The SPEED Project's Societal Stability Protocol: An Overview

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ABSTRACT

This document provides an introduction to, and an overview of, the SPEED Project's Societal Stability Protocol (SSP). The SSP's aim is to generate event data that will advance our understanding of civil strife in the post-WWII era. The SSP's focus is on human-initiated destabilizing events, which are defined as *happenings that unsettle the routines and expectations of citizens, cause them to be fearful, and raise their anxiety about the future.* The SSP's destabilizing event ontology contains four Tier 1 categories (political expression events, politically motivated attacks, and disruptive state acts). Because of the enormous variations that exist across and within these broad categories, advancing our understanding of civil strife requires a good deal of event-specific information (who, what, where, when, how, why, etc.). The SSP was created to collect this information and the purpose of this paper is to provide an overview of its design and structure.

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extraction process, and introduces some key terms (primary events, secondary events, related events, focal events, recapitulation codings, disinterested news accounts, referent events, multiple-event news reports, etc.). 6
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The SPEED Project's Societal Stability Protocol: An Overview

Executive Summary

This document provides an introduction to, and an overview of, the SPEED Project's Societal Stability Protocol (SSP). SSP's aim is to generate event data to advance our understanding of civil strife for 165 countries in the Post WWII era. Correspondingly, the unit of analysis in the SSP is the event, which is defined as a happening that occurs in a specific place at a specific time or time frame. The focus of the SSP is on human-initiated destabilizing events, which are defined as *happenings that unsettle the routines and expectations of citizens, cause them to be fearful, and raise their anxiety about the future.* In order to advance our understanding of civil strife using event data it is important to: (1) focus on an encompassing and well-defined set of destabilizing behaviors;[1] (2) assemble comprehensive sources of information on them;[2] and (3) develop robust procedures for identifying documents with information on relevant events.[3] But equally important is the type of event-specific data collected, which is the focus here.[4]

Destabilizing events vary enormously in terms of what they involve (speech, symbols, coercion, lethal force, etc.), who is involved (type of initiator, target, or victim), when and where they occur (date, city, country, etc.), the type of impact they have on individuals and communities (killed, injured, arrested, quarantined, etc.), their origins (anti-government sentiments, socio-cultural animosities, socio-economic concerns, etc.), and their relationship to other destabilizing events. All of these event-specific factors affect the capacity of destabilizing events to disrupt routines and expectations, cause fear, and generate anxiety. Extracting information on these matters in a way that enables rigorous empirical analysis involves transforming unstructured data (i.e., textual information embedded in news reports) into quantitative event data.[5] Compounding the challenges involved in this transformation is the fact that the textual information varies enormously in terms of quality, comprehensiveness, semantic structure, etc., across news reports and event types. To cope with the challenges involved in extracting event-specific information, SPEED personnel: (1) developed a protocol to structure and guide the data generation process, and (2) the created a technology-intensive operating

[1] The SSP's destabilizing event ontology is introduced below. It is developed more fully at: http://www.clinecenter.illinois.edu/research/publications/SPEED-Definitions_of_Destabilizing_Events.pdf

[2] Information on SPEED's global news archive can be found at: http://www.clinecenter.illinois.edu/research/publications/SPEED-Comparison_With_Other_Projects.pdf

[3] A description and assessment of SPEED's automatic text categorization system can be found at: http://www.clinecenter.illinois.edu/research/publications/SPEED-BIN.pdf

[4] An analysis of the quality and reliability of SSP data can be found at: http://www.clinecenter.illinois.edu/research/publications/SPEED-Reliability.pdf

[5] A broad overview of the challenges in dealing with unstructured data, and SPEED's approach to dealing with them can be found in Nardulli, Peter F., Scott L. Althaus, and Matthew Hayes, "A Progressive Supervised-learning Approach to Generating Rich Civil Strife Data (under review). A more concrete discussion can be found at: http://www.clinecenter.illinois.edu/research/publications/SPEED-Transforming_Textual_Information.pdf

system (**EXTRACT**) to help implement the protocol.[6] Designing a protocol to meet the information needs of the SSP required an iterative, multi-year process. The final iteration is organized in eleven main sections.

Sections One through Three: Housekeeping Matters
The first three sections deal with technical matters that allow operators to employ utilities embedded within **EXTRACT** to do such things as direct non-codeable news reports to a trash bin, activate an annotation tool to highlight relevant events, and capture information on the source of the news report (New York Times, Summary of World Broadcasts, Foreign Broadcast Information Service, news website downloads, etc.).

Section Four: Type of Coding
This section generates data on the type of event record being created by **EXTRACT**. Most are simply event records for destabilizing events. But some are codings of recapitulation passages, which "bundle" information of multiple events, and must be distinguished from codings of individual events. This section also allows operators to indicate that the destabilizing event being coded is a post-hoc reaction to a prior event and, if so, if it had direct consequences for the initiators of that prior event.

Section Five: Spatial and Temporal Information
Section five captures information on *where* and *when* the destabilizing event occurred. It is organized into three subsections: geospatial data, geophysical setting, and date information. The geospatial data section captures: (1) information on whether the event occurred at a pinpoint location (e.g., city) or if it affected a whole country, region, etc. (as would declaring a state of emergency or executing a coup), and (2) a range of geographic data (from latitude and longitude to the names of the city, province, region, country). The geophysical setting section captures information on the type of physical setting in which the event occurred (road, bridge, private residence, religious site, government facility, etc.). Information on when an event occurred is reported in a variety of ways in news reports. This section requires that operators specify the type of information available and/or applicable ("precise single day" date; "precise multi-day" data; "estimated single day" date; and "estimated multi-day" date). Selecting one of these options activates follow-up questions that capture appropriate date information (day, month, and year) as precisely as the news report allows.

Section Six: The Domain Ontology
This section is designed to collect information on the type of the destabilizing event (i.e., *what* happened). There are four Tier 1 categories in the SSP domain ontology (political expression events, political attacks, and disruptive state acts). Selecting one of these options will activate follow-up questions that elicit additional information on the type of destabilizing event being processed.

[6] The use of a technologically enhanced operating system is important because the extraction of event-specific information in the SSP requires the generation of geo-spatial data, dates, proper names, the group affiliations of actors, etc. More information on **EXTRACT** can be found at:
http://www.clinecenter.illinois.edu/research/publications/SPEED-Comparison_With_Other_Projects.pdf

Section Seven: Initiators, Messengers, Rioters, and Reactors
Section seven captures information on the initiators of destabilizing events (i.e., *who* did it). If the initiators are known, operators are prompted to respond to seven question sets. The first four ask for basic information: name, the type of initiator (non-governmental actor, governmental actor), initiator socio-political traits, whether an initiator was from another country, and whether the initiators "claimed credit" for the act. The next three question sets pertain to the resources available to the initiators: the number of initiators, the weapons used, and evidence of foreign support. If evidence of foreign support exists, operators identify the type and source of that support (e.g. military aid from Nicaragua).

Section Eight: Post Hoc Reactions
This section captures information on post hoc reactions to a destabilizing event that have direct consequences for its initiators; it is activated by the responses provided to questions in Section Four. The consequences for the initiator can be negative (arrested, reprimanded, killed, etc.) or positive (assumed political power, achieved objectives, etc.).

Section Nine: Targets and Effects
This section captures information on: (1) the targets of those who initiated the act; (2) the entities that were affected by the act; and (3) the effects (injuries, damages, number of people affected, etc.) of the act (i.e., *what* happened to *whom*). As is the case with initiators, socio-political characteristics of the targets and victims is collected, along with detailed information on the event's effects (e.g., the number arrested, dispersed, injured, killed, etc.)

Section Ten: Event Origins
This section captures information on the attributed origins of the destabilizing event (i.e., *why* the event happened). The types of events captured by the SSP do not occur in a vacuum. Most are rooted in *something*. The SSP's pretest identified the most common origins of destabilizing events (governance matters, socio-cultural animosities, desire for political power, retribution, security threats, etc.) Operators are asked to use information in the news report to identify event origins at a Tier 1 and Tier 2 level, which yields relatively specific information (e.g., the behavior of specific government leaders, ethnic/religious cleavages, desire for political autonomy, etc.).

Section Eleven: Multiple Event Coding
The final section allows operators to code more than one destabilizing event from the same news report. If operators indicate that the news report has more than one destabilizing event, **EXTRACT** provides a new screen (with the same news report being displayed) that will permit the generation of a new event record. This utility can accommodate up to twenty additional events. This section also allows operators to indicate that one or more of the events are related to other events in the article. If related events exist, the operators utilize the **LINK** module in **EXTRACT** to create electronic "links" between the event records.

The SPEED Project's Societal Stability Protocol: An Overview

Introduction

This document provides an overview of the Societal Stability Protocol (SSP). The SSP embodies carefully organized and highly pretested question sets that structure the human extraction of information on destabilizing events from digitized news reports; it was developed as part of the Social, Political, and Economic Event Database (SPEED) project. Destabilizing events are one of a number of event types that are of interest to SPEED's parent project, the Societal Infrastructures and Development (SID) project, which is concerned with the role of institutions in societal development. The aim of the SSP is to provide the empirical basis for advancing our understanding of societal stability for 165 countries in the post-WWII era. While stability is generally connoted by a lack of unsettling occurrences, the SSP is concerned with destabilizing events. Destabilizing events are defined as *happenings that unsettle the routines and expectations of citizens, cause them to be fearful, and raise their anxiety about the future*. These happenings can be initiated by human actors (private, state) or natural forces; the SSP focuses on human-initiated events not involving international conflicts (i.e., civil strife).

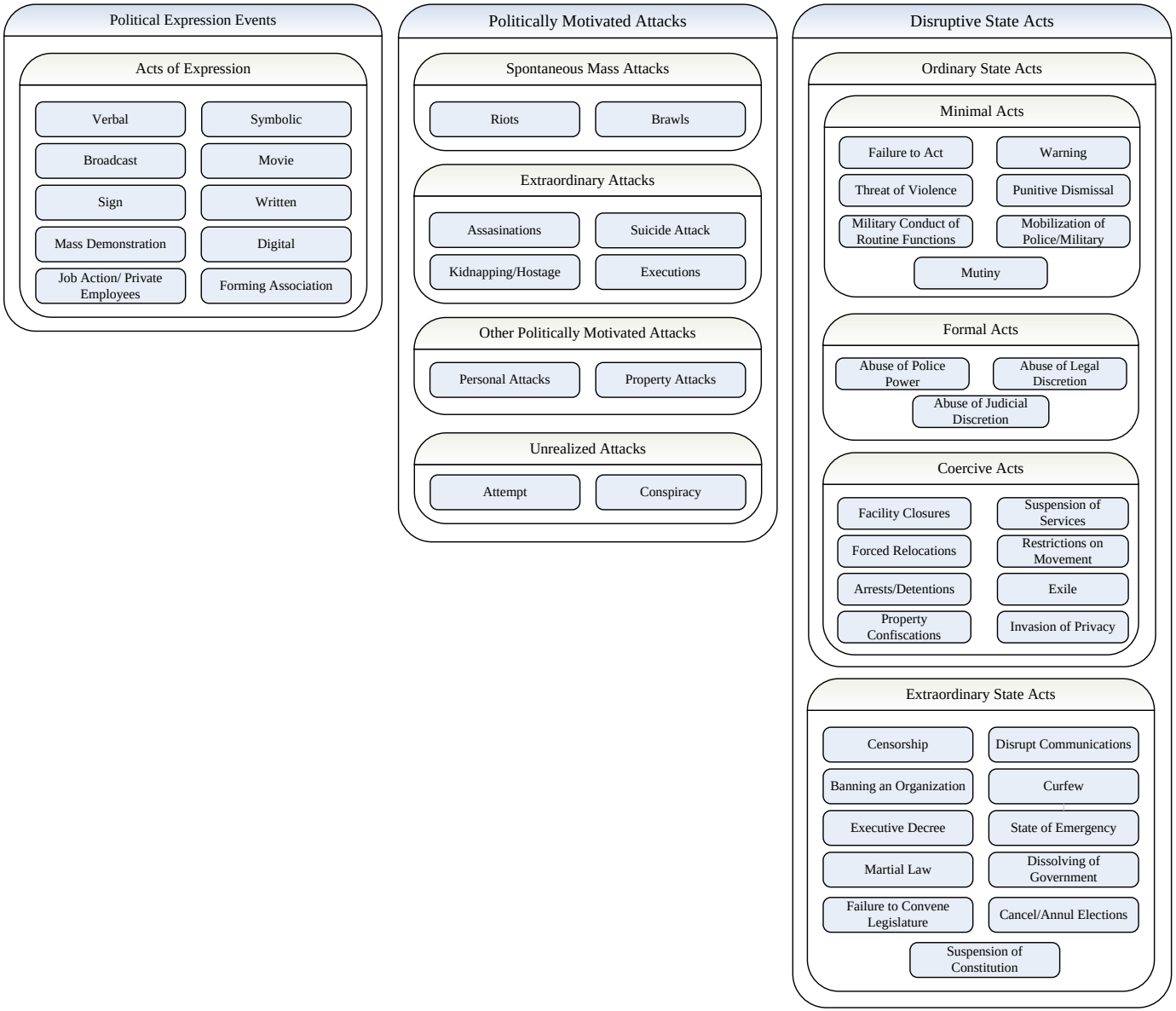
The disruptive effects of fear and anxiety join with the uncertainty they create to undermine the ordinary functioning of governments, beneficial economic interactions, and normal social intercourse. As a result, societal development is unable to proceed in an orderly and cumulative fashion. The type of events that can generate these disruptive effects include: (1) relatively rare, high-profile happenings (a coup, an assassination, major demonstrations, etc.); and (2) more routine, small-bore events (pickets, sit-ins, armed attacks, government harassment, etc.). The latter are important because they are often precursors to more disruptive events. Reviews of prior research and extensive pretesting led to the creation of hierarchical domain ontology for destabilizing events; it has three Tier 1 categories: political expression events, politically motivated attacks, and disruptive state acts (see Figure 1).

