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The Logic of Violence in Civil War

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The Study of Violence in Civil War

The overwhelming majority of research on civil wars has overlooked the issue of violence. Most studies focus on either the onset and duration of civil wars or on termination and consequences. There is also a huge literature on motivations for joining rebel movements. Insofar as war is defined in terms of violence (over 1,000 battlefield deaths in the COW dataset) this seems to pose no problem. Yet, the victimization of civilians remains outside the purview of this definition. More importantly, since the decision to kill civilians cannot be subsumed under the decision to resort to war (“collateral” damage notwithstanding), violence against civilians remains puzzling. And it is a major phenomenon. Ten out of the thirteen deadliest conflicts in the nineteenth and twentieth century were civil wars, while major violence was a feature of 68 percent of civil wars as opposed to 15 percent of interstate wars (Miall 1992:124; Magalhães 1996:225). At least eight out of ten people killed in contemporary civil wars have been civilians (Kriger 1992:1). A detailed seven-month study, conducted in a rural health center in the Mozambique in 1989-90, reported 454 cases of war injuries, of which 379 were civilians--89 percent children under the age of 15 (Vincent 1994:87). Hart’s (1999:18) description of the violence in the Irish Revolution and Civil War (1916-23) applies to most civil wars: “The revolution produced many skirmishes and casualties by combat, but many more people died without a gun in their hands, at their doors, in quarries or empty fields, shot in the back by masked men. Murder was more common than battle.”

The few studies that do not overlook the issue of violence, approach it almost exclusively as an independent rather than as a dependent variable. The emphasis is more on how coercion and violence are used to achieve specific outcomes (solve collective action problems, generate rebellion, turn a revolution into victory or defeat it) rather than on the dynamics of violence proper. Even when the focus is directly on violence, it tends to be directed toward cognate issues, such as the suffering of victims (Daniel 1996), the formation of collective memories of past violence (Contini 1997; Portelli 1997), or the narratives of violence (Gilsenan 1996).

In this paper, I address the issue of the violence against civilians in the context of civil wars. In addition to civilian victimization, the violence of civil wars often carries a puzzling intimate character, insofar that it is often exercised between neighbors. This is a question with important normative implications. However, any answer presupposes a prior question: whose decision is it to use violence? There are usually two answers to this question and they have defined two

distinct research agendas: leaders or elites (in political science and especially international relations) or individual perpetrators (in history and especially psychology). In this paper I suggest that both answers fail to take into account the complex dynamics of civil war. I introduce an alternative conceptualization based on a more realistic understanding of civil wars; I outline a simple model, derive from it a set of testable hypotheses about the spatial distribution of violence within civil war. I outline my preliminary findings along with a few comparative empirical illustrations. I begin with conceptual distinctions and I then.

Conceptual Distinctions

I. Violence and conflict

Most references to, say, ethnic violence refer to ethnic conflict, rather than the actual violence which takes place within the conflict. However, as Hannah Arendt (1970:19) pointed out, violence is “a phenomenon in its own right.” A key implication of this distinction is that civil war and violence in civil war should be analytically decoupled. Hence my question is not what causes civil war but rather what causes violence *within* civil war; and my findings suggest that the determinants of civil war and violence within civil wars diverge.

II. Violence as an act and as a process

The focus of much description and research is on acts of violence (described as atrocities, human rights violations, etc.) rather than the complex and often invisible set of usually non-violent actions and mechanisms that immediately precede and help produce these instances of violence;¹ on the identification of perpetrators and victims, rather than the typically larger number of actors who participate in the process without being either direct perpetrators or victims. Understanding violence as a process rather than an act allows the investigation of the dynamic sequence of decisions and events which combine to produce acts of violence, as well as the study of the otherwise invisible actors who partake in this process.

III. Violence in peace, violence in war

Although studies of civil war have tended to overlook violence, studies of “political violence,” a broad and imprecise concept which covers such disparate phenomena as campus demonstrations, urban riots, “terrorist” actions, and even genocide (Della Porta 1995), have tended to disassociate it from civil war. There exist many studies of “contentious action,” “civil violence,” or “collective violence” (such as demonstrations, protests, riots, etc.), particularly in the context

¹Often, the description of very recent acts of violence is accompanied by a causal references to very old events (e.g. ancient hatreds).

of research on social movements (Tarrow 1994). There is also substantial research of unilateral mass violence, especially genocide (Fein 1993). But there is little about violence in civil wars. To be sure, contentious action may sometimes precede civil war--although most ethnic conflicts do not escalate into civil war (Licklider 1998). To conflate the two, however, suggests a failure to recognize that war and peace are radically different contexts, which produce violence in very different ways, both in terms of degree and kind.

IV. Purpose and production of violence

The intersection of two key attributes of violence, its purpose and production, provides another key distinction which is necessary in delimiting the analytical boundaries of a study of violence in civil war. First, mass violence may be used to achieve primarily compliance or extermination. When at least one political actor intends to govern the people against whom it is using violence, violence becomes a means rather than an end in itself. The use of violence as a tool to shape individual behavior (by attaching a cost to particular actions) is often referred to as “terror.” Second, mass political violence may be produced unilaterally (by one actor) or bilaterally/multilaterally (by one or more actors). The intersection of the two attributes generates four ideal-typical analytical categories of mass violence: state terror, genocide and mass deportation, civil war violence and a type which may be referred to, for lack of a better term, as “reciprocal extermination” (see Table 1).

Table 1
A Typology of Mass Political Violence

		Political Actor Intends to Govern the Population Targeted	
		Yes	No
Production of Violence	Unilateral	State terror	Genocide & mass deportation
	Bilateral (or multilateral)	Civil war violence	“Reciprocal extermination”

Civil War Violence

My focus is on the civil war violence. Unlike genocide or mass deportation, the objective of at least one actor is to control the population rather than exterminate or expel it. Unlike state terror and genocide, civil war violence is not unilateral: it is produced by at least two political actors who enjoy segmented monopolies of violence. These monopolies are usually unstable and shifting, since the ultimate objective in civil war is either the re-establishment of a monopoly of legitimate violence over the prewar national territory or the legitimation of segmentation (i.e. secession). Contrary to situations where violence is produced unilaterally, the targeted population either enjoys some options or is coerced into shifting its loyalty and resources to the rival political actor; such shifts matter because they affect the outcome of the conflict. It is this characteristic that gives civil war violence its strategic dimension: it is not just state terror multiplied by two.

A theory of violence in civil war

Irregular war

The great majority of civil wars are fought by means of irregular, as opposed to conventional, warfare; some civil wars include varying degrees of both irregular and conventional warfare (e.g. the Vietnam War), while a few are fought primarily as conventional wars (e.g. the Spanish Civil War and the American Civil War). There is a link between civil war and irregular warfare (Trotsky 1969).

Irregular warfare is a method of fighting; it does not require a specific cause (as claimed by Luttwak 1995:9 or Schmitt 1992 [1963]). The fundamental difference between conventional and irregular warfare is the absence of a front. Related to this, irregular fighters and supporters are not easily identifiable. Fellman's (1989:23) description of the American Civil War in Missouri, a guerrilla war, as a war "of stealth and raid, without a front ... with almost no division between the civilian and the warrior" captures both differences. Irregular war is not a war fought by irregular soldiers. The civil war in Bosnia was fought in part by irregular paramilitaries, but it was a conventional war with clear frontlines.²

The link between irregular war and violence is usually explained in three ways. First, formal

²Conventional civil wars reach high levels of violence against civilians when and where they are fought irregularly (e.g. Missouri and Kansas in the American Civil War) or when they mimic features of irregular war (most violence in Bosnia and Spain took place during the first months of the war when frontlines had not been drawn yet).

