The Political Terror Scale (PTS) Codebook

Version 1.40

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http://www.politicalterrorscale.org/

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The **PTS** dataset and this codebook can be found at http://www.politicalterrorscale.org/. Please cite
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The Political Terror Scale (PTS)

Introduction

This document describes the Political Terror Scale (**PTS**) dataset, a data collection project housed by the Political Science Department at the University of North Carolina, Asheville. The dataset is described in detail in Wood and Gibney (2010). The **PTS** measures violations of physical integrity rights carried out by states or their agents – covering some 200 countries or territories from 1976 to 2020. The dataset is available for download at: http://www.politicalterrorscale.org/.

Definition of "Political Terror"

The **PTS** seeks to measure *political terror*. We define political terror as *violations of basic human rights to the physical integrity of the person* by *agents of the state* within the territorial boundaries of the state in question. It is important to note that political terror as defined by the **PTS** is not synonymous with *terrorism* or the use of violence and intimidation in pursuit of political aims. The concept is also distinguishable from terrorism as a tactic or from criminal acts.

Violations of Physical Integrity

Violations of physical integrity rights – also referred to as *violations of personal integrity or security* – constitute the scope of violence that is captured by the **PTS**. Violations of physical integrity rights include:

- torture and cruel and unusual treatment and punishment;

- beatings, excessive use of force, brutality;

- rape and sexual violence;

- killings and unlawful use of deadly force;

- summary or extra-judicial executions;

- political assassinations and murder;

- political imprisonment, arbitrary arrest and detention;

- incommunicado and clandestine imprisonment and detention;

- forced disappearances;

- kidnappings, forced relocations and removal;

Not considered are corporal and capital punishment in the context of legal proceedings conforming to international standards. Extra-territorial violations (such as those perpetrated by soldiers abroad) are excluded as well.

Agents of the State

Physical integrity rights violations are only captured *if* they are perpetrated, sanctioned, or ordered by *agents of the state*. Domestic, societal, or criminal violence, or violence ascribed to insurgent groups or criminal syndicates are not considered. Examples of state agents or actors acting on the behest, or on the authority or with implicit consent of agents of the state, include:

- police, law enforcement, guards, and security personnel

- military and paramilitary organizations

- executives and members of executive agencies and bureaucracies

- members of the criminal justice and penal systems (e.g., prison guards)

- intelligence agents

- militias

- death squads

- political parties and their organizations

- mercenaries and private military contractors

- foreign personnel such as peace-keepers supplementing domestic capacity

Identifying agents of the state and distinguishing them from non-state actors is often difficult. Violations that cannot be attributed to state agents are not coded.

Motivations

It is important to note that the **PTS** includes "non-politically motivated violations" of physical integrity rights by state agents. The **PTS** captures any violation of physical integrity rights by state agents, regardless of reasons or motivation for the violation. The assassination of a political challenger, for example, is counted the same way as the killing of a suspected criminal or a random by-stander. General

police brutality, for instance, will be taken into account even in the absence of explicit repressive policies.

As such, it is worth to point out that the **PTS** does not exclusively measure repression. Repression as understood in the literature is the use of violence and intimidation in pursuit of political aims (Tilly, 1978; Goldstein, 1978; Gurr, 1986; Haschke, 2018). The **PTS** captures the use of violence by state agents for any aim – political, personal, or monetary.

Sources

Three separate indicators of *political terror* as defined above are coded – PTS_A, PTS_H, and PTS_S. Each indicator is coded based based on information contained in the annual human rights reports published by Amnesty International (PTS_A), Human Rights Watch (PTS_H), and the US Department of State (PTS_S):

1. Amnesty International: The State of the Worlds' Human Rights (URL: latest report)

2. Human Rights Watch: World Report (URL: latest report)

3. US Department of State: Country Reports on Human Rights Practices (URL: latest report)

Unit of Observation

The unit of observation or unit of analysis of the **PTS**-data project is the *report-year*. The annual publications on human rights conditions published by Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and the US State Department contain a large number of separate reports on human rights practices across countries, territories, and other entities. We treat these constituent reports as our units of observation and code a separate score for each constituent report each year.