This document is composed of two sections: the first provides a brief overview of the SSP; the second provides a detailed discussion of the question sets embedded within it. To better understand the event data generated by the SSP, this document should be read in conjunction with a scholarly overview[7] and another SPEED white paper, *Transforming "Unstructured" Textual Data into Quantitative Event Data within SPEED*.[8] The former document outlines the approach used within SPEED; the latter document addresses some of the issues and challenges involved in moving from unstructured data embedded in news reports to the creation of event data. It also defines what is meant by an "event," discusses the scope of the information extraction process (what is coded, what is not), explains the basic outputs generated by **EXTRACT**, the operating system that runs SPEED's protocols and facilitates the information

[7] Nardulli, Peter F., Scott L. Althaus, and Matthew Hayes, "A Progressive Supervised-learning Approach to Generating Rich Civil Strife Data (under review).

[8] This white paper can be accessed at: http://www.clinecenter.illinois.edu/research/publications/SPEED-Transforming_Textual_Information.pdf.

Figure 1
Societal Stability Event Ontology



extraction process,[9] and introduces some key terms (primary events, secondary events, related events, focal events, recapitulation codings, disinterested news accounts, referent events, multiple-event news reports, etc.).

The Organization of the Societal Stability Protocol

The SSP contains several hundred queries nested within a series of question sets that are organized within one of eleven main sections. The overwhelming majority of these questions are relevant to only subsets of events (e.g., political expression events, political attacks, disruptive state acts, etc.) or event attributes (events involving weapons, injuries, state actors, etc.). Thus, all but ten of the SSP queries are response-activated; that is, the queries are only visible to the coder when a response to an earlier question indicates they are relevant. Thus, coders do not have to respond to a question about weapon type if they previously indicated that no weapon was present. Moreover, because some options are so rare extensive use is also made of pre-coded default options in order to enhance efficiency and reliability; coder need only to complete the item when the default option does not pertain. These default options are valuable because **EXTRACT** does not allow a record to be created until all queries are completed.

The SSP's first three sections deal with housekeeping matters. Section One is for dispensing with non-codeable news reports; it provides four options for operators to redirect a news report electronically (i.e., not direct it into the SSP database).[10] Section Two is used by operators to activate an annotation tool that is used to highlight events in the article. Annotating relevant events is the first step in transforming information in a news report into an event-focused coding; the annotations are also essential for implementing the **LINK** module. Section Three captures source information (NYT, SWB, FBIS, etc.), calculates the word count, records the page number upon which the article appeared (where relevant), and assigns the event coding a unique event identification number. This section is completed by **EXTRACT**; no human actions are required.

Section Four contains question sets that allow operators to indicate the type of coding that is being generated (an event coding or a recapitulation coding). Section Five includes information on when and where the event occurred. To facilitate the extraction of this information **EXTRACT** has both a module that returns geospatial information (**GEOCODER**) and a calendar module (**CALENDAR**). Operators need only click on dates and locales provided by **EXTRACT** to capture

[9] More information on **EXTRACT** can be found at: http://www.clinecenter.illinois.edu/research/publications/SPEED-Comparison_With_Other_Projects.pdf.

[10] The first option is for the rare news reports that are totally illegible due to OCR error. These are redirected using the "Corrupt" option. The second option is for redirecting news reports that SPEED's BIN system mistakenly categorized as being relevant to the SSP (i.e., false positives). These are redirected using the "Irrelevant" option. The third option is for news reports that provide background information relevant to understanding periods of instability in a particular locale, country, or region of the world. These reports tend to be longer than most news reports and they may, or may not, have information on specific destabilizing events. In either case these news reports are identified by selecting the "Background" option. If these reports contain information on specific destabilizing events they should also be coded as any other event. The fourth option is for exceptionally challenging event reports that raise issues that need to be discussed with a supervisor before being coded. Using the "Skip" option, along with a note outlining the issues or problems, redirects the report to a queue so that it can be reviewed by a supervisor.

this information uniformly and efficiently. This section also captures information on the event's geophysical setting (i.e., an isolated area, a marketplace, a medical facility, etc.).

Section Six contains a question set that embodies the domain ontology for destabilizing events (see Figure 1). Like most domain ontologies, this one is organized hierarchically; each Tier 1 category has Tier 2 and Tier 3 categories. In addition to being a substantively important component of the protocol, this is a key section from an operational perspective. The selection of a destabilizing event type will activate later question sets in the protocol, many of which extract information that is relevant only to certain types of events. Section Seven contains a series of questions on the initiators of the destabilizing event. These queries deal with such things as the identity of the initiator, the type and number of initiators, social group affiliations (where relevant), the involvement of foreign actors, and weapons used by the initiators. The eighth section pertains to post hoc reactions that have direct consequences for the initiators. Section Nine includes a set of queries about the targets of the destabilizing actions, the entities actually affected by the act, and the type of effects (injuries, damages, number of people affected, etc.) that resulted from it. Section Ten pertains to the event's origins (anti-government sentiments, socio-cultural animosities, desire for political rights, etc.). The final section deals with coding multiple event articles; it also activates the **LINK** module.

Structure of the Key Societal Stability Question Sets

As the first three sections of the SSP deal largely with administrative matters (i.e., uncodeable news reports, annotation colors, and information sources), little more needs to be said about them. It is important, however, to provide a more detailed overview of the protocol's substantive sections; these overviews are provided in the following subsections. They are accompanied by flow charts that outline the key question sets and provide a clearer picture of the flow of the information extraction process.

Section Four: Type of Coding

This section is designed to provide **EXTRACT** with information on the type of coding being created. The first question set asks whether the destabilizing event being coded is a reaction to an earlier event. The default option is "No." If operators select "Yes" to indicate the coding of a post hoc reaction, another query it activated: it asks whether the post hoc reaction had direct consequences for the initiators of the earlier event. If operators respond "Yes," a question set will be activated that asks for more information on the consequences. More details on the question sets activated are provided in the Section Eight, Post Hoc Consequences for the Initiator.

The second question set in this section asks whether the record being created captures information from a recapitulation passage. The default option is "No." If operators select "Yes" to indicate the coding of a recapitulation, **EXTRACT** will activate the remainder of the protocol, just as it would with the coding of a specific event. Designating a coding as a recapitulation is important because data analysts must handle recapitulation codings differently from codings of individual events. Figure 2 outlines the organization of this section.

Section Five: Spatial and Temporal Information

This section captures information on where and when the destabilizing event (or post-hoc reaction) occurred. It is organized within three sections: geospatial data, geophysical setting, and date information.

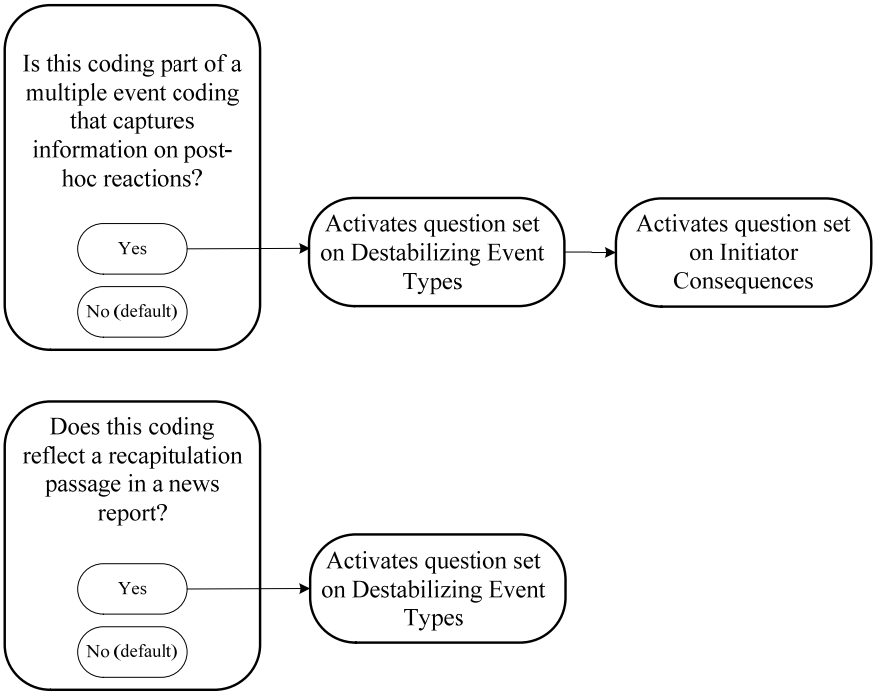
Geospatial Data -The first query here asks if the event occurred at a specific locale (i.e., city, province, nation, etc.). If operators respond "Yes" the **GEOCODER** module will assist them in specifying relevant "pinpoint" geospatial information (from latitude and longitude to city, province and nation). They are then prompted to provide some general geographic information about the location of the event, using one (or both) of two geographic list sets: the Other Locales and/or the Wide Area list set. The Other Locales list set is outlined below; it captures unconventional event locations that are impossible to associate with a geographic pinpoint.

- National airspace
- National waters
- International airspace
- International waters
- International border
- Mountainous area

The Wide Area list set is for events that unfold across a broad swath of territory, or for situations in which only vague geographic information is available: the options are: North, South, East, West, and Central. It can be used in conjunction with the **GEOCODER** module to provide more precise geographic information. If, for example, the news report indicates that an event unfolded in "northern Texas" the **GEOCODER** can be used to indicate that the country is the USA and the province/state is Texas. Then the Wide Area list set can be used to indicate that it occurred in northern Texas. The Wide Area designation pertains to the smallest geographic unit specified by the **GEOCODER**.