(especially military) structures are weak or absent in irregular war, thus making possible all kinds of looting and crime (Fellman 1997). This is the “medievalization of warfare” thesis. Second, the absence of clear frontlines and the presence of the enemy behind one’s back raises the stress of soldiers and facilitates trigger-happy reactions (Grossman 1995). Third, the distinction between civilians and combatants is blurred. Whether the population acts willingly or not, there is a very deep social and geographical overlap between armies and civilians (Wickham-Crowley 1990). However, these arguments are inadequate: the first one ignores the empirical evidence of mass violence in situations where there exist disciplined armies, while the other two are only able to address one particular instance of civil war violence: the indiscriminate violence of regular armies against civilians.

A different starting point would be that civil war alters the nature of sovereignty in a fundamental way. At its core lies the breakdown of the monopoly of legitimate violence by way of armed internal challenge. Sovereignty is divided (Tilly 1978). Usually, there are two competing actors, insurgents and incumbents, using different tactics based on their resources. The division of sovereignty is reflected in two distinct realities on the ground. First, sovereignty is divided in the sense that two political actors (or more) exercise sovereignty over *distinct parts* of what used to be the territory of the state. Second, sovereignty is divided (or *fragmented*) in the sense that two political actors (or more) *simultaneously* exercise varying degrees of sovereignty over the *same parts* of what used to be the territory of the state. These two situations must be clearly distinguished.

Contrary to conventional war, civil war displays a ‘triangular’ character. It involves not just two (or more) competing actors, but also civilians. Civilian support matters for the outcome of the conflict. Typically, civil war involves little fighting between combatants and much action in which civilians play a prominent role. As a Cypriot peasant told the writer Lawrence Durrell (1996 [1959]:224), the fight must be conducted *through* the people--“like a man who has to hit an opponent through the body of the referee.” Civilian support is a term that describes the act of exclusive collaboration with one political actor. Its motivations vary; they can be material or nonmaterial, and it would be unnecessarily reductionist to try to determine one overarching set of motivations. Typically, civilian support is assumed to be exogenous to the war, predetermined by cleavages such as class or ethnicity. For example, landless peasants in Guatemala support the rebels, like Tamils do in Sri Lanka. However, it is also endogenous to the war: preferences and identities may be redefined in the course of the war, in response to the dynamics of both war and violence. No matter how much sympathy a local population may feel vis-à-vis a political actor, there will likely be strong incentives for some people (or communities)

to switch sides or “defect” in the course of the war. Defection is motivated by a variety of reasons, most notably survival. Although the provision of (material and non-material) benefits matters in the initial stages of the war, once violence escalates into the “main game in town,” individual survival becomes the main priority for most people--irrespective of their initial preferences. Obviously, this consideration will weigh on the choices they will make. This is precisely how a peasant from war-torn Mozambique put it (quoted in Nordstrom 1992:266): “The only ideology the *people* have is an anti-atrocity ideology.” Likewise, as the war escalates, violence becomes an increasingly important tool (often even the only one) in civil war; and as violence escalates, even political actors who initially emphasize selective incentives (material or ideological goods) also need to resort to violence in order to “match” their opponent’s violence. The aggregate result of individual strategies of survival in the face of violence is described by Finegan (1999:50) in his observation about the dynamics of popular support in Sudan: “People’s political views would be highly contingent on the power arrayed around them.” In other words, the distribution of control shapes the distribution of support—rather than the other way around.³

The major conundrum of civil war can be stated as follows: populations that find themselves under the sovereignty of one or the other political actor have little choice but collaborate with the sovereign, yet political actors are unable to achieve sovereignty over the entire territory of the state (when one does, the civil war ends). The military demands of irregular warfare are just staggering. As a Republican general wrote in a letter about the situation in the West of France during the Monarchist counterrevolution, the Republicans of the district “are so afraid, that we would need an entire garrison to guard every house” (quoted in Dupuy 1997:133). Hence, as long as both sides retain the ability to fight, sovereignty will remain both segmented and fragmented. Under these conditions, civilian support is central for the outcome of the war; but, by the same token, civilian support is the hardest to acquire: under two fires, survival-maximizing people are better off if they avoid committing themselves to one side.

A country under civil war will look somewhat like this: the (incumbent) state is more or less intact in areas, which are easy to control by a regular army. In these areas, the state is able to function more or less normally. In remote areas, the representatives of the state, both formal (police, etc.) and informal (suspected civilian informers and collaborators) have been eliminated or have fled and an insurgent counter-state is established. In these areas the insurgent counter-state is also able to perform most state functions (taxation, justice, security, etc.). Finally, there

³It is worth pointing out here that contrary to claims positing that it is impossible for individuals to defect from the ethnic group to which they belong (Kaufmann 1996), loyalty shifts are both possible and common in ethnically motivated civil wars.

exist intermediate areas where sovereignty is fragmented. These are contested areas, where civilian support matters the most and is the hardest to obtain.

Both incumbents and insurgents use violence to acquire civilian collaboration and deter defection. Incumbents rely on a set of strategies (often known as “counterinsurgency”) whose main objective is to deprive insurgents of civilian support (i.e. force civilians to collaborate only with incumbents). This can be accomplished in a variety of ways. For example, incumbents can institute a set of draconian reprisals against civilians and establish collective punishment for cases of collaboration with insurgents. Or, if they have access to substantial resources, they may sometimes remove (typically by force) the entire civilian population of rural areas in order to “dry the sea” in which insurgents (are supposed to) swim like fish. The strategies used by political actors vary within a civil war, both temporally and spatially. Here I focus on the impact of the spatial variation of control over the spatial variation of violence and offer a number of hypotheses.

1. Sovereignty

Where a political actor is sovereign (e.g. incumbents in towns and insurgents in remote areas) it will use limited violence. The exercise of control raises the cost of defection by shielding the population from competing sovereignty claims and by raising the credibility of threats. Also, in a world where expectations about the final outcome matter and information is mostly local, sovereignty signals dominance and eventual victory. As a result, where they are able to run “strong states,” both incumbents and insurgents rely on limited violence only. Note that this hypothesis runs against the central argument of the state terror literature which posits that government terror is a direct function of government control (Schmid 1983:175-6).

2. No sovereignty

Where a political actor lacks sovereignty over an area, it will resort either to indiscriminate violence or to no violence at all. Indiscriminate violence is the only kind of available violence in an area of non-sovereignty because of lack of information which flows from the lack of control. However, short of quasi-complete extermination, the use of indiscriminate violence against civilians who collaborate with a non-weak opponent is counterproductive because it offers incentives for civilians to join their rival. This is one of the most common observations in the descriptive literature: “No measure is more self-defeating than collective punishments” points out a classic text on irregular war (Heilbrunn 1967:152). Ultimately, political actors don’t want to use violence in a counterproductive way. A robust stylized fact in the descriptive literature is that, in the course of a civil war, political actors tend to abandon or reduce drastically

indiscriminate violence (e.g. Heilbrunn 1967:147). Selective violence is not an option since it is impossible to collect information from places one does not control. The hypotheses about violence under both sovereignty and no sovereignty are consistent with Arendt's (1970:56) observation that "Power and violence are opposites; where the one rules absolutely, the other is absent. Violence appears where power is in jeopardy."

