ACLED Hackathon Cheat-sheet

# Data Description

The ACLED project codes reported information on the type, agents, exact location, date, and other characteristics of political violence events, demonstrations and select politically relevant non-violent events. ACLED focuses on tracking a range of violent and non-violent actions by political agents, including governments, rebels, militias, communal groups, political parties, external actors, rioters, protesters and civilians. Data contain specific information on the date, location, group names, interaction type, event type, reported fatalities and contextual notes.

Each record in the ACLED dataset is one event. The fundamental unit of observation in ACLED is the event, and each row is a different event.

Events occur between designated actors. Examples might be a named rebel group, a militia or a government.2 They occur at a specific named location (identified by name and geographic coordinates) and on a specific day.

ACLED data is comparable across different countries and years. ACLED makes every effort to ensure that variables such as actors and their types, locations, and other descriptors are consistent across the entire dataset. Researchers work to ensure that the most specific location and time possible are recorded.

Example Used Below: A protest in Detroit, Michigan demanding more public expenditure for roads, organized by the ACLU, and which took place on 6 January 1994.

# Columns of Analytical Interest

## EVENT DESCRIPTOR (A: Event Type)

* Type: String
* Description: Each event is classified as one “type.” ACLED currently codes for nine types of events, both violent and non-violent, that may occur during a period of political violence and disorder.
* Possible values:
  + Battles-No change of territory
  + Battle-Non- state actor overtakes territory
  + Battle- Government regains territory
  + Violence against civilians
  + Remote violence
  + Riots and Protests
  + Non-violent transfer of territory
  + Headquarters or Base Established
  + Strategic development
* Example: If a peaceful protest demanding increased funding for roads occurred in Detroit, Michigan, this event would be coded as event type “Riots and Protests.”

## PRIMARY ACTORS (C: Actor1 & D: Actor2)

* Type: String
* Column in original ACLED data: Actor1 & Actor2
* Description: The primary actors involved in the event. The names of actors are standardized names to ensure consistency across countries and time. Actors are not coded in any particular order –an actor coded as “Actor1” does not imply that actor is the perpetrator of the event, or confer any prioritization of that actor over the actor listed in Actor2. Not all events have Actor2 (if only one actor is involved), but all events have Actor1.
* Possible values: Any name of a specific actor active in the country.
* Example: An actor in a peaceful protest in Detroit might be “Protesters (U.S.)”

## ACTOR DESCRIPTORS (Q: Actor1 Type & R: Actor2 Type)

* Type: String
* Description: These columns code Actor1 and Actor2 into categories based on how they behave and identify. In ACLED data downloaded directly from the website, these columns correspond to integer columns “Inter1” and “Inter2”. Each actor has only one Inter code (or “actor type”) which is consistent across all events in which the actor is involved. There are eight possible categories into which an actor can fall. In the data provided to you, the inter codes have been converted to the strings below for ease of analysis.
* Possible values:
  + 1: Government
  + 2: Rebel Groups
  + 3: Political Militias
  + 4: Identity Militias
  + 5: Rioters
  + 6: Protesters
  + 7: Civilians
  + 8: Other Forces
* Example: The Protesters in Michigan would be coded as a “6” or “Protesters.”