Geophysical Setting - The geophysical setting refers to the type of physical setting where the event occurred; the list set is composed of twenty-four options organized within seven cognates. The options are not mutually exclusive and operators are encouraged to choose more than one if it can enhance the clarity of the setting. The first cognate has to do with the density of the area in which the event occurred; the second includes a set of geospatial markers (bridge, tunnel, international border, checkpoint, harbor, etc.). The next cognate includes everyday settings where large numbers of citizens are likely to be found (residences, shopping areas, hotels, etc.). The fourth cognate includes more specialized settings where groups of citizens are likely to be gathered (hospitals, religious facilities, schools, parks, etc.). The fifth cognate includes government-related sites. The last cognate is for events that transpire in the air or water. The list set is as follows:

Figure 2
Flow Chart for Question Set in Section on "Coding Type"



- Whole country
- Sparsely populated area
- Densely populated area

- International border
- Road
- Checkpoint
- Bridge/tunnel
- Railway
- Harbor

- Residential property
- Shopping area; market place
- Hotel

- Railway/bus station
- Airport
- Factory/industrial property
- Office

- Religious site
- Hospital/medical site
- School/university
- Recreational site
- Monument

- Government facility
- Polling place
- Embassy/consulate
- Military facility
- Rebel stronghold

- In the air
- On water

- Unspecified
- Other

Date Information - This question set is designed to capture information on the date of the event. Because some events span multiple days and not all news reports have precise information on dates, the first query here asks operators to specify the type of temporal situation involved in the event being coded. Operators are asked to choose from one of four alternatives: Precise Single Day; Precise Multi Day; Estimated Single Day; Estimated Multi Day. The selection of one of these options will activate appropriate follow-up questions that will allow operators to specify the date information (day, month, and year) as precisely as the news report allows (i.e., precise dates or ranges; estimated date ranges). Moreover, the **CALENDAR** module will assist operators in specifying dates. It provides operators with a year-specific calendar; selecting specific days in the calendar will automatically enter the date information. This is particularly useful in handling situations in which the news reports use references such as "last Thursday" to indicate dates. The Spatial and Temporal information question set is outlined in Figure 3.

Section Six: The Domain Ontology

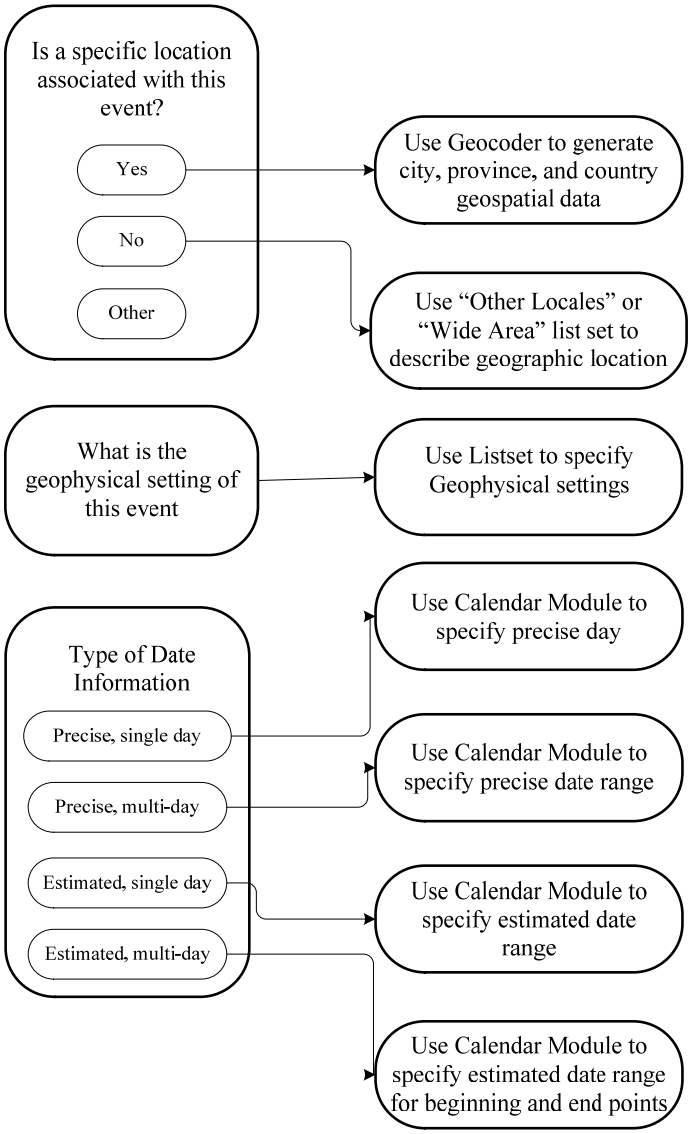
The function of this section is to capture information on the characteristics of the destabilizing event that is the focal event of the coding. As noted earlier, there are four Tier 1 categories in the SSP domain ontology (political expression events, political attacks, disruptive state acts, and political power transfers). The list set is as follows:

- Political expression event
- Politically motivated attack

- Disruptive state act

Selecting one of these options will activate follow-up questions that elicit additional information on the type of destabilizing event being processed. List sets for Tier 2, Tier 3 and

Figure 3
Flow Chart for Question Sets in Section on
"Geospatial and Temporal Information"



and Tier 4, event categorizations are provided to capture this information; Figure 1 provides an overview of just the first two tiers of the SSP ontology. A more extensive discussion of the types

of events included within this ontology is provided in *Definitions of Destabilizing Events in SPEED*[11]. The following subsections provide an introduction to the three Tier 1 event types.

Political Expression Events - Political expression events are defined as *the public articulation, by non-governmental actors, of threatening or unwelcome political messages*. Embedded in this definition are four criteria that must be met before a happening can be properly categorized as a political expression event. These criteria deal with both the message and the messenger. The event must: (1) involve a *public articulation*; (2) the public articulation must convey a *political message*; (3) the political message must be *threatening or unwelcome*; and (4) the messenger must be a non-governmental actor, or a governmental official acting in his/her private capacity.

Private thoughts, no matter how disturbing, do not meet the first criterion; until they are articulated they cannot have disquieting effects on others. To meet the second criterion the messages articulated must address political matters; if they do not address political matters then they do not embody *political* messages. Political matters, however, are defined broadly; in addition to the conduct of public affairs, they include messages about the make-up of the social system, the structure and operation of the economic system, and cultural mores that bear on how individuals live their lives (religion, family life, community life, sexual mores, etc.). To meet the third criterion, the articulated political messages must be "unwelcome." Examples of political messages that do not meet this criterion include: a tribute to a nation's "Dear Leader," posting a sign that welcomes a visiting dignitary, and a rally to support a president who has just been inaugurated. Certain types of public expressions by government officials acting in their official capacity can qualify as a destabilizing event, but not as a political expression event.[12]

These are several *modes of expression* that individuals and groups can use to convey unwelcome political messages. These include: (1) *verbal statements* (speeches, interviews, announcements); (2) *broadcasts* (political commentaries, political satire, news conferences); (3) *movies, documentaries, plays, etc.* (movies about socially taboo topics, plays that mock the nation's rulers, performances that indict the nation's morality); (4) *signs* (placards, bill boards, political cartoons); (5) *written statements* (books, pamphlets, press releases, letters to parishioners or supporters, editorials, cartoons); (6) *digital transmissions* (e-mails, website postings); (7) *mass demonstrations* (rallies, marches, protests); (8) *job actions* (strikes, pickets); (9) *association creations* (political party, gay rights association, protest group); and (10) *symbolic expressions* (sit-in, self-imposed exile, self-inflicted injury). These ten modes constitute the Tier 2 categories for political expression events. The list set for these events, including a set of Tier 3 categories for symbolic expressions, is listed below.

- Verbal statements
- Broadcasts
- Movies, documentaries, plays, etc.
- Signs

[11] This document can be accessed at: http://www.clinecenter.illinois.edu/research/publications/SPEED-Definitions_of_Destabilizing_Events.pdf

[12] Qualifying statements by public officials are captured under the "minimal acts" section of the "disruptive state acts" category, as discussed below.

- Writings
- Digital transmissions
- Mass demonstrations
- Job actions
- Creating an association
- Symbolic expressions
    - Passive resistance (sit-in, etc.)
    - Praying
    - Boycott
    - Blocking traffic, egress, regress
    - Withholding something due another
    - Disrespecting national symbols
    - Symbolic burning
    - Symbolic throwing
    - Symbolic wearing
    - Symbolic walkout
    - Return of an exiled leader
    - Self-inflicted harm
    - Voluntary resignation, self-exile
    - Defection

The categories of expression outlined above are useful because they can help differentiate among seeming similar political expression events; they can also help in understanding different reactions to those events. Also useful in differentiating among political expression events, and third-party reactions to them, are the "tactics advocated" in those expressions. Thus, a "tactics" question set is included in this section; it asks about the type of tactics that political messengers are advocating. Operators can choose from the following list set, which is organized within five cognate groups:

- Civil disobedience
- Symbolic acts
- Disrespect to national symbols

- Demonstration, march, mass gathering
- Strike, work slowdown, walkout, etc.
- Picket targeted location(s)
- Boycott
- Blocking traffic, building egress/regress

- Lobbying, pressure tactics
- Vocal information campaign
- Written information campaign

- Trespass on property
- Property damage

- Riot
- Personal violence; armed attack
- Armed revolt against government

Some of these tactics are clearly within the bounds of conventional political expression rights; those that advocate violence or armed revolt are not. Knowing what messengers are advocating or threatening can provide important insights into the level of threat posed by seemingly similar expression events; it can also help in meaningfully comparing government reactions across expression events.

Politically Motivated Attacks - Politically motivated attacks are defined as *physical acts, perpetrated by humans for political reasons, which are intended to damage the person or property of others*. Four criteria must be met before a happening can be properly categorized as a politically motivated attack: (1) there must be a *physical act* involved that is capable of doing harm to people or property; (2) those physical act(s) must be *perpetrated by a human(s)*; (3) the human initiators must *intend for their act to inflict damage on the person or property of others*; and (4) the initiators must have *political reasons* for initiating the act. The events included in this category are distinct from other event categories in the SSP ontology because they involve violence, or the potential for violence, inflicted by humans on *other humans* – or their property or environs.[13] Two types of violent attacks are specifically excluded from this category: (1) garden-variety criminal acts and (2) ordinary acts of war between nations. It should be emphasized that atrocities (rape, mutilation, mass executions, etc.) committed against non-combatants qualify as politically motivated attacks. Even with these exclusions, there are a broad range of events that fall within the politically motivated attack category. The SSP pretest revealed that several attack types account for most of the variation in this category; they are included in the Tier 2 and Tier 3 options depicted in the following list set:

- Spontaneous Mass Attacks
    - Riots
    - Brawls
- Extraordinary Attacks
    - Assassinations
    - Suicides
    - Kidnappings/hostage takings
    - Executions
- Other Politically Motivated Attacks
    - Other politically motivated attacks on humans
    - Other politically motivated attacks on property
- Unrealized Attacks
    - Attempt

[13] Unrealized political attacks involve unsuccessful efforts to damage the person or property of others for political reasons (e.g., would-be political assassins whose conspiracy was detected by the police, suicide bombers whose efforts to detonate her device was thwarted by bystanders who noticed her anxious behavior, etc.).

- Conspiracy

"Spontaneous Mass Attacks" involve situations in which social sparks ignite particularly tense or incendiary situations. For example, a race riot may be ignited in a ghetto teeming with unemployed or underemployed residents by a police shooting. A food riot may result when the government reduces food subsidies. A brawl among teenagers may be the result of insulting remarks made across class, religious or racial lines.

"Extraordinary Attacks" include an egregious subset of attacks that are particularly disruptive to societies. Assassinations of leaders, suicide attacks, kidnappings and executions are particularly noteworthy here. Assassinations are defined as targeted murders of public figures; they are usually labeled as assassinations in news reports. An accidental death of a president would not be an assassination as it is not "targeted." A mob "hit" of a drug competitor would not be an assassination because the drug competitor is not a public figure. Suicide attacks are defined as those in which the death of the assailant is an integral part of the attack plan. Thus, an attacker whose bomb accidentally explodes in route to planting it would not qualify as a suicide attack. Suicide attacks are frequently labeled as such in news account; they are important to isolate for a number of reasons. Suicide attacks underscore the commitment of the perpetrator to a political cause in ways that distinguish them from other attacks. Also, suicide attacks are particularly destabilizing because they are difficult to prevent and underscore the vulnerability of ordinary citizens, or at least some segments of the population. While assassinations target prominent individuals, suicide attacks can affect anyone. Moreover, they often inflict collateral damage that can affect individuals and the property of those in population groups that are not targeted (tourists shopping at a bazaar in a Sunni locale).

Kidnappings, hijackings and hostage-takings are particularly noteworthy for some of the same reasons that distinguish suicide attacks. They induce a sense of vulnerability among ordinary citizens because anyone can be a victim. In addition, kidnappings and hostage-takings frequently linger for an extended period of time and are covered extensively in the news, thereby generating sustained uncertainty and anxiety. Executions involve methodical and deliberate murders that are designed to intimidate others. Thus, they differ considerably from murders involving the explosion of a bomb in the lobby of an office building. What sets executions apart from other political attacks that result in death is the ritualistic nature of the killing.