3. Contestation

Where sovereignty is fragmented, both political actors are likely to use more violence as compared to where they exercise full sovereignty, but this violence will be more selective. Contested areas are where the real competition between incumbents and insurgents is taking place. The population in these areas has the opportunity (and feels the pressure) to collaborate with (or defect toward) either political actor. On the one hand, political actors use violence in order to force the population to take sides under uncertainty. On the other hand, this uncertainty greatly complicates civilians' calculations. As Manrique's (1998:217) puts it about Peru, "the line that separates the protagonists of the confrontation becomes confused, [there is a] difficulty of delineating sharply between friends and enemies." Fellman (1989:xv) describes the prevailing thinking in Missouri during the Civil War: "Which side should you appear to support? ... Under such peril, how ought you to act? Who *were* they? Who were *you*?" In this kind of environment collaboration will be induced (and deterrence achieved) by selective violence.

Selective violence is effective because it satisfies two fundamental conditions for the credibility of threats: persuasiveness and personalization. The observation that the effectiveness of sanctions requires selectivity has been made with regard to many different social settings (Hechter 1987:50) and is also true in the civil war context. In the words of a counterinsurgency expert (Thompson 1966:25): "Terror is more effective when selective." A British practitioner (Paget 1967:110) compared indiscriminate and selective violence to "trying to catch fish in a weedy pond by splashing about with a rather widemeshed net as opposed to adopting the tactics of the pike, and lurking quietly in the weeds ready to snatch unsuspecting fish as they swim by." A U.S. colonel in Vietnam pointed out that "You really have to use a surgeon's scalpel" (quoted in Race 1973:238), and a U.S. advisor in the same country put it in a crude but clear way: "This is a political war and it calls for discrimination in killing. The best weapon for killing would be a knife, but I'm afraid we can't do it that way. The worst is an airplane. The next worst is artillery. Barring a knife, the best is a rifle--you know who you're killing" (quoted in Sheehan 1989:317).

The discussion up to this point suggests that massive and selective violence will be most likely in

contested areas whereas indiscriminate violence will be most likely where no information exists, i.e. under no sovereignty. Let us then formulate three preliminary hypotheses about the spatial variation of violence within a civil war:

H1: No violence is likely under full sovereignty.

H2: Either no violence or massive and indiscriminate violence are likely under no sovereignty.

H3: Massive but selective violence is likely under fragmented sovereignty.

Anecdotal evidence confirms the presence of massive and selective violence in contested areas (e.g. Kann 2000[1969]:409; Jones 1989:127-8); this evidence is sketchy and needs to be extracted from countless reports, accounts, memoirs, etc. The most systematic evidence I could locate is from Carmack (1988a:xv-xvi) who, summarizing first-rate research by anthropologists in Guatemala, points out that the violence of the army appears to have varied inversely with the magnitude of the challenge it faced: it was massive in areas of heavy guerrilla activity, selective in areas where guerrillas had limited access, and limited where they have no access. In my own research (Kalyvas 1999) I found that mass and selective violence erupted in Algeria after areas controlled by the Islamist rebels became contested by the army (i.e. when sovereignty became fragmented).

These hypotheses tell only part of the story. The analysis of selective violence opens up an entire (and generally overlooked) area of inquiry. Although the analysis up to this point has focused on the level of relations between political actors and the population, it has missed (like most research) the level of relations *within* the population, i.e. intra-community dynamics. Here I focus on selective violence.⁴

Intra-community dynamics

Selective violence may be effective but is hard to achieve: how to know exactly who provides information to the other side in a given village? This is, in fact, a fundamental problem of rule: “The Sovereign can punish immediately any fault he discovers, but he cannot flatter himself into supposing that he sees all the faults he should punish,” pointed out Tocqueville. In other words, selective violence requires information. Thompson (1966:84) stresses the importance of this

⁴In Greece I found that even when indiscriminate violence was massive, more people were victims of selective than indiscriminate violence.

resource--known as intelligence in military parlance: “[W]ithin the government the intelligence organization is of paramount importance. In fact I would go as far as to say that no government can hope to defeat a communist insurgent movement unless it gives top priority to, and is successful in, building up such an organization.”

The kind of information which is necessary for selective violence is typically private and, as a result, asymmetrically distributed between political actors and civilians. Although some private information can be extracted violently, there is really no substitute for its spontaneous provision. However, channeling such information to political actors often hinges on complex intra-community dynamics. These dynamics are rarely studied. Indeed, most political scientists (and not only them) assume that violence is a process that can be understood solely on the basis of an analysis of what political actors do (both to each other and to civilians). The incentives and strategies of individuals and communities (both vis-à-vis political actors and, especially, vis-à-vis other individuals and communities) are disregarded. The most obvious cause of this neglect is the difficulty of conceptualizing, researching, and collecting systematically data at the community and individual levels--a work traditionally assigned to social anthropologists.

At the macro level individuals are aggregated into groups (e.g. peasants, Albanians) which are often treated as if they possessed anthropomorphic qualities: they take decisions (whom and how much to support) and act as if they were unitary actors.⁵ However, to speak of unitary actors when studying civil war violence is to go awry at the outset. Indeed, such an approach is at odds with both theoretical advances and empirical evidence suggesting that (a) groups (including ethnic ones) are, more often than not internally divided, and (b) much violence flows intra-group dynamics. As a Basque peasant woman whose family suffered at the hands of the nationalists during the Spanish Civil War, told the anthropologist Joseba Zulaika (1988:21): “It wasn’t Franco who harmed us, but people from here--the village.”

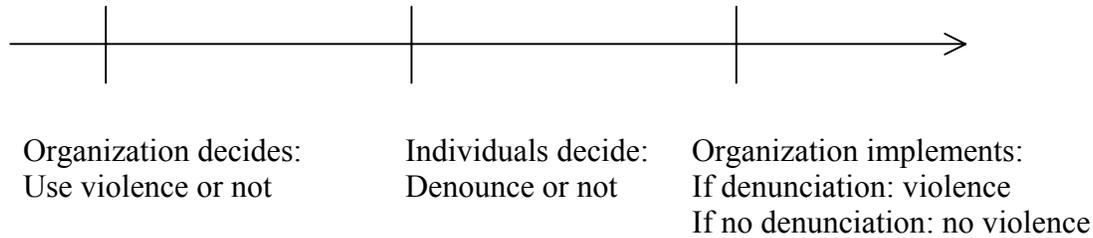
The flow of private information from individuals to political actors is motivated by intra-community dynamics. In other words, a large part of the violence in civil war is the outcome of transactions between on the one hand “outsiders” (both insurgent or incumbent political actors), and on the other hand “insiders” (local civilians—political cadres, sympathizers, and ordinary people). I call this feature *jointness*. Selective violence is *jointly* produced by insiders and outsiders, locals and nonlocals, civilians and soldiers.⁶ Figure 1 describes a stylized sequence of

⁵The mirror image of a group as a collective actor is that of a group as the collective victim of violence.

⁶Although violence can be produced jointly in the context of genocides and state terror, it acquires a different dynamic in civil wars, where there are actually two (or more) sides, which demand information.

the process which leads to the production of selective violence.

Figure 1
The basic sequence



First, a political actor decides whether to use violence or not, along the lines specified by hypotheses H1-H3; then individuals decide to provide the actor with information about defectors (i.e. denounce) or not. Denunciations are caused by all kinds of local conflicts: purely private ones (e.g. a recurring family feud)⁷ or local reflections of a larger cleavage (e.g. a conflict between a wealthy and a poor family); they may become attached to the conflict (e.g. adversaries in an old family feud might join opposite political camps) or they may be generated by the conflict itself (e.g. political actors may increase the pool of available resources in a given community and generate competition for them, hence generating new conflicts). Although denunciation is sometimes motivated by genuine support for a political actor (“pure” denunciation), it is more often motivated by narrow individual interests--such as settling private disputes (“malicious” denunciation). The few systematic historical studies on denunciation (e.g. Fitzpatrick and Gellately 1997) suggest that the majority of denunciations are malicious.⁸

Individuals who are often willing to denounce their neighbors in order to gain material or other benefits are, under normal conditions, unlikely to murder them, either because they are repelled by an act that transgresses the established normative order in times of peace, or because they are

⁷Abraham Lincoln described the civil war in the American West as a situation in which “every foul bird comes abroad, and every dirty reptile rises up. These add crime to confusion. ... Murders for old grudges, and murders for pelf, proceed under any cloak that will best cover for the occasion” (quoted in Fellman 1989:85).

