Marquardt, Kelly McMann, Valeriya Mechkova, Juraj Medzihorsky, Natalia Natsika, Anja Neundorf, Pamela Paxton, Daniel Pemstein, Josefine Pernes, Oskar Rydén, Johannes von Römer, Brigitte Seim, Rachel Sigman, Svend-Erik Skaaning, Jeffrey Staton, Aksel Sundström, Eitan Tzelgov, Yi-ting Wang, Tore Wig, Steven Wilson and Daniel Ziblatt. 2023. "V-Dem [Country-Year/Country-Date] Dataset v13" Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Project. <https://doi.org/10.23696/vdemds23>

<sup>3</sup> Soufiyane Belyamani, Kali Brochak, Cory Dulemba, Lilly Engelhart, Zach Kuhrt, Patric Lam, Annie Lindley, Luke Lombardo, Austin Olsavsky, Robby Palmieri, Ryan Paul, Davis Pickett, Kourtnei Presswood, Jake Ryan, Gavin Shinn, Jillian Smith, Logan Walczak

<sup>4</sup> *Journal of Democracy*, Volume 29, Number 1, January 2018, pp. 111-125

<sup>5</sup> Skaaning, Svend-Erik, 2021, "Lexical Index of Electoral Democracy (LIED) dataset v6.0", <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/WPKNIT>, Harvard Dataverse, V2

## The GTD-Data

The GTD is an event database. For details of GTD's methodology and variables consult the GTD's codebook.<sup>6</sup>

Only data from 2002-2020 are included in our merge. In addition, and importantly, only incidents that meet all three of the GTD's criteria are included. This means that "The incident must be intentional"; "the incident must entail some level of violence or immediate threat of violence"; and "the perpetrators of the incidents must be sub-national actors."

We counted all events for each country to produce country-year data. We also counted the number of suicide attacks, the number killed, and the number wounded for each country-year. Finally, we summed up the numbers for all the "Attack Types" and "Target Types" for each country-year. So, for example, Afghanistan has 37 separate incidents listed for 2002. For each one of those the GTD includes how many were killed, the attack type, etc. But in our merged data we present the *total* figures. A (partial) entry would look like this:

Year	Country	Incidents	Suicide attacks	Number killed	Number wounded	Incidents with "Attack Type" = Bombing/Explosion
2002	Afghanistan	37	2	74	296	32

### Variables included:

- *GTD-Incidents* provides the number of incidents that meet all three GTD criteria recorded for the country in a given year.
- *Sum of GTD-suicide* provides the number of suicide incidents recorded for the country in a given year.
- *Sum of GTD-nkill* provides the number of fatalities recorded for the country in a given year.
- *Sum of GTD-nwound* provides the number of non-fatal injuries to both perpetrators and victims for all incidents recorded for the country in a given year.
- Attack Type variables "capture the general method of attack and often reflects the broad class of tactics used."<sup>7</sup> In the merged dataset the total number of incidents of each attack type is listed for each country-year.
  - *Sum of GTD-AtkTyp-Assassination*
  - *Sum of GTD-AtkTyp-Armed Assault*
  - *Sum of GTD-AtkTyp-Bombing/Explosion*
  - *Sum of GTD-AtkTyp-Hijacking*
  - *Sum of GTD-AtkTyp-Hostage Taking (Barricade)*
  - *Sum of GTD-AtkTyp-Hostage Taking (Kidnapping)*
  - *Sum of GTD-AtkTyp-Facility / Infrastructure*
  - *Sum of GTD-AtkTyp-Unarmed Assault*

---

<sup>6</sup> START (National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism). (2021, August). *Global Terrorism Database codebook: Methodology, inclusion criteria, and variables*. University of Maryland. <https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/downloads/Codebook.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> GTD Codebook, page 24