Most of the politically motivated attacks encountered in news reports will fall in the category labeled "Other Politically Motivated Attacks" This is a residual category in that it includes politically motivated attacks that do not fall within any of the other categories included in the list set. It includes both attacks against persons and property. One gray area that should be mentioned with respect to this category concerns attacks perpetrated by organized crime, gangs, drug cartels, and the like. Often attacks perpetrated by such groups fall do not qualify as "politically motivated." However, there are periods of time in certain locales when these actors purposively create a reign of terror intended to intimidate both citizens and officials in ways that allow them to operate with impunity. An example would be the targeted killings of police officers and their family members by gang members or drug cartels.

"Unrealized Attacks" are attacks that, for one reason or another, are never executed. This notwithstanding, the fact that they were contemplated can have destabilizing effects. Attempts are attacks that were thwarted *at the execution stage*. That is, the bomb did not explode when ignited; security officials discovered the attacker before he shot the target; passers-by disarmed the attacker before she did any damage, etc. In contrast, a conspiracy involves an unrealized attack that was disrupted *in the planning stage* (i.e., before the execution stage). For example, intercepted messages, informants, or wiretaps may have revealed the existence of a plot, resulting in the arrest of the conspirators well before the event was to take place.

Disruptive State Acts - Disruptive state acts are defined as *extraordinary acts of government or the repressive performance of ordinary state tasks – including the failure to perform routine duties*. There are three criteria that must be met before a happening can be properly categorized as a disruptive state act: (1) the *initiator* of the event must be a *government agent*; (2) the governmental actor must be acting within *his/her/its official capacity*; and (3) the actions initiated must involve either: (a) *the invocation of extraordinary governmental power* or (b) *the repressive use of routine state powers*. Extraordinary acts of government (imposing martial law, suspending the constitution, canceling elections, etc.) are actions that are inherently disruptive to the smooth functioning of societal processes and the conduct of normal human interactions. In contrast, the second Tier 2 category involves the repressive use of mundane state powers (regulatory power, police power, dispute resolution, etc.). When these powers are exercised by public servants in a manner consistent with their fiduciary obligations to society, they provide order and stability – which facilitates peaceful and mutually beneficial societal interactions. However, when state actors violate their fiduciary obligations to the public, routine state powers can be transformed into instruments of repression whose coercive effects can be disruptive to the conduct of day to day affairs and undermine core societal processes.

While the most basic criterion for including an event within this category is that the initiator must be an agent of the state acting in their official capacity, there are broad arrays of state activities that can have destabilizing effects. One subset of these activities can be initiated *only* by agents of the state (declaring martial law, arresting dissidents, suspending public services, exiling opponents, etc.); another subset can be initiated by both state and non-state actors: politically motivated attacks. Because these events are captured in the Politically Motivated Attack, *not all destabilizing events initiated by state actors will fall within the "Disruptive State Acts" category*.[14]

The state acts that are captured within the "Disruptive State Acts" category can be classified within one of following Tier 2 and Tier 3 categories:

- Extraordinary state acts
- Routine state acts
    - Minimal acts
    - Formal acts
    - Coercive acts

[14] To handle these types of disruptive state acts otherwise would introduce confusion and duplication. Data on the type of initiator (private actor; state official) is used to treat the events captured in other categories as disruptive state acts.

Extraordinary State Acts - The Tier 3 categories for "Extraordinary State Acts" include eleven options within three cognates. They are as follows:

- Censorship
- Disrupting electronic communications
- Banning or suspension of civil society groups

- Imposition of a curfew
- Extraordinary executive decree
- Declaration of state of emergency
- Imposition of martial law

- Dissolving government
- Failure to convene legislature
- Cancellation/annulment of election
- Suspension of national constitution

The first cognate involves extraordinary governmental interferences with expressive rights and the free flow of information, which are vital to the maintenance of vibrant, open societies. Censorship involves such things as the confiscation of written materials or orders to withhold them; closures of communication facilities (e.g., radio/television stations, newspaper offices); and kindred activities. Disrupting electronic communications includes jamming broadcast frequencies and shutting down, or restricting access to, the internet. The third option involves the banning of civil society groups (political parties, public interest groups, religious organizations, etc.). Outlawing such groups is tantamount to restricting the associational freedom of citizens, which can undermine their ability to act in concert with like-minded citizens to pursue personal and social objectives within both the private and public spheres of life.

The second cognate involves the use of extraordinary state powers that impinge upon the liberties and prerogatives of ordinary citizens (imposing curfews, issuing extraordinary executive decrees, declaring states of emergency, etc.). These actions reach beyond the political sphere of life and constrain the enjoyment of some of the most basic personal and social activities. Imposing a curfew is an extreme act that can be used to isolate and punish targeted population groups. Executive decrees can touch upon a broad array of topics (administrative personnel codes, food and drug regulations, tariff matters, etc.) and most of them are not disruptive. However, a subset of such decrees – those that have effects similar to imposing a state of emergency or martial law (i.e., they restrict civil and political liberties and rights) – qualify as disruptive state acts. Imposing martial law involves the military assuming the dominant role in the performance of governmental tasks, including the maintenance of order and the administration of justice. The imposition of martial law introduces major changes in the status of legal rights and how legal disputes are processed; it also introduces a great deal of uncertainty among those potentially affected by the changes. The use of these various extraordinary powers is normally justified only under dire circumstances; in many cases exercising them is tantamount to suspending the rule of law. Thus, their invocation is inherently disruptive.

The third cognate involves the extraordinary use of executive power in ways that affect the operation of other branches of government. Indirectly, of course, this affects the lives of citizens. This cognate includes dissolving the government, failing to convene the legislature, canceling or annulling elections, and suspending the constitution. Dissolving the government is disruptive because it is an impediment to the normal conduct of governmental affairs, which can generate a great deal of anxiety and uncertainty within a society. Similarly, when the constitution mandates that the executive convene the legislature at a specified time – and the executive fails to exercise that duty – it can have disruptive effects. Such an arrogance of power can lead to questions about the executive's respect for other legal constraints on its authority. Suspending or annulling an election strikes at the core of accountability mechanisms in modern societies. Suspending the constitution is an even more extreme act. It is equivalent to suspending the legal constraints on government and imposing dictatorial rule. All of these actions, though to varying degrees, can have disruptive societal effects.

Routine State Acts - As noted above, this category includes a set of events that belong to a genre of routinely performed state tasks that provide for public order; as such the types of acts that fall within this category are not inherently disruptive. Thus, this category is only used when textual materials in the news report clearly suggest that the event is not a good-faith exercise of state power. As seen above, this category includes three Tier 3 categories: minimal acts, formal acts, and coercive acts. The minimal acts category includes events that do not involve the formal use of state power. The formal category includes official state acts that fall short of direct, physically coercive acts. The last category includes events that invoke the formal use of coercive power, *but fall short of violent attacks*. Each of these Tier 3 categories has a set of Tier 4 options that help elucidate the type of acts that are properly included within them.

The "Minimal Acts" category includes eight Tier 4 options grouped within three cognates. The first is a "latent state act" cognate. It includes the failure to discharge state responsibilities; warnings about imminent formal state actions; and threats to use violence. The second is a "job action" cognate; it includes punitive dismissals of government employees as well as related punitive actions. The third is an "ominous state action" cognate; it includes the assembly of coercive forces and the military conduct of routine governmental tasks. These options are listed below, by cognate.

- Failure to act
- Warning of formal/coercive action
- Threat to use violence

- Punitive discharge/treatment of government employees

- Assembly of police/military
- Military conduct of routine state functions

Examples of the "failure to act" include the refusal of the police to stop hecklers or protagonists from interfering with protestors; or when they fail to intervene to stop rioters from pillorying the neighborhood of a minority group. The "Warning" category is for statements that raise the possibility of initiating some state act that meets the SSP criterion for a disruptive state

act; the type of coercive power enjoyed by the state makes such warnings destabilizing. The "warning" option, however, should only be used in conjunction with one of the other options in the "Disruptive State Acts" section (impose martial law, declare a state of emergency, arrest malcontents, close facilities, exile opponents, confiscate property, etc.). The "threat to use violence" is for written or verbal threats by government actors to engage in acts that would qualify as a politically motivated attack.

Governments routinely dismiss state employees for a variety of justifiable reasons. However, in some instances, dismissals of high-profile officials are highly politicized/punitive and can be used to send a coercive message. These dismissals can involve whistleblowers, officials who voice ethical objections about state policies, a general who calls into question security decisions or war strategies, etc. Dismissals under such circumstances, as well as kindred job-related actions, can have chilling effects on other employees and destabilizing effects within society.

The visible assembling of police or military forces in specific areas can be intimidating to citizens desiring to exercise legal rights and prerogatives. These assemblies can interfere with the conduct of elections or political demonstrations without a shot being fired or an arrest being made. The military conduct of routine state tasks – patrolling streets, monitoring traffic, guarding public buildings or areas – can also have disruptive effects. The assumption of these functions by the military sends a message to citizens that something is awry. Or it can reflect a belief that something is about to go awry that requires a display of coercive force – even though that force is never used.

The "Formal Acts" category includes three options dealing with the abusive exercise of a variety of formal state powers. The options are listed below.

- Abuse of police powers
- Abuse of prosecutorial discretion
- Abuse of judicial discretion

The abuse of police powers involves use of routine police powers (street stops, inspections, interrogations, public health inspections, safety inspections, etc.) to harass citizens. For example, street stops become harassment when they focus on targeted populations and/or occur during periods of social tension. Inspections of businesses become harassment when they are focused on companies that feature signs supporting opposition figures, or stores owned by minority groups. Questioning suspects becomes harassment when those taken into custody happen to be dissidents, or their kin, and their actions are not related to bona fide criminal activities. State lawyers routinely initiate tax investigations, file criminal charges, secure search warrants, and dismiss formal legal actions. The use of these prosecutorial powers becomes abusive when they are used as political weapons to punish or intimidate political opponents, dissidents, or social outcasts. Judges are charged with the impartial implementation of laws and legal rules and are vested with a wide range of powers to discharge their duties; they can dismiss lawsuits, rule on motions, and sentence defendants. But when judges use their powers in ways that reward or punish those in public life – or their political enemies – then they have abused the powers vested in them. This becomes evident in hurried trials or abrupt dismissals that are tailored to fit

electoral cycles, heavy-handed sentences given to dissidents convicted of vague offenses, or complicity with the executive branch in the handling of highly political matters.

The "Coercive Acts" category involves a set of official state actions that involve the use of state power in ways that impinge upon the lives of citizens, but which fall short of violent attacks. There are eight options within this category; they are organized within three cognates. They are:

- Facility closures
- Service suspensions

- Restricting movements
- Forced relocations
- Proactive arrests/detentions
- Exile of citizens

- Intrusion into non-public spaces (homes, offices, etc.)
- Confiscation of property

The first cognate deals with state actions that affect the operation of facilities and services. The inclusion of these actions within coercive state acts category must be justified by the circumstances. Thus, the closing of a facility or the suspension of public services (rail, power, water, etc.) because of documented safety hazards would not qualify as a repressive act. However, the closing of a stadium where an anti-government rally was scheduled would – as would the closure of bus lines headed to the stadium. Cutting off power and sanitation facilities to a settlement where unwanted refugees were locating would also qualify as a repressive act.

The second cognate includes a variety of actions that impinge upon the mobility of individuals. The first two options in this cognate – restricting the free movement of citizens and the forceful relocation of citizens – are relevant mainly with respect to mass gatherings of individuals (protests, marches, pickets). They capture state interference with public expressions that fall short of formal arrest or detention. However, in rare situations, governments restrict the access of international aid workers or peacekeeping troops to certain regions of a county because it may upset the government's grip on power. Also, sometimes individuals are forcibly relocated (from the country to the city, or vice versa) to achieve policy objectives (industrialization, pacification, etc.).