⁸Note that this distinction does not overlap with the distinction between correct or false denunciation. A denunciation may be simultaneously malicious *and* accurate.

deterred by the sanctions associated with murder in normal times--or both. Denouncing personal enemies when a political actor assumes all the costs of violence, abolishes sanctions, or even replaces them with moral and/or material benefits, unfortunately becomes an attractive option. Individuals acquire, so to speak, private armies following a pattern which Jan Gross (1988:118-9), in his study of violence in Western Ukraine and Belorussia in 1939, describes as *privatization of authority*: the state is franchised, as it were, to local individuals, who use their newfound power to pursue their private interests and settle scores. To use Arendt's expression (1963:134), these are situations in which evil almost loses the quality of temptation.

Many acts of violence which on the surface (and to outside observers) appear to be generated by exclusively political or ideological motivations, ascriptive or not, turn out on closer examination to be "caused not by politics but by personal hatreds, vendettas, and envy" (Harding 1984:75). I provide a few examples. In the village of Ibieca in Aragon, during the Spanish Civil War, a carpenter named Joaquín Murillo was executed by anarchist militiamen. His execution, Harding's fieldwork revealed (1984:75) "had little to do with either war or revolution, according to one of his neighbors, who said that Murillo was denounced by a fellow carpenter out of rivalry." Freeman (1979:164) who studied Vega de Pas, a town of Northern Spain, reports that the main cleavage in its central neighborhood began as a dispute between two doctors in the early 1930s. These doctors competed against each other to obtain the title of official town doctor which entailed a state-guaranteed practice; the loser would be relegated to the sidelines, competing for patients while setting his own prices. Many families, Freeman reports, became engaged on the side of one or the other of the doctors.

Simultaneously, the political turmoil of the end of the Republic added a wider political dimension to what was in essence a dispute based on local issues. The tug-of-war is often described today in terms of the liberal-conservative issues of the time, but most informants agree that the basic issues were local and personal. However, the politics of the war provided a rationale for more drastic acts than would have been possible in peace: parties to the dispute denounced others and a few political assassinations ensued.

In their in-depth study of a death squad in the small town of San Pedro la Laguna, in Guatemala, Paul and Demarest (1988:125) found that "personal vengeance was a recurrent motive" behind the violence. Particular cases include the killing by a death squad leader of his brother-in-law, the abduction of a man in retaliation for having married a woman who was formerly the wife of a death squad member, and the denunciation by a woman of a man as a "subversive" because, in fact, "he had stolen her daughter-in-law's affections." The same phenomenon recur in the most varied historical and geographical contexts. An anthropologist of Greece reports that "It is said

that one man joined the Communists with the express intention of killing a rival inheritor of his father's" (Du Boulay 1974:239). The gangster Jean Grimaldi was killed by the German police in occupied Marseille after his local rivals deceived the Germans into believing that he was a leading resistance member (Jankowski 1989:117). Likewise, the murder of Afonso Gonçalves in September 1999, in East Timor, was "as personal as it was political" Mydans (1999) reports. Gonçalves was not killed just for the pro-independence views he held, but also for a family feud related to a niece who eloped, against family resistance, with a pro-Indonesia militiaman. A year later, during the terror that engulfed East Timor in the wake of the referendum, members of the militiaman's family came to Gonçalves' house and killed him. According to Hart (1998:306), the typical informer in the Irish Civil War (1922-3), was not someone with a cause but "rather someone with a grudge, a grievance, or with people or property to protect. Others saw the opportunity for gain or to settle old scores." Likewise, in the village of Qian Foji in China, during the Chinese Civil War, a wealthy peasant returned to his village which he had fled, when the Kuomintang Fortieth Army raided it in 1947, and informed the Kuomintang troops on his uncle's CCP membership. Thaxton (1997:290) notes that he had been previously "asked to return back interest to local borrowers including his uncle."

Because information about the private aspect of this violence is hard to get, observers often misinterpret it by giving it the kind of ideological bent that best suits them. A particularly suggestive example in that respect is that of Pavlik Morozov, the Soviet boy who informed on his kulak father and was killed by his uncles in revenge in September 1932. Pavlik became famous when the Soviet regime promoted him as an example of the upstanding young Pioneer who, in a situation of conflicting family and state loyalties, he nobly put the interests of the state first. The writer Maxim Gorky cited Pavlik Morozov as an example of Soviet heroism and for decades he was treated as the patron saint of the Pioneers and eulogized in public monuments, meetings, and inspirational children's books. Anticommunists, on the other hand, cited his case as indicative of the moral decay of totalitarianism, whereby ideological control undermined and destroyed even family bonds. A careful investigation, however, uncovered a different motivation behind Pavlik's action: his father, the chairman of the local rural soviet, had abandoned his wife and children and moved in with a younger woman from the same village. Pavlik, denounced his father either out of personal resentment (at thirteen or fourteen the eldest child, he had to take care of his family), or prompted by his mother or a cousin who wanted to become chairman of the rural soviet himself (Fitzpatrick 1994:255-6). Similar evidence can be found in in-depth studies of such diverse conflicts as the French counter-revolution (Martin 1994:40-44; Lucas 1983; Cobb 1972), the American Civil War in frontier states (Fisher 1997:63--Eastern Tennessee; Fellman 1989--Missouri), Nazi-occupied Poland (Paczowski 1999:311),

the Palestinian rebellion of 1936-1939 (Swedenburg 1995), the Spanish Civil War (Moreno 1999:309; Sender Barayón 1989), the Chinese Revolution (Thaxton 1997:290), the Algerian war of independence (Hamoumou 1993; Faivre 1994) and the ongoing civil war in Algeria (Kalyvas 1999; Gacemi 1998; Abdi 1997), WW2 and immediate postwar Yugoslavia (Djilas 1980:78), the Vietnam War (Blaufarb and Tanham 1989), civil wars in Guatemala (Stoll 1993; Stoll 1999; Davis 1988; Paul and Demarest 1988; Ebel 1988), Salvador (Wickham-Crowley 1992), Peru (Starn 1998; Degregori 1998), and the Philippines (Berlow 1996:182), the Zimbabwean war of independence (Kriger 1992), and the civil war in Sierra Leone (Richards 1996:8)--among many cases. This insight goes as far back as Thucydides' description of civil strife in Corcyra:

There were the wicked resolutions taken by those who, particularly under the pressure of misfortune, wished to escape from their usual poverty and coveted the property of their neighbors; ... Their victims were accused of conspiring to overthrow the democracy, but in fact men were often killed on grounds of personal hatred or else by their debtors because of the money that they owed.

This logic also operates in the context of societies which are sharply polarized in terms of class (Stoll 1999) and ethnicity (Hamoumou 1994; Gross 1988). Consider the following remark about the situation in Western Poland following the Soviet invasion of 1939 (Gross 1988:42): "Yet, much as the violence represented an explosion of combined ethnic, religious, and nationalist conflict, I am nevertheless struck by its intimacy. More often than not, victims and executioners knew each other personally. Even after several years, survivors could still name names. Definitively, people took this opportunity to get even for personal injuries of the past."

