Repertoires of Violence Against Noncombatants: Evidence from El Salvador

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Research Challenges on Women, Peace and Security
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Puzzling Variation

+ Rape, Sexual Mutilation

- Killing

+ Rwandan genocide

- US in Vietnam

RUF

NPFL

Bosnian serb militias

Salvadoran state

FMLN

Israeli Defense Forces

Sendero Luminoso

LTTE

- +
The Puzzle

Why do armed groups commit some forms of violence against non-combatants and not others?

Repertoire of Violence: Types of violence against non-combatants regularly employed by an armed group, and their relative proportions

Some groups that frequently kill civilians also frequently use sexual violence and other non-lethal violations; others do not.
### Selected Theories of Violence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual or Small Group Level</th>
<th>Armed Group or Conflict Level</th>
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<tr>
<td>Desensitization (Grossman 1996)</td>
<td>Territorial Control (Kalyvas 2006)</td>
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<td>Obedience (Milgram 1975)</td>
<td>Resource Endowments (Weinstein 2007)</td>
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<td>Conformity (Asch 1956)</td>
<td>Ethnic Fractionalization</td>
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<td>Small-group socialization (Cohen 2010)</td>
<td>“Terror”</td>
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<td>Opportunism (Brownmiller 1975)</td>
<td>State cannot defeat insurgents (Valentino et al. 2009)</td>
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<td>Government insecurity (Stanton 2009)</td>
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The Commander’s Dilemma

Combat effectiveness requires training a large number of young men (usually) to wield violence obediently and without hesitation.

Combat effectiveness also requires maintaining some level of control over combatants’ use (targeting, level, type) of violence.

Dilemma can be resolved either by providing external behavioral incentives or by attempting to align combatant preferences.
Hypotheses

H1. Ongoing political education that valorizes controlled violence associated with narrower repertoires of violence.

H2. Ongoing political education that valorizes controlled violence associated with lower incidence of sexual violence.

H3. Repertoire changes associated with changes in armed group training/education, rather than with strategic factors.
8- Debemos ser amigos del pueblo, conocer a fondo sus problemas orientarlo e incorporarlo a la lucha en todas partes. Así haremos de nuestra Patria un inmenso mar de guerrillas y pueblo organizado.

11- Forjaremos siempre los valores revolucionarios de austeridad, sencillez, desintereses, humildad y honestidad. Criticaremos a los engreídos y a los individualistas.
Measuring the Repertoire of Violence: Data from El Salvador

Repertoire data from four datasets, all requiring some creativity to retrieve.

Repertoire proxies: % of violence non-lethal, % of violence sexual or property.

Data are incomplete, biased => use multiple systems estimation.

First ever MSE for non-lethal violence.
Results

1. Narrower repertoires of violence by FMLN than state groups.
FMLN vs. State Repertoires

• One episode of rape by FMLN personnel, 429 episodes recorded by state personnel.

• FMLN violations approximately 1-5% of all violations. Most of these are targeted killings and abductions.

• State repertoires vary widely, include large amounts of torture, disappearance, rape, property crime.
Results

1. Narrower repertoires of violence by FMLN than state groups.

2. Sexual violence by FMLN declined following institution of standardized curriculum.
Decline in (already low) FMLN sexual violence

- Mid-level officer, western region: “You don’t know what a guy is going to do when he gets a gun, even if you think he joined for the right reasons. So at first, we had guys who would come down from the mountain and “bother” [molestar, implies sexual violence].

- High-level officer: “At first we had some big problems with people coming down to the towns and stealing, abusing women, and killing prisoners. After we started the school, it was a lot better because they all had the Principios and so on.”
Evidence from Other Conflicts

- Sierra Leone
- American troops in Vietnam
- Potential cross-national tests
Policy Implications

• Strong notion of command and control: commanders should expect excessive violence unless they build effective political education mechanisms.

• Ideology works. Interventions with armed groups could focus on military effectiveness of limited violence but should also emphasize duty, justice, heroism.
Multiple Systems Estimation: Two-System Logic

\[
\begin{align*}
A/N \times B/N &= M/N \\
\frac{AB}{N^2} &= M/N \\
AB &= MN \\
N &= \frac{AB}{M}
\end{align*}
\]
Multiple Systems Estimation: Modeling 3+ Systems

- Assumptions of the two-system model: inappropriate to data on violent events.

- With three or more systems, MSE is robust to violations of the two-system assumptions.

- Log-linear model with Poisson link:

  \[
  \log(u_{abc}) = u + u_a + u_b + u_c + u_{ab} + u_{ac} + u_{bc}
  \]

- OR, Chao (1989, 1992) individual heterogeneity model