The next option within this cognate – proactive arrests/detentions – is to be selected only when two conditions are met. The first is that they must be *proactive*; the second is that they must involve *dissidents, opponents, or some other type of individual that is perceived to pose some type of political threat to the government*. Proactive arrests/detentions can be best understood by contrasting them with *reactive* ones. A reactive arrest or detention is one that is made in direct response to a criminal or destabilizing act involving the arrestee/detainee. For example, the initiator of a politically motivated attack may be arrested during/after the attack; a group of demonstrators may be detained to suppress the protest; rioters may be arrested to quell

the violence; etc. These arrests and detentions are to be captured in the section on post-hoc reactions (see below).

Proactive arrests/detentions involve situations that are not reactions to immediate circumstances. For example, a dissident in Mozambique may be arrested the week before a party gathering or a rally; a legal activist in China may be restricted to her house to prevent her from aiding law suits against the state; a Russian oligarch may be arrested before he can form a party to challenge the incumbent; etc. The second condition pertains to the type of individual(s) who are arrested or detained. This option should not be used unless the arrestee or detainee is someone who poses a political threat, or at least a nuisance. Thus, it would not be used when the affected individual is a common criminal.

The last option in this cognate involves the exile of individuals outside the country or to outlying regions within a country (e.g., Siberia). It should be used only when the person being exiled poses a political threat. Exiles of criminals, spies or illegal immigrants would not meet this criterion; exiles of former political leaders or dissidents would.

The last cognate in this section includes state infringements on the property of those who are viewed as political threats to the state. The two options here include state trespasses on private spaces and the confiscation of private property. These are tactics that are routinely used in prosecuting drug crimes, income tax evasion, money laundering, etc. Thus, they should only be designated as repressive acts when the circumstances or the individuals targeted suggest that they are driven by petty political motivations.

Section Seven: Initiators, Messengers, Rioters, and Reactors

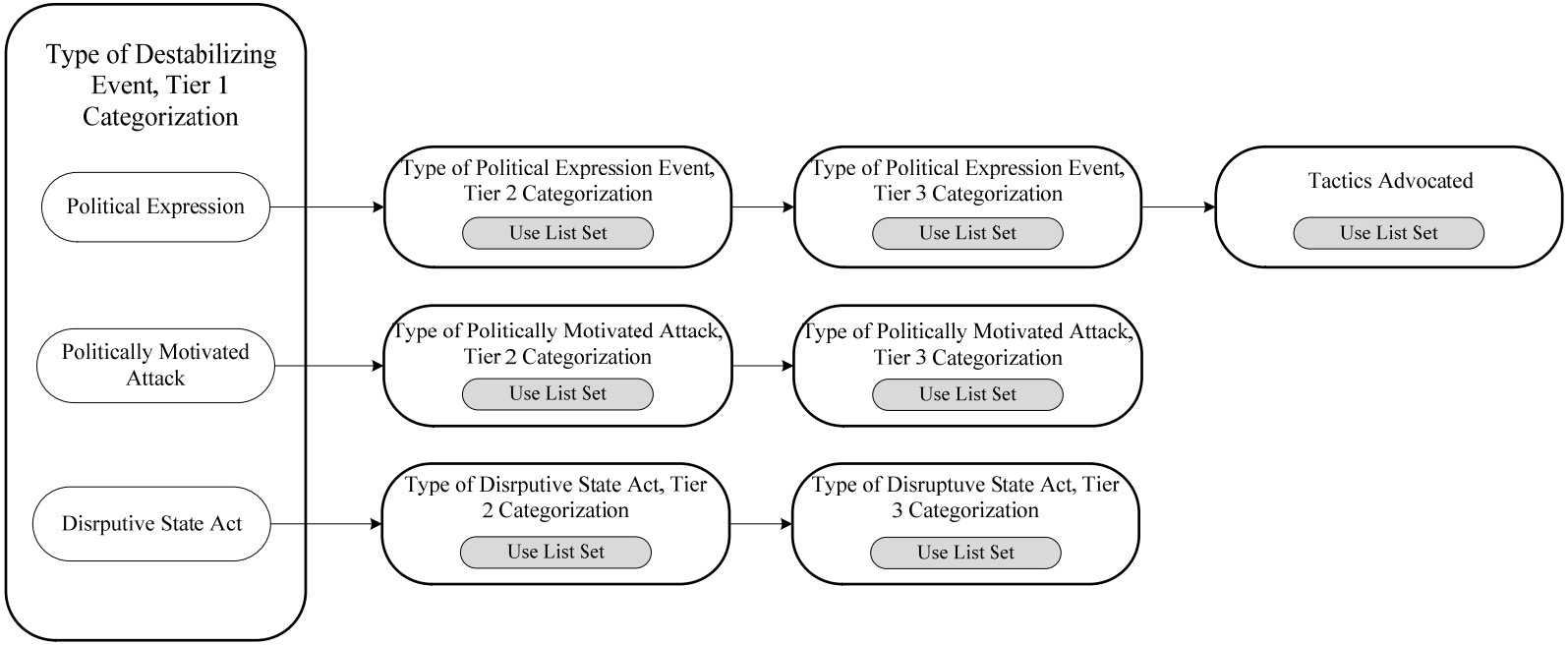
This section captures information on the initiators of the destabilizing event (attackers, agents of repression, coup plotters, etc.). For political expression events this section pertains to messengers and/or protesters; for riots it refers to the rioters; when coding post-hoc reactions, this section pertains to the reactors. The initial query in this section asks whether, based on information contained in the news report, the initiators are:

- Known
- Suspected
- Ambiguous
- Unknown

For most events the initiator is known; but sometimes their identity is only suspected. In other cases (armed conflicts between soldiers and insurgents, confrontations between protesters and the police), ambiguity exists as to who actually initiated the event. The flow of questions activated in this section depends on the response to this initial inquiry.

Known/Suspected Initiators - If the initiators are known, or at least suspected, operators are prompted to respond to seven question sets. The first four ask for basic information: name, the type of initiator (private actor, government actor, etc.), initiator affiliations (social group, insurgent group, political group, etc.), whether at least one of the initiators was from a different

Figure 4
Flow Chart for Question Sets in Section on
"Destabilizing Event Ontology"



country, and whether the initiator "claimed credit" for the act. The next three question sets pertain to the resources available to the initiators: the number of initiators, the weapons used, and evidence of foreign support.

Initiator Names, Types and Affiliations - The **PROPER NAME** module is used to specify the name(s) of the initiator(s). This module captures all of the proper names in a news report; operators simply begin to type the appropriate name and it is extracted from the list. The following list set is used to specify the initiator type:

- Non-governmental actor
- Governmental actor
- Suspected, but unacknowledged, government actor
- Quasi-governmental actor
- Unspecified

Nov-governmental actors are defined as anyone who is not a government official. The suspected, but unacknowledged governmental actor category is for situations where government involvement is not confirmed, but highly likely, based on a reading of the news report. Quasi-governmental actors include such things as government contractors working in their official capacities.

If the initiators were non-governmental or quasi-governmental actors, operators are asked to select from a standard list set of non-governmental entities that are organized within cognate groups. The cognates within that list set are as follows:

- Members of a social group
- Members of a political group
- Members of a civic association
- Members of a labor union
- Members of a business association

- Undifferentiated people
- Workers
- Farmers, peasants

- Women
- Children (12 or under)
- Teenagers (13 to 19)
- Elderly (65+)
- People with disabilities

- Members of LGBT community
- Refugees/displaced persons
- Immigrants

- Students
- Educators
- Other intellectuals (author, poet)
- Private journalists/blogger

- Dissidents
- Voters
- Candidate for elective office

- Leading local actor
- Leading societal actor
- Former government official

- Religious actors, clergy
- Humanitarian, human rights workers
- Health care workers

- Government supporters
- Government officials (in private capacity)
- Soldiers (in private capacity)

- Peacekeepers
- Private security official
- Member of a paramilitary organization

- Members of an insurgent group
- Criminal (gang, organized crime)
- Prisoners

- Business people
- Large landowners

The first cognate relates to members of some organized group: social, political, civic or economic. If one of the social or political group options is chosen, a lexicon-based module is activated that operators use to specify the name of the group. If the module does not return the appropriate group, the operator adds it to the lexicon using a dialog box that is activated. The next cognates relate to very common groupings of individuals (undifferentiated citizens, workers, peasants); vulnerable individuals (women, children, disabled, etc.), an "outsiders" cognate (gays, refugees and immigrants) and an intellectual cognate (students, teachers, authors, etc.). These cognates are followed by a political cognate (dissidents, voters, and candidates), a civic cognate (local leaders, societal leaders, former government officials), a service cognate (religious, humanitarian, healthcare workers), a security cognate (soldiers, peacekeepers, and paramilitary), a threatening cognate (insurgents, criminals, prisoners), and an elite cognate (business people, land barons). The soldier and government official option is only to be used when they are acting in a private capacity. Selecting the "Insurgent" option will activate the

insurgent group lexicon that operators use to specify the name of the insurgent group. Operators are encouraged to choose multiple options whenever doing so provides a clearer designation of the initiator.

If the initiators are governmental actors, suspected governmental actors, or quasi-governmental actors, operators will be asked to select from a standard list set of non-governmental entities that are organized within the following cognate groups:

- Firefighters, rescue workers
- Police/security officials
- Soldiers

- Secret police
- Intelligence agent

- Cabinet-level official, ambassador, diplomat
- Lower-level government worker
- Election workers
- General officer/military command

- President, P.M.
- Royal ruler/family
- Religious ruler
- Dictator, supreme ruler
- Military ruler, junta
- Colonial administrators

- Judge
- Court
- Legislator
- Legislative body

- Corporate government

- University officials
- Government-run media organization
- Government contractors

- Representative of an international organization

The first cognate includes public safety officials; the second includes covert security officers. These cognates are followed by two cognates for executive branch actors: second- and third-level government officials (cabinet members, ambassadors, bureaucrats, generals, etc.) and top-level executive officers (presidents, prime ministers, royal rulers, clerical rulers, dictators, etc.). The fifth cognate includes non-executive officials (legislators, legislative body, judges, court,

etc.); the corporate designations (legislative body, court) are to be used when the destabilizing act is the result of legislative act or a multi-member court decision. The next cognate, "Corporate government," is to be used only when the initiator is simply designated as "the government" and no further information is provided. The next cognate is a miscellaneous grouping (university officials, public media organization, government contractors). Finally, operators can indicate the initiator was a representative of an international governmental organization. After specifying the type of government actor, operators are prompted to designate their level of government (international, national, provincial, local).

Initiator Resources: Numbers, Weapons, Foreign Support - The first question set in this subsection captures information about the number of individuals involved in the initiation/execution of the event. Information on the number of individuals involved is common to several sections of the SSP. For example, information is sought about the number of targets and/or victims, as well as the number that suffered some type of adverse effect (attacked, injured, killed, raped, etc.). To facilitate the extraction of this type of information, which is often ambiguous in news reports, a *standard specification routine* was developed. It provides operators with the capacity to provide: (1) exact numbers, when possible; (2) precise estimate ranges, when necessary; and (3) "ballpark" estimates as a last resort. The routine for providing ballpark estimates varies somewhat with what is being estimated (symbolic acts, attacks, demonstrators, strikers, etc.).

Operators are instructed to choose the specification technique based on the available information, but always choosing the most precise option available. For example, with respect to initiators, the standard specification routine begins as follows:

Does the news report provide concrete estimates of the number of initiators?

- Yes
- No

If the "Yes" response is chosen a dialogue box is activated in which coders indicate both the highest estimate contained in the article (e.g., 45) and the lowest (e.g., 25). If the article provides a precise number of those dismissed it can be used for both entries (e.g., 32 and 32). If the "No" option is selected, the following list set is activated for operators to provide a "ballpark" estimate:

- Five or less
- A sizeable group (6-25)
- A large group (26 and 100)
- More than 100
- Unitary actor (government, organization)
- An armed unit (military, police, rebels)
- This is a mass demonstration
- This is a strike
- Not possible to estimate

The unitary actor option is for situations in which the actor is a corporate entity acting on behalf of an organization (government, labor union, cultural group, etc.). The "armed unit" option is for when all that is known about the initiation of the event is that it was executed by an organized armed unit, such as the military, the police or rebels. It is necessary to include the "mass demonstration" and "strike" options because these events operate on a very different scale from most other events (small-gauge political expression, violent attacks, repressive acts, etc.). Selecting either the "mass demonstration" or the "strike" option activates a list set with four options that are based on precise data (lowest quintile, second quintile, etc.) on the number of protesters/strikers involved in over 1,000 SSP events. These numbers are, of course, much higher than those contained in the standard list set.