## INTERACTION DESCRIPTOR (B: Engagement Type)

* Type: String
* Description: The “Engagement Type” column describes the types of primary actors involved in the event in the form of “Actor1 Type vs. Actor2 Type”. In data downloaded directly from the ACLED website, this is equivalent to the “Interaction” code, which is a combination of “Inter” codes and appears in Tableau as a two-digit integer. The data you are provided with will slow only the string descriptor for ease of analysis.
* Possible values:
  + 10: Sole government action
  + 11: Government vs. Government
  + 12: Government vs. Rebel group
  + 13: Government vs. Political militia
  + 14: Government vs. Identity militia
  + 15: Government vs. Rioters
  + 16: Government engagement with protesters  
    17: Government engagement with civilians
  + 18: Government vs. Other forces
  + 20: Sole rebel group action
  + 22: Rebel group vs. Rebel group
  + 23: Rebel group vs. Political militia
  + 24: Rebel group vs. Identity militia
  + 25: Rebel group vs. Rioters
  + 26: Rebel group engagement with protesters
  + 27: Rebel group engagement with civilians
  + 28: Rebel group vs. Other forces
  + 30: Sole political militia action
  + 33: Political Militia vs. Political militia
  + 34: Political militia vs. Identity militia
  + 35: Political militia vs. Rioters
  + 36: Political Militia engagement with protesters  
    37: Political militia engagement with civilians
  + 38: Political militia vs. Other forces  
    40: Sole identity militia action
  + 44: Identity militia vs. Identity militia
  + 45: Identity militia vs. Rioters  
    46: Identity militia engagement with protesters  
    47: Identity militia engagement with civilians  
    48: Identity militia vs. Other forces  
    50: Sole rioter action  
    55: Rioters vs. Rioters  
    56: Rioter engagement with protesters  
    57: Rioter engagement with civilians  
    58: Rioters vs. Other forces  
    60 & 66: Sole protester action  
    68: Other force engagement with protesters  
    78: Other force engagement with civilians  
    80: Sole other force action
* Example: A peaceful protest in Detroit, Michigan might be coded as “Sole Protester Action” (or, in the ACLED data downloaded from the website, a ‘60’), meaning the only primary actor coded is “Protesters.”

## ASSOCIATE ACTORS (H: Assoc Actor 1 & I: Assoc Actor 2)

* Type: String
* Description: Actors indirectly involved in the event that are associated with either primary actor. The names of actors are standardized names to ensure consistency across countries and time. Not all events have associated actors.
* Possible values: Any name of a specific actor active in the country.
* Example: If Actor1 in a peaceful protest in Detroit might be “Protesters (U.S.),” while an associated actor might be a known activist group who organized the protest-- for example “ACLU: American Civil Liberties Union.”

## LOCATION (Y: Region, J: Country, E: Admin1, F: Admin2, G: Admin3, & V: Location)

* Type: Strings
* Description: Name of the region, the country, and the first, second, and third-level geographic administrative areas in which the event took place, as well as the name of the location in which the event took place, as specifically as possible.
* Possible values: Any name of a region of the world (Region), nation (Country), geographic provinces or states (Admin1), districts or counties (Admin2), or subdistricts (Admin3) in the given country, as well as the name of the city, town, village, camp, or even specific part of any of these in which the event took place. Please see website for a list of countries coded by ACLED.
* Example: If the most specific information we have about a peaceful protest places it in Detroit, Michigan, it would be coded within the “North America” region, with country “The United States of America”, Admin1 “Michigan,” Admin2 “Wayne County,” and Admin3 might be blank (for lack of a further administrative breakdown below the county level). Location would be “Detroit.”

## TIME (AD: Year & L: Event Date)

* Type: Dates
* Description: The “Year” column contains the 4-digit year in which the event took place. The “Event Date” column provides the date, month, and year in which the event took place.
* Possible values: Different countries in the ACLED dataset have events coded for different years –some have events from 2017, some from 1990. Please see website for more details on time period for which ACLED offers data in various countries.
* Example: The year for the Detroit protest would be “1994” and the event date would be “06-Jan-1994.”

## COORDINATES (U: Latitude & W: Longitude)

* Type: Coordinates
* Description: The latitude and longitude, as specific as possible, in which the event took place. Latitude and longitudes are standardized to the “Location” column (meaning the same location will always have the same latitude and longitude).
* Example: The latitude and longitude for the protest in Detroit would be

## REPORTED FATALITIES (O: Fatalities)

* Type: Integer
* Description: The reported number of fatalities resulting from the event. ACLED’s reported fatality count is always an estimate, and ACLED data codes the lowest number reported if counts differ across sources. “Fatality” means death – this value does not count other casualties, including injured or missing.
* Possible values: Any number. ‘10’ is coded where there are fatalities but the number is unknown.
* Example: In the peaceful protest in Michigan, in which there are no fatalities, ‘0’ is recorded.

## DETAILS (X: Notes)

* Type: String
* Description: The notes column of ACLED data provides further details, contextual information, and a description where relevant. Every event in the ACLED dataset has a note.
* Example: For a peaceful protest in Detroit, the note might read: “On 06 January 1994, protesters gathered peacefully across the city of Detroit, Michigan to demand higher public expenditure on infrastructure. The protest was organized by the ACLU.”