

Bias Check Codebook

Context and Background:

MLP collects lots of news data from various national news sources across countries. Bias is checked for all our sources at a three-month frequency due to a) Frequent changes in coverage of sources, and b) Changes in ownership of sources. When we forecast, it's essential to track our accuracy for reporting purposes. Weighting helps to enhance the accuracy of MLP civic space forecasting. The bias check exercise primarily assists in assigning weights during the forecasting stage of the MLP pipeline. This is achieved by evaluating the level of independence of all media sources for a country and their respective volumes. If the majority of articles for a country originate from independent sources, then there is no need to assign weight.

Task:

1. To assess and report the bias of the media sources we are currently scraping.
2. To formulate a standardized and formal process to assess bias.

Bias Categories and Coding Guide:

1. Ideology:
 - Political Ideology of the source
 - Coded as: 1. Right, 2. Right-centre, 3. Centre, 4. Left-centre, 5. Left
2. Independence vs Pro-regime:
 - Whether the source operates as a regime mouthpiece, exhibits a bias in favour of political actors, or maintains independence (whether investigative or neutral). It's possible for a source to align with a certain ideology without being under the influence of specific entities such as political parties, government, or oligarchs.
 - Coded as: 1. Pro-regime, 2. Opposition, or 3. Independent.
3. Government Owned:
 - Code as 1 if the source is partially or completely owned by the country's government, and 0 otherwise.

Process:

1. Start by checking the information about a country's newspapers provided in the sources listed in the appendix (e.g., BBC or RSF) to assess and record the bias of each newspaper.
2. If step 1 does not help you will need to dive deeper. Search for country-specific analyses of the local media, reports on media ownership, etc.
3. If steps 1 and 2 do not help: Do a subjective quick review of news reported on the website to get some sense of bias.
4. If steps 1, 2, and 3 are not successful: Report as unable to assess independence.

Appendix

Helpful sources:

- BBC Media Guide country profile: search the web for Country Name BBC Media Guide
- RSF- Reporters Without Borders country profile: <https://rsf.org/en>
- World Newspapers country profile: <https://www.world-newspapers.com/countries>
- Freedom House: <https://freedomhouse.org/countries/freedom-world/scores>
- Other country and region specific helpful sources are available in the Bias check sheet

Bias Sheet:

- <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/15Y24C9kEakEJ3x3viouPeJHbK2RMQzxbY9Rk5gTPCqk/edit#gid=1778450964>