The second question set pertains to weapons used by the initiators. It begins with a query as to whether any weapons were involved. If the response is "Yes" the following list set of weapons is activated:

- None
- Fake weapons

- Body parts (fists, legs, etc.)
- Animal
- Vehicles
- Computer

- Blunt instruments (baton, club, whip, rocks)
- Tear gas, pepper spray, mace
- Knives or other sharp weapons
- Fire

- Less-than-lethal projectiles
- Small arms
- Light weapons

- Letter bomb
- Improvised (fire bombs, small explosives)
- Incendiary device
- Explosives, grenade
- Car bomb

- Land mine
- Tanks or other armored vehicles
- Field artillery
- Missile/rocket
- Aircraft munitions
- Naval power
- Biological or chemical weapons

- Ambiguous
- Other

Operators can choose as many weapon types as applicable. If the "Ambiguous" or "Other" option is selected, operators are asked to choose from a cruder set of weapon types; they are asked to select up to two options from the following list set:

- None
- Crude weapons
- Small arms
- Explosive devices
- Military grade weapons

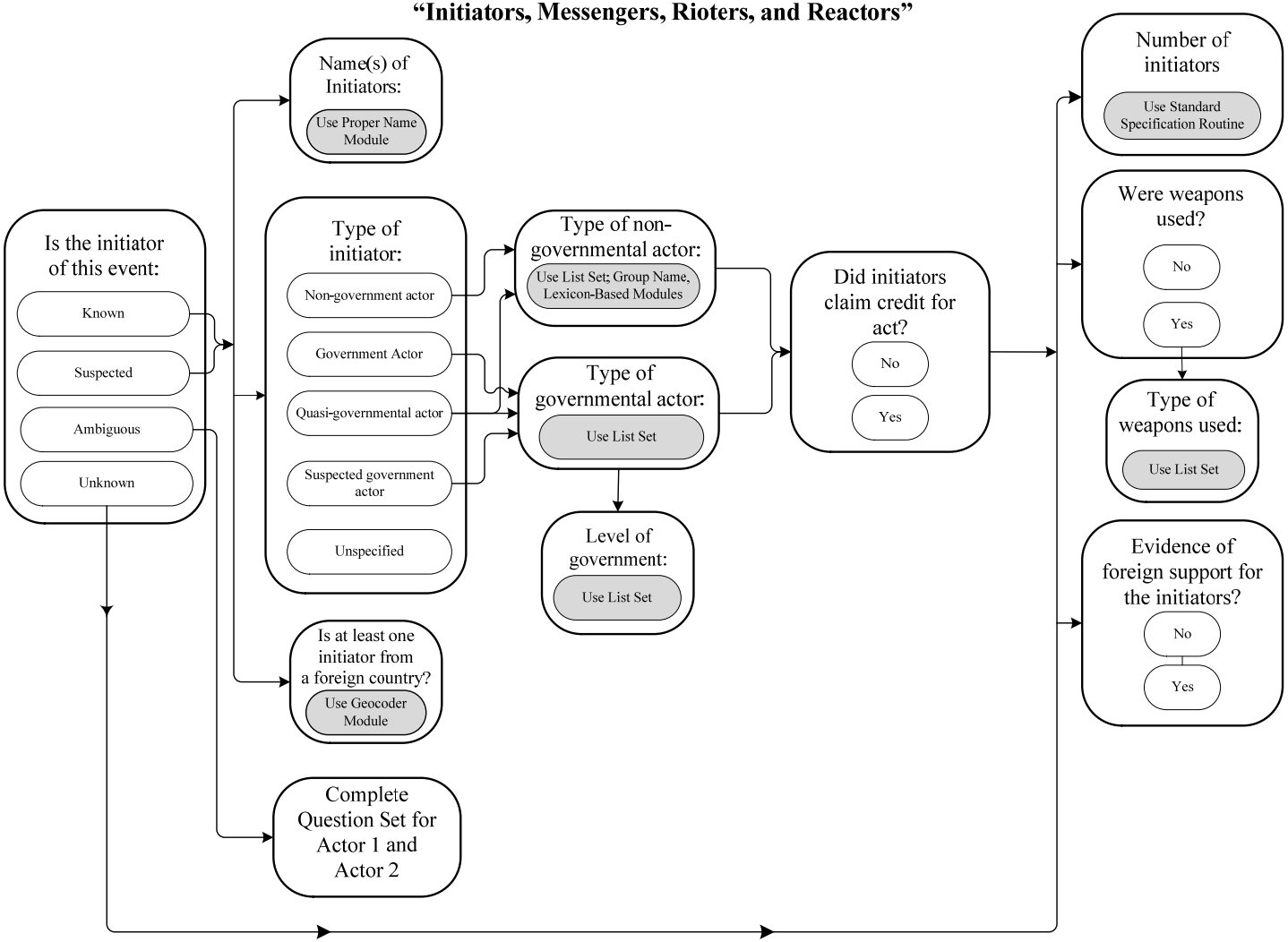
One final inquiry pertains to whether support for the initiators was provided by a foreign country (i.e., support from outside the country in which the event occurred).

Ambiguous and Unknown Initiators - It is sometimes impossible to determine, based on information in news reports, which of the actors involved in an event was the initiator. This routinely occurs in skirmishes between rebels and soldiers as well as confrontations between demonstrators and security forces. In these situations coders are instructed to select the "Ambiguous" option on the first list set in this section. Selecting this option activates question sets for "Actor 1" and "Actor 2" that are identical to those used in the "Known/suspected initiators" section described above. This option provides the capacity to handle ambiguous situations without losing valuable information.

If the initiators are unknown, operators are instructed to select the "Unknown" option in the initial list set. This activates a highly truncated set of queries. Operators are asked to extract, where possible, information on: (1) the number of initiators; (2) whether weapons were used; and (3) whether there is evidence of foreign involvement.

Figure 5 provides a flow chart that outlines the organization of this section.

Figure 5
Flow Chart for Question Sets in Section on
"Initiators, Messengers, Rioters, and Reactors"



Section Eight: Post Hoc Reactions with Direct Consequences for Initiators

This section captures information on post hoc reactions to a destabilizing event that have direct consequences for its initiators. It is activated by the responses provided to questions in Section Four. Capturing information on these consequences is important because it can provide insights into their effect on subsequent patterns of destabilizing actions within a particular locale. Consider two countries that adopted very different practices concerning protest demonstrations: one country suppressed them using coercive force; the other tolerated and protected demonstrators. Knowing this could provide insights into the level of civil strife in the two countries – as well as whether suppressing political protests leads to the use of political violence to manifest discontent.

Because of the importance of information on these post hoc reactions a question set was developed to capture them. The pretest suggests that most of these responses fall within one of four Tier 1 categories:

- Minimal, negative consequences
- Coercive, negative consequences
- Legal, negative consequences
- Beneficial consequences

Coders are instructed to select multiple options from the Tier 1 and Tier 2 categories for post hoc reactions whenever applicable.

The Tier 2 categories for the "Minimal, Negative Consequences" category include a range of reactions with relatively minor consequences for the initiators; it has three cognates. The first cognate includes a set of informal consequences that impose relatively little discomfort for most initiators. For example, officials who initiated overly zealous destabilizing acts on behalf of the government may be forced to apologize. Organizers of job actions may be intimidated or subjected to informal or formal sanctions. The next cognate includes more formal reactions. For example, a formal investigation may be launched to investigate those who authorized excessive force to quell a demonstration; the security officials who engaged in excessive violence may be formally reprimanded. The last cognate includes punitive consequences that fall short of legal or coercive acts. For example, the superiors and the security officers involved in quelling a peaceful demonstration may be suspended, dismissed or forced to resign. The options in this list set are reported below.

- Forced to apologize
- Threatened, intimidated

- Subject to informal/unofficial retaliation
- Formally reprimanded, censured

- Suspended from position, furloughed
- Dismissed from position

- Resigned from position

The Tier 2 categories for "Coercive, Negative Consequences" include an array of straightforward options that involve the use of some type of coercive force. They are organized within four cognates. The first cognate includes two options involving some type of "push back." Thus, demonstrators can be physically dispersed; insurgents can be counterattacked. The second cognate involves consequences that go one step beyond being dispersed. Thus, assailants can be forced to surrender; rioters can be detained or formally arrested. Finally, initiators may suffer some type of physical injury; they may be injured or even killed. The options for this list set are listed below:

- Dispersed
- Counter attacked

- Surrendered, captured
- Detained
- Arrested

- Injured
- Killed

The Tier 2 options for the "Legal, Negative Consequences" category includes a range of undesirable legal consequences, organized within two cognates. The first cognate simply involves some type of legal proceeding being initiated. Initiators can be sued in a civil proceeding, which is normally filed by victims. If successful, civil proceedings can lead to monetary damages being paid to the victims by the perpetrators. Initiators can also be subjected to criminal proceedings. They can be indicted, which is often the first step toward a criminal trial; many who are indicted are then tried as a criminal. The second cognate includes a set of options reflecting the negative outcome of legal proceedings. Thus, initiators can be convicted in a criminal proceeding and given a fine or a jail sentence; some can even be sentenced to death and executed. Losers in civil proceedings can be made to pay monetary damages. These options are listed below:

- Sued in non-criminal proceeding
- Indicted
- Tried in criminal proceeding

- Convicted
- Fined or required to pay monetary damages
- Sentenced to jail/prison
- Sentenced to death, executed

Sometimes post hoc reactions to destabilizing events vindicate the initiator's actions. In other cases they may advance the interests of the initiators or their cause. The Tier 2 options within the "Beneficial Consequences" category include a number of these positive outcomes. They are organized within four cognates. The first cognate includes some type of symbolic recompense.

For example, the initiators may receive a formal apology from the government or representatives of a non-governmental organization. The second cognate includes options that reflect some type of concrete progress toward the initiator's goals: they may have achieved the initiation of formal negotiations to discuss their discontents, or concessions that further at least some of their objectives. The third cognate is for initiators who benefited simply by evading the consequences of their action. They may have escaped or received amnesty or a pardon. The final cognate is for initiators who benefited materially from their actions. Consider, for example, a promotion given a state official for his heavy handed treatment of rioters. Also relevant here is the initiator of a successful coup who then assumes political power. The list set for this subcategory is as follows:

- Received symbolic recompense

- Achieved negotiations for concerns
- Achieved at least some goals

- Escaped/evaded consequences
- Received amnesty
- Received a promotion
- Enhanced their power/stature

Figure 6 provides a flow chart that outlines the organization of this section.

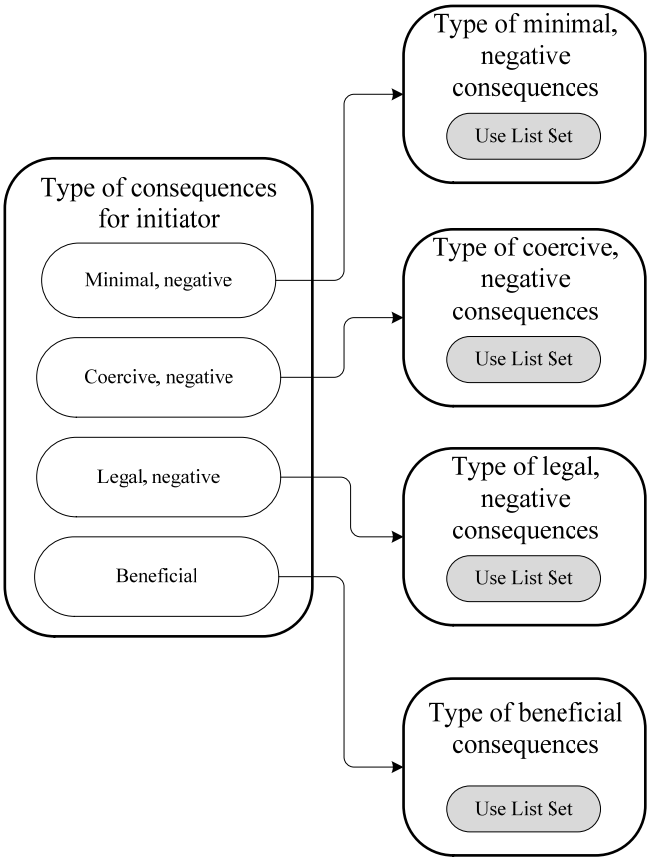
Section Nine: Targets, Entities Affected and Effects

This section captures information on: (1) the targets of those who initiated the destabilizing act; (2) the entities that were affected by the act; and (3) the effects (injuries, damages, number of people affected, etc.) of the act. Consequently, this section is composed of three question sets, one that addresses each of these concerns. The questions activated in each set are determined by the nature of the targets/entities affected. That is, if individuals were affected by a destabilizing event, one set of questions is activated; if property was affected, different questions are activated. However, more than one option can be specified as a destabilizing act can affect individuals, property and geopolitical entities. Each question set is outlined below.