The local and personalistic nature of conflict runs the risk of getting lost--or worse be dismissed as either just a local reflection of the broader cleavage that informs the conflict or a collection of fascinating but ultimately unimportant anecdotes. Instead, these conflicts, which appear in almost every civil war I have read about, are part and parcel of the process of civil war violence and point to its core element which is seldom perceived, even less theorized: its joint character.

The joint production of violence emerges for the following reasons. Effective (that is, selective) violence requires control. Yet, political organizations (especially insurgent ones) typically lack resources, such as permanent bureaucracies, for the exercise of the kind of direct regular control that modern states are supposed to exercise (in fact, states in many civil war-torn countries are unable to exercise effective control even in times of peace). They, thus, achieve control indirectly by relying on local agents. Although resources for establishing and maintaining control are often limited, control requirements in civil wars are much more demanding than in

times of peace. These requirements range from tax collection to continuous and elaborate control of movements and exchanges, even (or especially) in small and marginal localities traditionally outside the state's reach. The distribution of information between organizations and local people is asymmetrical. Political actors need information so that they can use violence efficiently to force individuals into complying in an environment dominated by uncertainty. While the initial targets of violence are easy to spot (usually information about a well-known informer, a gendarme, a mayor, or a political activist is in the public domain), it is far more difficult to identify defectors (or potential defectors) later on, once the more suspect ones have either been killed or fled. Such identification is necessary for organizations that seek to achieve compliance for two reasons: first, well-targeted violence makes threats credible; second, constant monitoring allows highly efficient preemptive violence. However, tracking and anticipating peoples' daily behavior is only possible when local collaborators provide information. While it is possible to rely on cues, depend on spies and paid informers, or use torture, there is no substitute for the kind of information provided on a regular and voluntary basis by scores of local sympathizers. Finally, because organizations depend heavily on their local agents for a variety of tasks besides the collection of information, they usually refrain from carrying violent acts against local civilians without their consent. In other words, local agents often have veto power over violence.

The joint production of violence requires institutions. Levels of institutionalization may vary and institutions through which decisions are reached about the use of violence are, for obvious reasons, not very visible and thus hard to study. These institutions can be very informal, as when individuals provide unsolicited denunciations to political organizations. However, even seemingly simple acts such as a denunciation require quite complex institutions to handle solicitation, credible guaranties of anonymity, the evaluation of information, etc. In fact, the joint production is often quite formalized, mainly because of a variety of principal-agent problems that arise.

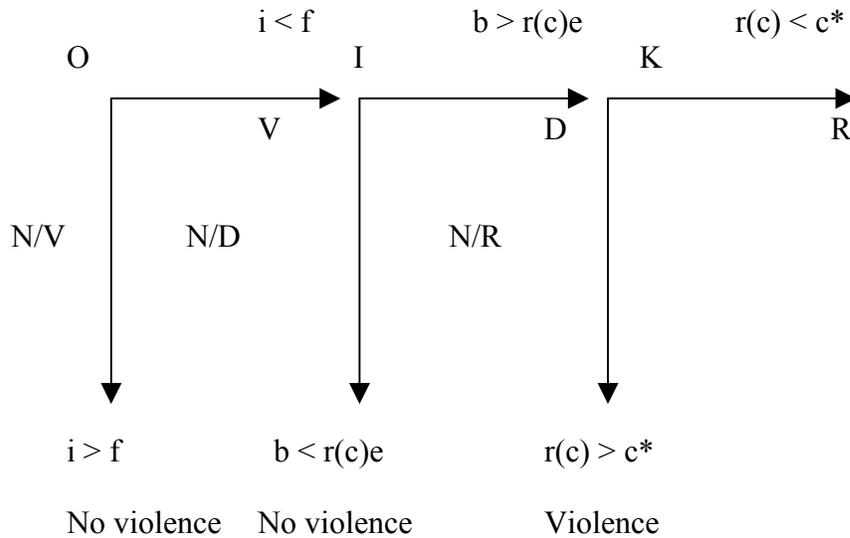
On the one hand individuals require that their anonymity be protected; yet, in small face-to-face societies visibility prevails: it is almost always possible to guess who caused harm to a person. On the other hand, political organizations demand reliable information. Yet, individuals have an incentive to free ride by turning a personal enemy into a political threat, thus using a political organization to settle private scores. A common way to ensure a degree of reliability is to rely on local agents who can sort out the information provided by the people they know. But how can an organization trust the information provided by its local agents? One way is to set-up mixed committees of local collaborators and representatives of the organization to discuss and

filter out information--and to hold the local committee members collectively responsible for the decision. Political actors also use profiling: a mayor who is denounced to the rebels as a collaborator of the army is more likely to be indeed a collaborator than a random peasant. Most importantly, political actors judge the accuracy of denunciations by looking at its surrounding context. Defection is more likely in areas where the adversaries are active, hence denunciations in these areas are likely to be more accurate compared to those coming from areas with no activity. Finally, credible (and hence deterring) violence need not always *be* selective but rather *appear to be* selective. The presence of an apparatus that deliberates and makes choices provides a credible indicator of selectivity in an environment where actual “guilt” is often hard to ascertain.

Denunciation does not only bring benefits to individuals; it also carries considerable risks. Individuals willing to denounce their neighbors will generally do so only when the benefits of such action exceeds its cost. The calculus of (potential) denouncers, an essential component of the process of violence, has been neglected even by anthropologists and historians because it is so hard to observe. The main cost of denunciation is the risk of future sanctions facing the denouncer. As a French officer who fought in Algeria put it (Trinquier 1964:35): “The inhabitants will know [the rebel collaborators], since they suffer terribly from their activities, but will not denounce these agents unless they can do so without risk. Fear of reprisal will always prevent them from communicating to is information they possess.”

In rural societies where visibility is high and denunciations can be traced with relative ease (since local conflicts are public knowledge), sanctions take the form of retaliation against the denunciator by the victim’s kin. Retaliation is almost never immediate or direct. The victim’s kin (or other interested parties) usually carry their retaliation ‘through’ the rival political actor (in the same fashion that the original denouncer kills ‘through’ an army). This requires such an actor to be available for such an action. In other words, the victim’s kin must have access to the rival political actor in order to achieve retaliation (and this actor must be willing to use violence). Figure 2 describes the logic of joint violence in the form of a game tree which combines the incentive structure of *both* organizations and individuals.

Figure 2
The Logic of Violence



- O: Organization
- I: Individuals
- K: Victim's kin
- V: Decision to use violence
- N/V: Decision not to use violence
- D: Denounce
- N/D: Not Denounce

- R: Retaliate
- N/R: Not Retaliate

A Simple Model of Violence in Civil War

Defection will be most likely where sovereignty is fragmented. If there are k defectors in a village and c is the level of control an organization enjoys in the village, $k(c)$ is decreasing with c and reaches 0 at c^{**} . In other words, defection (and hence the use of violence by political actors) is strong where their sovereignty is weak.

Political actors don't want to use violence when it is unnecessary to do so. In particular, they want to avoid using violence indiscriminately (i.e. kill the wrong people) because such violence is likely to generate more defections instead of deterring them. Let the benefit of using violence for an organization be b_o and the cost of violence e_o . Organizations will use violence when $b_o > e_o$ and will refrain from using violence when $b_o < e_o$.

Information about defectors is private and is transferred to organizations by means of

denunciation. If there are no denunciations, or if denunciations are false, we have $b_o < e_o$. Since violence is likely to be indiscriminate in the absence of information, organizations will be unwilling to resort to violence.⁹ The truth of a denunciation is ascertained indirectly by organizations through the use of a proxy: their estimation of the likelihood of defection, $k(c)$. Where there is no activity by the rival actor defection is unlikely, hence denunciations in those places will be false. If $k(c) = 0$, then all denunciations will be false. Conversely, where control is weak and the enemy close, defection is far more likely, hence the likelihood of accuracy of denunciations, as ascertained by the political actor, will be higher.