- *Sum of GTD-AtkTyp-Unknown*
- Target/Victim Type variables “capture the general type of target/victim.”<sup>8</sup> In the merged dataset the total number of incidents of each target type is listed for each country-year.
  - *Sum of GTD-TargTyp-Business*
  - *Sum of GTD-TargTyp-Gov(General)*
  - *Sum of GTD-TargTyp-Police*
  - *Sum of GTD-TargTyp-Military*
  - *Sum of GTD-TargTyp-Abortion*
  - *Sum of GTD-TargTyp-Airports/craft*
  - *Sum of GTD-TargTyp-Gov(Diplo)*
  - *Sum of GTD-TargTyp-EductnInst*
  - *Sum of GTD-TargTyp-Food/WaterSupply*
  - *Sum of GTD-TargTyp-Journalists/Media*
  - *Sum of GTD-TargTyp-Maritime*
  - *Sum of GTD-TargTyp-NGO*
  - *Sum of GTD-TargTyp-Other*
  - *Sum of GTD-TargTyp-PrivateCitz/Property*
  - *Sum of GTD-TargTyp-Religious*
  - *Sum of GTD-TargTyp-Telecom*
  - *Sum of GTD-TargTyp-Terrorists/StMilitia*
  - *Sum of GTD-TargTyp-Tourists*
  - *Sum of GTD-TargTyp-Transp(noAviation)*
  - *Sum of GTD-TargTyp-Unknown*
  - *Sum of GTD-TargTyp-Utilities*
  - *Sum of GTD-TargTyp-ViolentPolPart*

#### A note on our process

We processed the data using Microsoft Excel and—rather tediously—through Excel’s pivot tables. I set up the pivot tables for student teams to go through country-by-country to copy the relevant data and then paste it over in a new excel sheet containing the VDem data. Later, I redid the entire process by myself and used the student’s work as a quality check on my own.

#### **The VDem Data**

The entire VDem Full+Others v13 is included in our merged dataset. Please consult the VDem codebook for information.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> GTD Codebook, page 33

<sup>9</sup> Coppedge, Michael, John Gerring, Carl Henrik Knutsen, Staffan I. Lindberg, Jan Teorell, David Altman, Michael Bernhard, Agnes Cornell, M. Steven Fish, Lisa Gastaldi, Haakon Gjerløw, Adam Glynn, Sandra Grahn, Allen Hicken, Katrin Kinzelbach, Kyle L. Marquardt, Kelly McMann, Valeriya Mechkova, Anja Neundorf, Pamela Paxton, Daniel Pemstein, Oskar Rydén, Johannes von Römer, Brigitte Seim, Rachel Sigman, Svend-Erik Skaaning, Jeffrey Staton, Aksel Sundström, Eitan Tzelgov, Luca Uberti, Yi-ting Wang, Tore Wig, and Daniel Ziblatt. 2023. "V-Dem Codebook v13"

## Notes on the merged dataset, omissions, and finesses.

There are a few countries that were represented in one dataset but not the other.

Represented in GTD but not VDem.

- Bahamas (not coded in VDem)
- Belize (not coded in VDem)
- New Caledonia
- St. Lucia (not coded in VDem)
- Western Sahara (not coded in VDem)

Represented in VDem but not in GTD

- Cape Verde
- Mongolia
- Oman
- Sao Principe

There were a number of countries who had no incidents listed in the GTD for the 2002-2020 time period (again, with all three Criteria met). We assumed that those countries recorded zero incidents. I note the countries here.

- Barbados
- Botswana
- El Salvador
- Fiji
- Gambia
- Luxemburg
- Mauritius
- Namibia
- North Korea
- Seychelle
- Singapore
- Slovenia
- Suriname
- Vanuatu

There were a few entries that required additional sorting and finessing. Here they are.

- VDem separates the West Bank from Gaza. The GTD lists the West Bank and Gaza together as one "country." However, I was able to separate West Bank from Gaza events using the GTD's "province" label. This resulted in one incident being omitted from the data (it was not geocoded in any fashion). The event has the GTD Event ID, 200708030001. No one was injured in this attack.
- VDem has a separate entry for Somaliland. The GTD does not list Somaliland as a separate "country." However, I was able to separate attacks that happened in the five provinces of Somalia that overlap with Somaliland and count those attacks separately. Those provinces are: Awdal, Woqooyi Galbeed, Togdheer, Sanaag, and Sool.
- Zanzibar has a separate listing in VDem, while the GTD lists incidents within Zanzibar as occurring in Tanzania. I was able to use GTD's additional geographic information to separate those incidents.
- "Serbia" in the merged dataset includes the data from GTD's "Serbia-Montenegro" from 2002-2006, GTD's "Serbia" from 2006-2020, and from GTD's "Yugoslavia" in 2002. Each incident in "Serbia-Montenegro" and "Yugoslavia" occurred in modern day Serbia.