Targets - The target of a destabilizing act can be different from the entity affected by that act, for a variety of reasons (a stray assassin's bullet, a premature bomb explosion, an interruption in the schedule of a notable official, etc.). Thus, queries about targets are distinct from questions about victims. The first question in this set asks about the type of entity targeted by the initiators. Operators choose from the following target list set:

- Individuals
- Property
- Geopolitical entity
- No specific target
- Unspecified

Figure 6
Flow Chart for Question Sets in Section on "Post-hoc Reactions"



The "No specific target" option is for those destabilizing events that are not targeted at anyone or anything, such as a spontaneous riot or a diatribe against a society's sexual mores. The "Unspecified" option is for situations in which there is no information on the target of an act. If either of these options is selected no further queries in this question set are activated; operators are directed to the question set on "Entities Affected." If the type of entity targeted is an individual, operators are prompted to indicate: (1) the name of the individual(s) targeted by the destabilizing act (using the **PROPER NAME** module); (2) the type of individual(s) targeted (using a list set); and (3) whether at least one of the targets was from a foreign country. The list set for the type of individual target is identical to the list set for non-governmental actors outlined in Section Seven. If the "Government officials" option is selected from the list set, operators are prompted to indicate the type of government official targeted, using a list set that is identical to the government actor list set described in Section Seven. If at least one of the individual targets was from another country, operators are prompted to select the country name.

If the target of those who executed the destabilizing act was a piece of property, operators are prompted to indicate: (1) the type of property targeted, using a list set; (2) the type of property owner, using a list set; and (3) whether the owner of the targeted property was from another

country. The list set for the type of property is fairly long, comprehensive, and well-pretested. It includes items of private property (computer, flag, car, etc.), real property (residences, agricultural buildings, land), transportation facilities, infrastructures, etc. The owner type list set is as follows:

- Private individual

- Religious group
- Political group
- Social group

- Labor group
- Business or corporation
- The media/press

- Humanitarian organization
- Other non-governmental organization
- Government

- Unspecified

More than one selection from the type of property owner list set can be made.

If a geopolitical entity was targeted, operators are prompted to designate the type of entity from the following geopolitical entity list set:

- Neighborhood/community
- Individual city
- Individual state/province
- Region of a nation
- Entire nation

In addition, the **GEOCODER** module is used to extract geospatial information.

Entities Affected - The second set of questions in this section deals with the entities affected by the destabilizing act. The initial question simply asks if the entity affected is different from the entity identified in the section on targets. The default option is "No." If the entity affected is the same as the entity targeted, then operators move directly to the question set on effects; if the entity affected is different from the target, then a question set is activated that is virtually identical to the question set on targets.[15]

Effects - This question set captures information on the effects of the destabilizing event on humans. No questions are asked about the effects on geopolitical entities because those effects

[15] Operators complete the entity affected section whenever there is no target or the target is unknown.

will be clear either from the nature of the destabilizing act (a state of emergency, coup, curfew, etc.). No questions are asked about the effects on property because information on property damages is seldom reported. For human victims operators indicate the type of effect from a list set organized within the cognates specified below:

- None
- Affected

- Constrained
- Freed from confinement
- Arrested

- Dispersed
- Surrendered, captured
- Exiled

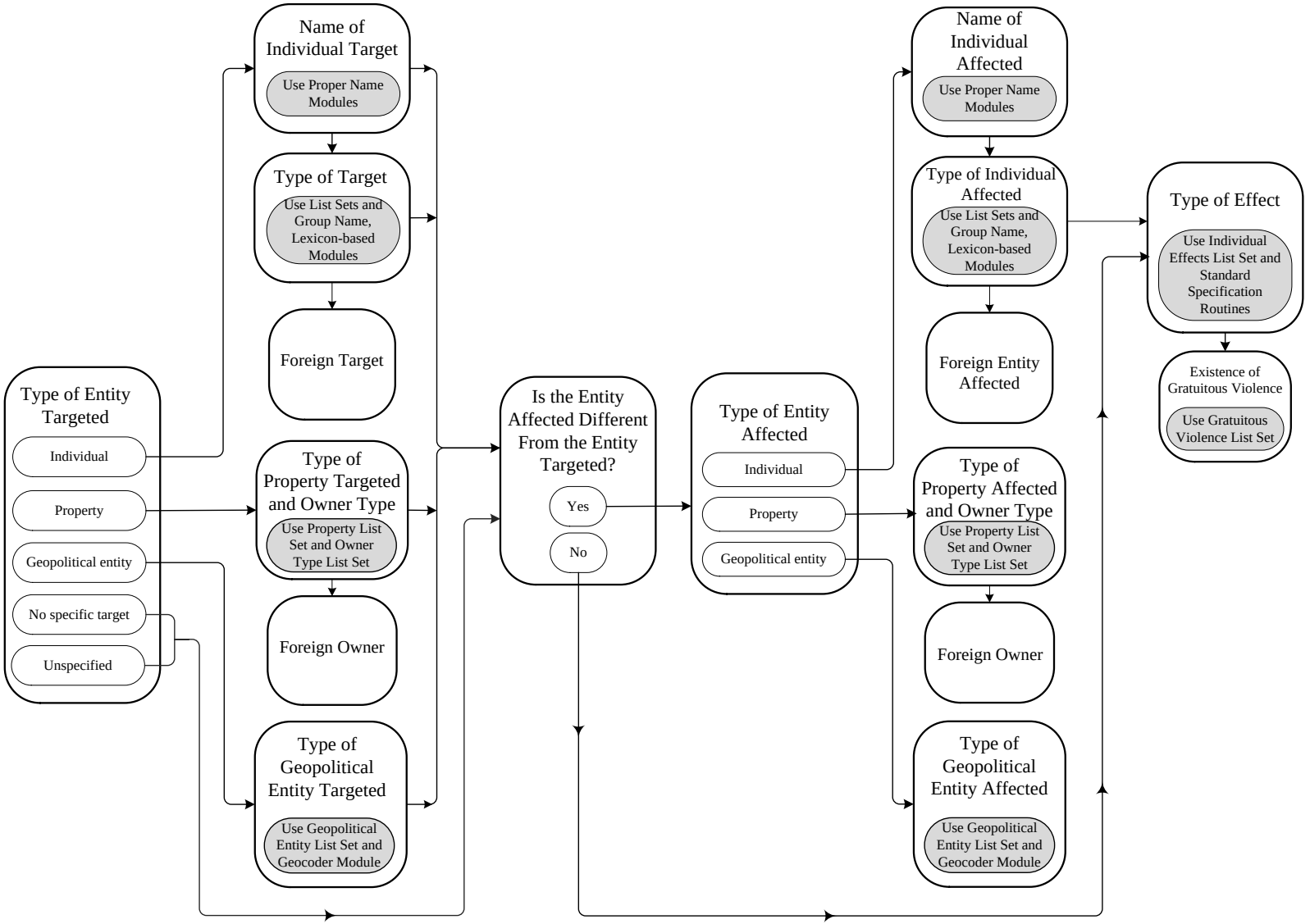
- Attacked
- Kidnapped
- Injured
- Raped
- Killed

Operators select as many options as apply for an event. For every option selected, a follow-up question is activated that asks for information on the number of people affected (i.e., arrested, kidnapped, exiled, killed, etc.). The standard specification routine described earlier (exact number, precise range, ballpark estimate) is employed to indicate the number of people affected. One last query that is activated pertains to egregious violence. Not all physical attacks are the same. Sometimes assaults, murders and rapes are committed with gratuitous violence. Thus, operators are asked to report whether any of the following are reported in the news account of the event:

- Torture
- Mutilation
- Exceptional brutality
- Other gratuitous violence

Figure 7 provides a flow chart that outlines the organization of this section.

Figure 7
Flow Chart for Question Sets in Section on
"Targets, Entities Affected, and Effects"



Section Ten: The Origins of Events

The type of destabilizing events included within the SSP's domain ontology – protests, politically motivated attacks, disruptive state acts, etc. – do not happen in a vacuum. Rather, most are rooted in *something*. Developing the capacity to identify these roots can lead to important advances in our understanding of civil strife because it can differentiate between seemingly similar events. Insights into event origins can be gleamed from a number of SSP variables: initiator and target traits (belonging to a socio-cultural group or a labor union; being a government leader, a large landowner, or a peasant, etc.), geophysical setting (government facility, church, mosque, temple, etc.), and even the type of destabilizing act (work stoppage). But central to any effort to impute event origins from news reports is a question set designed to capture broad origins categories; developing such a question set – and the supporting documentation to implement it in a reliable manner – was a central concern of the SSP pretest.

Two insights gained from this pretest suggested that creating an origins question set was feasible: (1) information on the roots of destabilizing events is often available in news reports; (2) a relatively modest set of broad, but fairly concrete, origins categories accounts for most known event origins. The pretest results, augmented by several later iterations based on the coding of over 50,000 events, led to the development of a fairly comprehensive origins list.[16] The Tier 1 and 2 categories for this list set – which are not mutually exclusive – are organized within six cognates: political, socio-economic, socio-cultural, security, retribution and ecological. They are listed below:

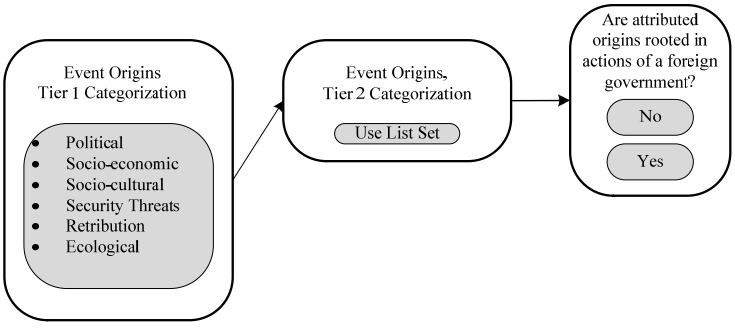
- Political origins
  - Governmental performance
  - Political desires and beliefs of citizens
  - Lust for political power
- Socio-economic origins
  - General
  - Business/employee relations
  - Business/consumer relations
- Socio-cultural origins
  - Ethnic/racial group tensions
  - Religious group tensions
  - National identity group tensions
  - Indigenous group tensions
  - Gender-based tensions
  - LGBT-based tensions
- Security origins
  - Threat to public order
  - Threat to personal safety

[16] The structure of the effort to develop and document these categories, along with a discussion of how the origins data are integrated with other SSP variables into a set of origin variables, is reported in a white paper that can be accessed at the following address: http://www.clinecenter.illinois.edu/research/publications/SPEED-Definitions_of_Destabilizing_Events.pdf

- Desire for retribution
- Ecological origins
    - Potable water
    - Clean air
    - Arable land
    - Consumable food
    - Energy
    - Public health
    - Other ecologically based concerns

To enhance inter-coder consistency several tiers of origins categories were constructed, along with a set of documentary/training materials. The number of tiers categories varies with each cognate; they are described in the following subsections. Figure 8 depicts the flow chart for the origins section.