Now consider the calculus of (potential) denouncers. Let the benefit of denouncing (the individual gratification plus any rewards from the organization) be b_i and the cost of being retaliated against $e_i > b_i$.¹⁰ Let the probability of retaliation following a denunciation be $r(c)$; $r(c)$ is decreasing with c : where control is weak, retaliation is more likely.¹¹ In these areas, the victim's kin enjoy the option of retaliation: they can depend in the rival organization to exercise retribution. The expected benefit of denouncing someone is $b_i - r(c)e_i$. Setting the value of the status quo to the individual to 0, villagers will denounce if $b_i > r(c)e_i$. Since the expected cost of denouncing decreases with the strength of the organization, denunciations will take place where the degree of control exceeds some threshold value c^* . No denunciations will take place below c^* (because $b_i < r(c)e_i$)--hence no violence either since it would be indiscriminate in the absence denunciations ($b_o < e_o$).

Since retaliation is not possible in areas of high control, denunciation is very likely there (because $b_i > r(c)e_i$). Thus, the probability of denunciation $d(c)$ increases with c . Yet we know that $k(c)$ is decreasing with c , hence the reliability of denunciation decreases with both k and c . In other words, individuals have an incentive to denounce most where there are few defectors around (or none at all): the reliability of denunciation reaches 0 at c^{**} .¹² Above c^{**} no violence will take place because it would be indiscriminate in the presence of false denunciations ($b_o < e_o$).

⁹Denunciations, which are vetoed by local committees, are equivalent to no denunciations.

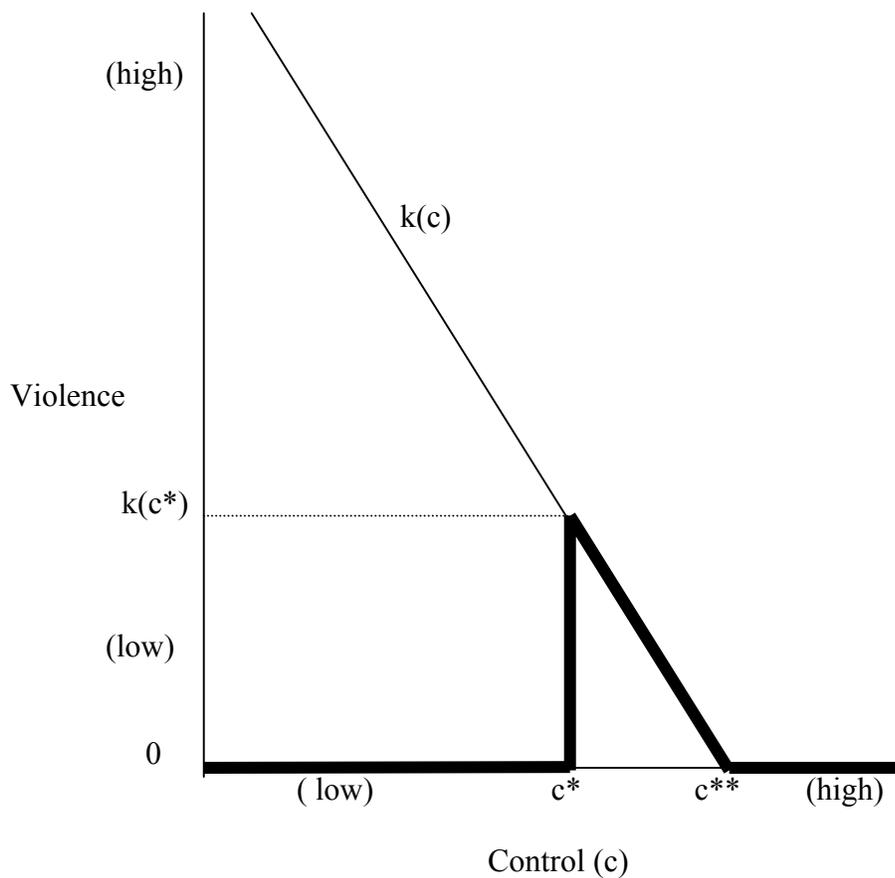
¹⁰At this point I do assume that all benefits from denunciation are cancelled by retaliation. However these benefits vary in other ways as well: given big incentives to denounce (including intense hatred), one might be willing to be more risk-averse. Likewise, the shape of the relationship underlying a denunciation matters: a mutually known symmetrical dislike might, under some conditions, give rise to individual security dilemmas and preemptive action.

¹¹ $r(c)$ is parallel to $k(c)$. The probability of retaliation is high where the probability of defection is high.

¹²Initially, individuals will give false denunciations; after a number of iterations, when they realize that political actors discount them (or even punish them), false denunciations will decline and disappear.

If we plot selective violence (deaths following denunciations) on the y-axis and c , the level of organizational control, on the x-axis, we will get this: the number killed is 0 up to c^* , then jumps to $k(c^*)$, and then declines from there as c increases above c^* . At c^{**} , violence ceases (Figure 3). The space between c^* and c^{**} is the “space of violence.”

Figure 3
Control and Violence
 (One organization)



Below c^* : $b_o < e_o$, because $b < r(c)e_i$

From c^* to c^{**} : $b_o > e_o$ because $b > r(c)e_i$ and $k(c) > 0$

Above c^{**} : $b_o < e_o$ because $k(c) < 0$

Space of violence: between c^* and c^{**}

These predictions are ironic in the following way: political actors won't use violence where they

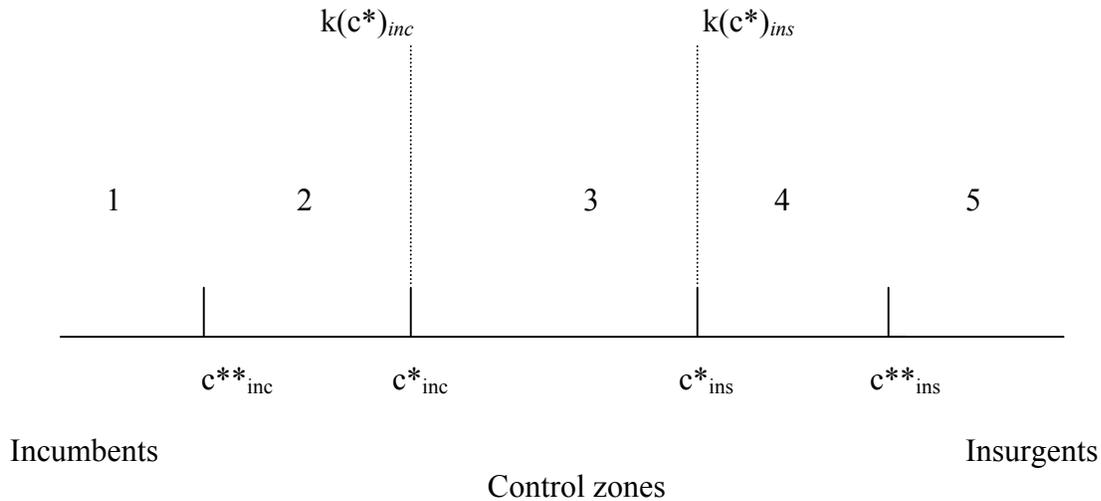
need it most (where $c < c^*$) because in these areas individuals face strong counterincentives to denunciation. The underlying logic here is mutual deterrence: denouncers are deterred by their potential victims' retaliatory ability. Likewise, individuals will fail to get rid of their private enemies where they denounce the most. In areas of mass denunciation (where $c > c^{**}$) there will be little violence because political actors have little use for violence. Violence will emerge only where the calculus of political actors and individuals converge.¹³