Our unit of observation is technically the *report-year* as opposed to the *country-year,* as each reporting agency publishes reports on some entity that does not constitute a 'country.' (We define 'country' as a full United Nations member state.) Human Rights Watch, for example, publishes a constituent report for the European Union. Amnesty International and the State Department report on the Occupied Territories or the State of Palestine. Other non-country reports include Puerto Rico, Taiwan, or Western Sahara.

Scaling

Political terror, is measured on a 5-point ordinal scale. At least two experienced coders are assigned to read and code any given report for a given year and task to assign a score between one and five.[1]

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[1]Each person codes separately and then scores are compared. In approximately 80% of the cases, the coders' scores match. However, when there are differences, disagreement is resolved in an informal discussion between coders. If, after determining how a particular score was assigned, discrepancies cannot be resolved, a third coder serves as the tie-breaker.

The coding scheme was adopted and loosely based on a scale published by Freedom House in its 1980 yearbook (see Table 1).

Table 1: Political Terror Scales – Coding Scheme

Level 1	Countries under a secure rule of law, people are not imprisoned for their views, and torture is rare or exceptional. Political murders are extremely rare.
Level 2	There is a limited amount of imprisonment for nonviolent political activity. However, few persons are affected, torture and beatings are exceptional. Political murder is rare.
Level 3	There is extensive political imprisonment, or a recent history of such imprisonment. Execution or other political murders and brutality may be common. Unlimited detention, with or without a trial, for political views is accepted.
Level 4	Civil and political rights violations have expanded to large numbers of the population. Murders, disappearances, and torture are a common part of life. In spite of its generality, on this level terror affects primarily those who interest themselves in politics or ideas.
Level 5	The terrors of Level 4 have been extended to the whole population. The leaders of these societies place no limits on the means or thoroughness with which they pursue personal or ideological goals.

Adapted from Gastil (1980)

Based on the evidence found in reports only, coders are asked to assign scores such that a score of 5 indicates the maximum or highest level or *political terror* and a score of 1 the minimum. A score of 3 ought to imply fewer violations (or less *political terror*) than a report coded 4. In addition, coders must only consider evidence found in the reports and are instructed to ignore their own knowledge, biases, and feelings about a country (or other entity) under consideration. Coders are also asked to give the country (or entity) covered in the report the benefit of the doubt. Thus, if a coder thinks that a report could be scored as either a 2 or a 3, the report is to receive the lower score. Finally, when coding reports, coders are asked to consider three dimensions of 'political terror' – its *scope*, its *intensity*, and its *range* (Wood and Gibney, 2010).

Scope, Intensity, and Range

Scope pertains to the type of violence that is described in a given report (e.g., arbitrary arrest, rape, killings). Coders are asked to count an instance of a more severe type of violation (e.g., an extra-judicial killing) more heavily than a less severe one (e.g., an instance of excessive use of force, an arbitrary arrest). *Intensity* refers to the frequency with which violations occur (e.g., isolated and rare instances, common or routine practice). Coders are asked to weigh evidence of multiple violations (e.g., mass arrests) more heavily than a single instance. Similarly, rare or isolated events are to be considered

less, compared with reports of systematic abuse. Finally, *range* is the proportion of the population subjected to abuse (e.g., targeted and selective violence, indiscriminate abuse). Coders are expected to assign worse or higher scores if violence is indiscriminate (e.g., affecting the whole country, the entire population) rather than selective (e.g., targeting select members of a particular group).

General and ID Variables

Country

Name of country or entity covered in human rights reports. In most cases names refer to independent states. Technically, the unit of analysis of the **PTS** data is the *report-year* and not the *country-year*. As such, some entities covered are not independent states or UN members. Potentially controversial examples of "non-states" covered include: Western Sahara, Taiwan, Kosovo, the Occupied Territories, Gaza, the European Union, and Puerto Rico.

Country_OLD

Name of country or entity covered in human rights reports as used in previous data releases.

Year

Year of observation. Note that this is not the year of publication but the year of events covered in reports. For example, the "World Report 2016" published by Human Rights Watch in 2016 covers events that took place in 2015.