Figure 8
Flow Chart for Question Sets in Section on "Origins"



Political Origins

Government Performance - Because governance matters involve binding and authoritative acts that affect large numbers of people, they can generate destabilizing acts such as controversial speeches, symbolic acts, demonstrations, and violent attacks. Our analyses suggest that the governance matters most likely to give rise to destabilizing events fall within one of five cognates. The first is simply discontent with the performance of the government, often as a result of long-term mismanagement and/or dismal societal conditions. The second cognate includes events rooted in attachments to, or antipathy towards, specific leaders – as well as events related to competition among governmental leaders. The latter can include partisan sniping, both violent and non-violent. The third cognate pertains to domestic governmental matters and includes both domestic policies and official acts. The domestic policy areas that are the most frequent source of destabilizing events include tax matters, economic management (budget deficits, industrial policies, trade, etc.) and social welfare policies (healthcare, pensions, education, etc.); the domestic political acts subcategory includes such things as repression, corruption, the conduct of electoral processes, and public facility matters. The fourth cognate relates to international matters

and it includes both policies and acts. The last cognate includes an array of military matters, some of which are combat-related and others which are not.

The overall structure of the government performance section is as follows:

- Overall government performance
- Specific government actors or relationships between actors
    - Dissatisfaction with specific leaders
    - Dissatisfaction with relationships between government actors
- Domestic matters
        - Policies
            - Tax policies
            - Economic policies/management
            - Social welfare policies
            - Other domestic policies
        - Acts
            - Repression
            - Corruption
            - Conduct of electoral processes
            - Judicial/legal actions or processes
            - Police actions or processes
            - Public facility matters
                - Adequacy
                - Location
                - Closure
            - Other domestic governmental acts
- International matters
    - Non-military foreign policies
    - International actions
- Military matters
    - Combat-related
        - War
        - Military occupations
        - Military deployments (troops, missiles)
    - Non-combat conduct/actions
        - Military's capacity to provide security
        - Role of military in society
    - Other military matters

Political Desires and Beliefs – This category has two Tier 3 options; one deals with the desire for political rights and liberties, the other relates to ideological beliefs. Concerns with political liberties and freedom have long been of concern to individuals. But the increasing reach of the modern state and the global diffusion of a democratic ethos during the post WWII era have made them an increasingly important driver of civil strife. Our analyses suggest that three categories of political rights are especially prominent: equality, freedom of expression (especially the

treatment of dissidents), and the right to self-determination (independence from a colonial ruler, independence from an existing state, demands for greater autonomy, etc.). In addition, a miscellaneous category for political freedoms is included (e.g., voting rights, freedom of association, etc.) The options are listed below.

- Equality
- Freedom of expression
- Right to self-determination

- Other political freedoms

Oftentimes concerns over political rights are focused on violations committed by other countries. Thus, information is gathered on whether these concerns are rooted in domestic entities or foreign entities.

Some ideological beliefs are so deeply held by some people that they can be the source of destabilizing acts. But these feelings cut both ways. In some instances people are motivated by the desire to realize their ideologies; other people are motivated by the fear of these ideologies being reflected in public life. In the post WW II era four sets of beliefs have generated the most intense feelings. They are listed below.

- Right-wing, conservative beliefs
- Left-wing, liberal beliefs

- Democracy
- Free markets

Lust for Political Power - While political rights and ideological concerns are important sources of civil strife, in many instances the origins of strife is simply the unvarnished lust for political power that it can bring. This lust manifests itself in acts aimed at maintaining/enhancing political power or in acts aimed at securing it. They are reflected in the following list set:

- Maintain/enhance political power
- Secure political power

Socio-economic Origins

General – This Tier 2 category includes two options that have long motivated individuals to express their dissatisfaction:

- Lack of economic opportunity
- Economic inequality

Business/employee relations - This subcategory captures a number of factors related to the quality of work environments. These work environments deeply affect individual outlooks and

overall satisfaction with life and they can be an important source of economic and class-based discontents. This subset includes such things as the availability of jobs, pay levels, and working conditions – all of which can generate public protests and sometimes give rise to violent attacks. So too can the treatment of other workers and general concerns over labor rights. The five options here are as follows.

- Benefit levels (wages, salaries, pensions, etc.)
- Working conditions

- Treatment of *other* workers
- Unionization/labor rights

- Other matters pertaining to business/employee relations

Business/consumer relations - While business employee relations have long been a source of instability, the displacement of local firms with national and multi-national entities have eliminated the local ties between production and consumption. The impact of these developments has been accentuated by a free-market ethos, competitive pressures and global economic forces. This has given rise to destabilizing acts rooted in consumer-based concerns. This subcategory has four options:

- Corporate greed/overreaching
- Business influence over government
- Business actions adversely affecting consumer welfare (product safety, access to healthcare, privacy, etc.)
- Other actions by businesses affecting consumers

Socio-cultural Origins

Tensions among basic socio-cultural groups can also be important sources of destabilizing events. The pretest revealed the prominence of some of the most fundamental units of human life; the list set includes the following options:

- Ethnic/racial groups
- Religious sects
- National identity groups
- Tribal ties
- Kinship ties
- Indigenous peoples

Security Concerns

Threat to Public Order - Destabilizing acts, especially overzealous actions taken by public safety officers, are often the result of other the manifestation of popular discontent by others. There are four options in this subcategory:

- Non-violent manifestations of discontent
- Imminent violence
- Specific acts of violence

Threat to Personal Safety – Personal safety also a core human desire; threats to personal safety that generate destabilizing acts can come from immediate threats to personal safety, widespread criminal activity, civil strife, and organized terrorism and/or international threats. The list set for this subcategory is as follows:

- Existential threat to well-being

- Ordinary criminal activity
- Organized criminal activity

- Civil unrest/terrorism
- Other

Retribution

The desire to seek revenge for the actions perpetrated by other individuals, groups, or organizations is one of the oldest sources of discontent. The pretest revealed the need for no subcategories to capture events rooted in the desire for retribution.

Ecological Origins

Scarcities in resources rooted in ecological factors (i.e., population pressures and climate change as opposed to economic inequalities or government policies) are as enduring a source of destabilizing acts as the desire for security and vengeance. They impinge upon very basic human needs (food, water, health, etc.). This category is designed to capture discontent rooted in such resource scarcities. The options for this subcategory are listed below.

- Potable water
- Clean air
- Arable land

- Consumable food
- Energy

- Public Health
- Other ecologically based concerns

Section Eleven: Multiple Event Codings

The function of this section is for operators to inform **EXTRACT** that the news report being analyzed has more than one destabilizing event (i.e., one or more related or independent events).

If the operator indicates that the news report has more than one destabilizing event, **EXTRACT** will provide a new screen (with the same news report being displayed) that will permit the creation of a new coding. This can be repeated for each discrete destabilizing event in the news report, up to a limit of fifteen events. Each event record created in this manner will be electronically "linked" to the others. In addition, this section allows operators to "copy over" the values of the present event record to the new event record, which is valuable in some multiple event codings as it eliminates the need to duplicate entries of the same information.

The first question in this section simply asks operators whether they want to code another destabilizing event. The default value is "No." The list set has five *mutually-exclusive* options:

- No
- New event that leads to this event
- New event that stems from this event
- New event that is part of this event

The default option (No) indicates that the event just coded is the only event in the news report – or the last of the multiple events to be coded. At this point operators activate the "Submit Coding" function. This will enter the coded event record into **EXTRACT**'s database and provide operators with the option to begin analyzing another news report – or to exit the system. If operators want to code another destabilizing within the present news report, they must indicate the nature of the relationship between the new event record and the one just completed.

If the next event to be coded is a related *event* (i.e., one that is thought to be related to the event that is the subject of the present coding), operators must indicate whether the related event is an *antecedent event* or a *subsequent event*. If the event to be coded preceded the event that is the subject of the present coding (i.e., it is an antecedent event), operators are to select the "New event that leads to this event" option. This is appropriate, for example, to indicate that a coup "led to" a major riot. If the event to be coded followed the event that is the subject of the present coding (i.e., it is a subsequent event), operators are to select the "New event that stems from this event" option. This option would be used to indicate that the riot "stemmed from" the coup.

Whenever a news report contains more than one related event, operators must verify the temporal links between the related events. This verification is performed at the end of a multiple event coding. Completing the final coding of a multiple event article will activate a dialog box that contains a diagram of the color-coded events with temporal links between them. The events will be depicted by numbered boxes (1, 2, 3, etc.) that are colored with the hue that the operator associated with the event using **EXTRACT**'s annotation tool; the links between the events (where relevant) will be those specified by the operator, using the list set depicted above. Antecedent events will be linked to subsequent events with an arrow (→); there will be no links between independent events and the other events. If a temporal relationship was mis-specified in the initial coding, simply clicking on the event box will allow the operator to re-specify the links between them. Once this dialog box is exited, the re-specified links will replace the mis-specified links in the event records.

The final type of relationship between events contained in the same news reports involves discrete happenings that are "part of" the same event. This option is normally used when a happening involves a *continuous stream of actions* involving different destabilizing event types, such as an army coup that simultaneously involves an assassination and the imposition of martial law. In this situation operators would use the "New event that is part of this event" to create separate (and linked) event records for the coup, the assassination, and the imposition of martial law.

To facilitate the extraction of information for multiple actions that are "part of" the same event, **EXTRACT** has a "Copy Over" function. This allows operators to use the information extracted from the present coding in completing the new coding. This function is valuable whenever such things as the date, location, actor names and actor types are identical.

Figure 9 provides a flow chart that outlines the organization of this section.

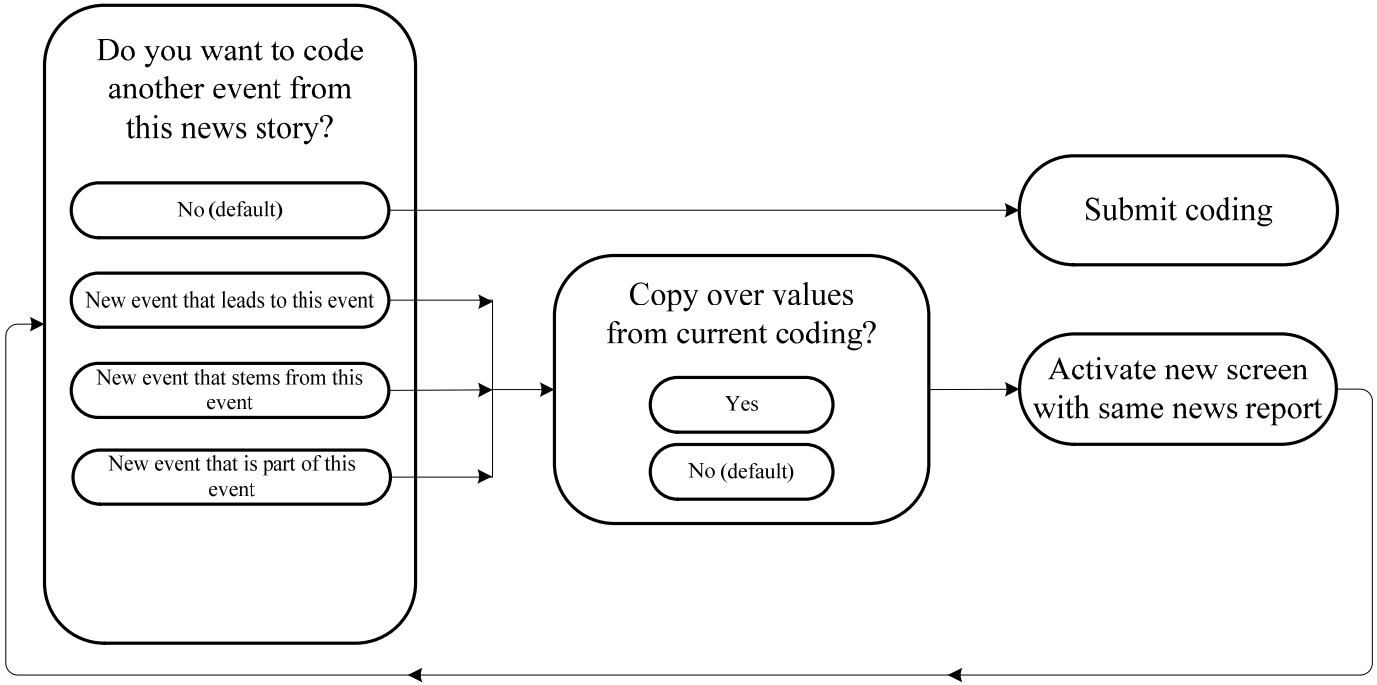



Figure 9
Flow Chart for Question Sets in Section on
"Multiple Event Coding"