Testing these predictions requires a subtler operationalization of the geographical space. Instead of three zones (sovereignty, no sovereignty, fragmented sovereignty), we may distinguish five zones, splitting the contested area into three sub-areas. Incumbents exercise full sovereignty in some areas (zone 1) and secure control in other places (zone 2). Whereas in the former they have a quasi-absolute monopoly of violence, in the latter they have to contend with an insurgent clandestine organization as well as infrequent visits by the rebels. On the other hand, insurgents maintain full control in some places (zone 5) and secure control in an adjacent zone (zone 4). In the latter, they enjoy prominence but cannot prevent the army from visiting from time to time. Finally there is an intermediate zone (3), which we may call a "contested area." These areas are often described as places where the government rules by day and the rebels by night. Defection toward the rival organization is highly likely in zone 3 because both actors are present and invest resources to induce defection. Defection is also likely in both zones 2 and 4 (although less so than in zone 3), and it is least likely in zones 1 and 5. Denunciations in zones 1 and 5 are, thus, highly likely to be false--but they will be massive since it is safe to denounce where there is only one sovereign. Denunciations are likely to be accurate in zone 3—and credible in zones 2 and 4. The model predicts that the numbers of killed will reach the maximum $k(c^*)$ in zones 2 (for incumbents-- $k(c^*)_{inc}$) and 4 (for insurgents-- $k(c^*)_{ins}$) (Figure 4). Note that the model predicts who the originator of the violence is likely to be: incumbents in zone 2 and insurgents in zone 4.

¹³The model carries an interesting implication: since no denunciations will be forthcoming in contested areas, if there is any violence (presumably outside the equilibrium path) it is likely to be indiscriminate.

Figure 4

Control and Violence
(Two organizations)



- Zone 1: secure (incumbents)
- Zone 2: relatively secure (incumbents)
- Zone 3: contested
- Zone 4: relatively secure (insurgents)
- Zone 5: secure (insurgents)

By disaggregating contested areas into three sub-categories, this model uncovers dynamics which remain hidden in models that fail to incorporate intra-community dynamics. Hypothesis 3 can be now amended as follows:

H3 (amended): Under fragmented sovereignty, violence is likely where one side has an edge over the other and limited where there is a balance of power.

Caveats

The following caveats apply. First, the distribution of areas into different zones of control is exogenous to the model; it is determined by a combination of variables, mainly geography and the nature of military operations. Substantial anecdotal evidence and my own systematic empirical research in Greece strongly suggest that support is generally endogenous to control; in a different formulation, war (the combination of geography and resources) shapes the distribution of support more than prewar cleavages.

Second, this model generates hypotheses about the onset rather than the absolute size of violence: whether an area will see violence as opposed to exactly how much violence it will experience. The actual magnitude of violence, as well as its modality (individual murders versus massacres, etc.) is an empirical issue that I address elsewhere by combining initial levels of violence with the number of “rounds” of violence (where “rounds” are determined by shifts in control). Estimating the overall level of violence at the aggregate level requires knowledge about the size of the various zones.

Third, an important underlying assumption is that individuals make correct estimates about where they live. If someone lives in an area strongly controlled by the rebels (zone 5), she knows it and expects it to be true for the duration of the war. This is a realistic assumption from a static perspective, but a less realistic one from a dynamic one. Individuals tend to underestimate the duration of wars¹⁴ and rely on local information, thus overestimating the duration of control. However, with time areas undergo repeated shifts of control which ultimately generate intolerable levels of uncertainty. Under very high uncertainty (i.e. the expectation that control may shift at any moment), it will be irrational to denounce anyone, anywhere (or, alternatively, it may appear rational to preemptively denounce the greatest possible number). Repeated shifts, accompanied by violence, will cause people to flee their homes and the zones of violence will turn into “no man’s lands”--a common occurrence in many protracted civil wars (Geffray 1990).

Finally, an underlying assumption of the model is that the past does not matter: the behavior of individuals is not altered by the number of shifts in control. However, recent victimization may lead to emotion-driven behavior that disregards risks. Someone living in zone 3, blind with rage following the death of loved ones, may well take unreasonable risks and denounce his victimizers. Possibly, the rise of uncertainty (causing risk averse behavior) and the upsurge of emotions (causing risk prone behavior) as the war go on may cancel each other out.

These assumptions can be relaxed in future model specifications to predict thresholds of toleration of uncertainty as well as of disregard of risks. The key variable is the number of iterations in “rounds of violence” defined as shifts in control (which in turn define how “advanced” a civil war is). By refining or extending the model and relaxing some of its assumptions it is possible to ask questions and generate hypotheses which would never emerged in the first place.

¹⁴For example, “No one, North and South, anticipated the duration or devastation of the American Civil War” (Fellman 1989:23).

Not all civil wars are the same. A major distinction is between ethnic (or ascriptive) and non-ethnic (or non-ascriptive) civil wars. This model allows the reformulation of the difference between violence in ethnic and non-ethnic wars as an information problem. In many civil wars, information about actual or potential defectors is (at least initially) public. In civil wars based on ascriptive cleavages (including ethnic ones), individual identities are signaled in a variety of ways which are both visible and public; in turn, these identities may convey information about the likelihood of future defection and hence prompt violent action.¹⁵ In such environments, no private information is generally needed for violence to be initially selective. As a result, violence may not be joint--although when and where local consent about the use of violence is introduced, violence may become joint. The first round of violence will often be an attempt to exterminate the (publicly known) local leaders of the rival faction. Following this first round of violence rival elites are exterminated and often their “underlying populations” flee: civil wars tend to produce segregation even when the intention is not to “cleanse.” In the newly homogenized environments, information about potential defectors will become private again. This information will be extremely valuable particularly where and when a political actor launches programs of co-optation. In the great majority of civil wars, ascriptive and non-ascriptive alike, the primary objective of at least one political actor (usually incumbents) is to obtain the collaboration of civilians who are “bundled” with the insurgents rather than exterminate them. As a result, the rival political actor, usually insurgents, will have an incentive to resort to selective violence against its “own” people in order to police them. In other words, in ethnic civil wars (as well as strongly polarized non-ethnic ones), the logic described by the model will not kick in immediately, but after a few rounds of violence.

Empirical Illustrations

Using data from the Greek Civil War, collected at the village level, I have tested the model with encouraging results (the test is still incomplete as the data is being extracted from interviews and archives). A summary of the results so far is presented in Table 2.

¹⁵Likewise, in civil wars based on non-ascriptive cleavages, which are highly polarized ex ante, information about identities is as public as in ascriptive environments.

Table 2
Summary of Results

	Insurgents t ₁	Insurgents t ₂	Incumbents t ₂	Insurgents t ₃	Incumbents t ₃	Insurgents t ₄
Violence correctly predicted	62.5%	80%	72%	55%	100%	50%
Violence incorrectly predicted	37.5%	20%	28%	45%	0	50%
Nonviolence correctly predicted	85%	87%	58%	97%	76%	98%
Nonviolence incorrectly predicted	15%	13%	42%	3%	24%	2%

There are two potential sources of endogeneity: of denunciations versus control and of control versus prewar support for the competing actors. Using the data from Greece I have tested for both. As far as the first is concerned, since denunciations are not observable I have used as a proxy the level of village conflicts prior to the war measured by judicial data (which in the Greek case is a very good indicator of petty conflicts) and found no relation; the same is the case with prewar electoral returns; furthermore, the level of denunciations as proxied by the level of violence follows the shifts of control rather than the other way around. For example, when an area goes from zone 1 to zone 2, violence tends to increase in the predicted direction and vice versa. In terms of the second I have used electoral data and found no relation.¹⁶

An additional issue is whether political actors may act strategically vis-à-vis the individuals' willingness to denounce by anticipating it and trying to meet it. Insofar as denunciation is not motivated by benefits other than violence, there is little that political actors can do to induce

¹⁶Recent research in a northern Greek region (Antoniou 2001) found that the number of local men who joined the Communist-led resistance in 1942-4 was not predicted by the electoral score of the Communist Party in 1936 and that it was predicted by the distance from the town that served as the main base of the incumbent army: the furthest away from the incumbent base a village was, the higher was the proportion of local men who joined the rebels.

more people to denounce in zone 3, given the cost of such action.