COW_Code_A

The Correlates of War Project (CoW) alphabetic country codes. Details can be found here: http://www.correlatesofwar.org/data-sets/cow-country-codes.

COW_Code_N

The Correlates of War Project (CoW) numeric country codes.

WordBank_Code_A

World Bank three letter country codes (ISO 3166-1 alpha-3). Details can be found here: http://data.worldbank.org/developers/api-overview/country-queries.

UN_Code_N

United Nation three digit numeric country codes (ISO 3166-1 numeric-3). Details can be found here: http://unstats .un.org/unsd/methods/m49/m49alpha.htm.

Region

OECD region identifier.

- eap – East Asia and Pacific

- eca – Europe and Central Asia

- lac – Latin America and Caribbean

- mena – Middle East and North Africa

- na – North America

- sa – South Asia

- ssa – Sub-Saharan Africa

PTS Variables

PTS_A   PTS: Amnesty International (PTS-A)

PTS-scores based on information contained in Amnesty International's annual human rights reports. Reports are scored on a 5-point scale. Higher scores indicate higher levels of abuse, *political terror*, or physical integrity rights violations than lower scores. 'NAs' imply missing values.

PTS_H   PTS: Human Rights Watch (PTS-H)

PTS-scores based on information contained in annual human rights reports published by Human Rights Watch. Reports are scored on a 5-point scale. Higher scores indicate higher levels of abuse, *political terror*, or physical integrity rights violations than lower scores. 'NAs' imply missing values.

PTS_S   PTS: State Department (PTS-S)

PTS-scores based on information contained in the annual human rights reports produced by the US Department of State. Reports are scored on a 5-point scale. Higher scores indicate higher levels of

abuse, *political terror*, or physical integrity rights violations than lower scores. `'NAs'` imply missing values.

New PTS Variables

NA_Status_A, NA_Status_H, and NA_Status_S

Three new indicators have been added to the to our regular **PTS** release: `NA_Status_A`, `NA_Status_H`, and `NA_Status_S`. Each variable corresponds to its respective **PTS** counterpart (i.e.`PTS_A`, `PTS_H`, and `PTS_S`). The variables provide information concerning missingness (i.e. 'NA' values) in the respective **PTS** variable. The `NA_Status` variables can take on the values: 0, 66, 77, 88, or 99.

0   The value of '0' is assigned for instances where the respective human rights report was available and has been coded. For example, `NA_Status_A` will be 0 for Sri Lanka 2016 if Amnesty International published a 2016 report for Sri Lanka and a `PTS_A` score has been coded.

99   We assigned the value '99' for units that exist (i.e., they are full United Nations member states), a human rights report was published but no **PTS** score was assigned. U.S. State Department reports for 'micro-states' such as Andorra or Liechtenstein fall into this category. The countries exist, a report was published but the reports were never coded and a `PTS_S` score was not assigned. As such, the `NA_Status_S` for Andorra and Liechtenstein takes on the value '99' for years.

88   The value of '88' is assigned for units that exist (i.e., they are full United Nations member states) but no report was published and as such no **PTS** score could be assigned. `NA_Status_S`, for example, is always coded as '88' for the United States (a full United Nations member state) because no State Department human rights reports are published for the United States and `PTS_S` is missing ('NA') for all years.

77   The `NA_Status` variables are coded '77' for units that no-longer exist, or do not exist yet. For example, `PTS_S` is missing ('NA') for the South Sudan from 1976 through 2010 because South Sudan only became a full United Nations member in 2011. As such, no reports on human rights practices were published before 2011 and **PTS** scores are missing. Similarly, `NA_Status` is coded '77' for the Soviet Union since 1992.

66   Finally, the value '66' is reserved for missing **PTS** scores due to missing reports for non-United Nations members, such as sub-national, supra-national, or non-state entities. Human Rights watch publishes reports for the European Union whereas neither Amnesty International nor the State Department does. Because of this `PTS_A` and `PTS_S` are missing for the European Union and `NA_Status_A` and `NA_Status_S` take on the value '66.' Other examples of non-United Nations member state entities that are subject of occasional human rights reports include Puerto Rico, Western Sahara, Taiwan, Palestine, Gaza, as well as Hamas.

Index of Variables:

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