Below I offer a few comparative illustrations suggesting that the hypotheses formulated here are (a) plausible and (b) have the potential to hold beyond the Greek case. They are extracted from anecdotal observations that are included in a variety of sources from a large number of civil wars.

Hypothesis 1 (Zone 1 & Zone 5)

There is considerable evidence that political actors do not apply mass violence in areas they control strongly (e.g. Wickham-Crowley 1991:50-1). For example, the Algerian Islamist rebels used little violence in the areas they controlled--until their control was contested by the army (Kalyvas 1999). Conversely, there is much evidence that both incumbents and insurgents resort to indiscriminate violence in places where they have no control at all (Carmack 1988). The following two examples of insurgent indiscriminate massacres are consistent with this hypothesis. On August 21, 1863, confederate guerrillas from Missouri raided Lawrence, Kansas and massacred about 150 civilians. Lawrence was populated by a strongly Unionist population and was located fifty miles into strongly Unionist territory (Fellman 1985:25). On March 20, 1953, Kikuyu rebels raided the Kikuyu village of Lari, some 25 miles north-west of Nairobi, and massacred 84 of its inhabitants. Lari was a "loyalist" village which had joined the cause of the colonial administration (Paget 1967:93-4).

Hypothesis 2 (Zone 2 & Zone 4)

Where incumbents are stronger than insurgents but the latter still have access to the population, we should observe high levels of incumbent violence. This appears to have been the pattern of Japanese violence in countries they occupied during the Second World War. Thaxton (1997:208) points out that as a rule, the highest Japanese-caused death rates were found in the areas immediately adjacent to the county towns, rather than in the towns or the remote countryside. For example, in the aftermath of the Japanese attack on Qingfeng County town in early 1938, villagers reported seeing more and more new grave mounds, about five *li* away. The number increased as they came closer to the town, where the Japanese damage was worst. Conversely, the Communist-led fourth branch army, far removed from these rural towns, enjoyed a comparatively high level of security. Likewise, most destruction in the areas of Southern China studied by Siu (1989:97-8) was suffered by periurban villages, villages located around the towns. A similar pattern is reported about the Japanese-occupied Filipino island of Leyte by Lear (1961:214).

The same pattern, only inverse (i.e. high levels of insurgent violence) should be observed where insurgents are stronger than incumbents but the latter still have access to the population. This seems to have been the case of one of the hamlets in the village of Loc Dien, a village of ten thousand near Hue, South Vietnam. This hamlet, the one farthest away from the village center, was under the influence of the Vietcong: "Since the hamlet by the bay is so remote from the village center, V.C. come there frequently, even in the daytime, to take fish from the fishermen, paying them with worthless V.C. money" (Moser (2000[1965]:99-100). It was so "insecure," that teachers would not come there as they did in the other hamlets. However, there was pro-government militia in the village center, visiting the hamlet quite frequently but never staying there. Two men from the hamlet were kidnapped and assassinated, both by the Vietcong. Race's (1973:114) outline of the pattern of assassinations in Long An province, in the same country, during 1959-1960, also seems to fit this hypothesis. In his comparison of two areas in Peru, one where Shining Path rebels exercised full authority (Canipaco valley) and one (Jarpa) where a Shining Path column "visited regularly," Manrique (1998:204) finds that in the latter "coercion predominated from the beginning. In contrast, Canipaco had initially lived a kind of honeymoon between the comuneros and the guerrilla column."

Hypothesis 3 (amended) (Zone 3)

This is the most interesting hypothesis in the sense that one would expect that the most hotly contested areas would also be the most violent. Consider the following observation from the contested Vietnamese village of Binh Nghia, where in 1965-67 a detachment of Marines and a local South-Vietnamese militia ruled by day while the Vietcong ruled by night. Although the local Vietcong did not dare visit their home in the village on a regular basis, West (1985:5; 219-20) tells us,

their families were immune from the violence. The relatives and children of both sides were equally vulnerable to reprisals, so no man dared to strike the family of another, lest his own family suffer ten times over. ... The PFs [militias] and the Viet Cong had certain rules to their war, understandings which were kept because, and only so long as, they were mutually advantageous. What often has been called accommodation frequently has been nothing more than a precarious balance of power, perceived as such by both sides. Deterrence is a better word than accommodation to describe a situation where in each side is unwilling to undertake certain acts while the other side retains capability to retaliate in kind. ... The ultimate step in escalation--the murder or wholesale slaughter of PF families--was unlikely in Binh Nghia because the VC families acted as hostages. Suong [the leader of the militia] had declared that he would kill ten of their children for each member of a PF family killed. Vulnerability to retaliation set limits on the actions either the PFs or the Viet Cong were willing to take in the struggle for Binh Nghia.

As a result, civilians were not victimized in Binh Nghia: “It was usually the participants on both sides, not the villagers, who died” (West 1985:187). A CIA case officer who served in Vietnam told Moyar (1997:68) that “many informants were also wary of providing information that would affect people in their village structure. As a result, the [Vietcong] cadres we’d get information on most often were guys from outside of the village coming into the village.” A similar dynamic prevailed in the village of San Ricardo in the Philippines, during the Huk rebellion. This village, Kerkvliet (1977:163-4) points out was not a “liberated area.” The rebels could prevent the intrusions of the army “sometimes and in some places but not all the time in all places.” During the height of the revolt in Talavera, between 1946 and 1950, threats, counterthreats, fears, and apprehensions frequently led to tacit understandings between the two factions and kept their respective armed groups from fighting over harvest. A last example comes from the Greek Civil War. A leftist Greek peasant recalls in his memoirs (Antonopoulos 1993:149-51) how, in 1948, he escaped death at the hands of an army officer, whom he describes as being extremely violent. This peasant was suspected of contacts with communist rebels who frequently visited the village because all his four brothers had joined the rebels and were roaming around the village. The officer and his men beat him up, and another peasant, for three days in a row, in order to get him to confess the location of a cache of weapons. On the third day, a man from a neighboring village, whom Antonopoulos describes as an “arch-murderer and leader of the local right-wing militia” showed up and told the colonel to stop “hurting these guys.” The officer initially refused to listen and the two men got into a dispute. Eventually the militiaman threatened the colonel: “I don’t want to leave my family in the street. If you do something [to these people] you won’t leave this place alive, do you hear me?” The dispute ended when another militiaman explained to the colonel that their intervention was not motivated by any sympathy toward Antonopoulos, but by the fear of retribution from the his brothers: “You will leave the area in a couple of days,” he told him, “but we will stay here. Who will deal with those guys?” A woman who was present added: “Mr. Colonel, do not kill them, they are a whole bee nest, how will we cope later?” The prisoners were promptly freed.

This pressure from below causes political actors to eventually even stop soliciting denunciations in contested areas. In Binh Nghia, for example, “The Americans were not trying to win the hearts and minds of the villagers so that they would rise up and drive out the Viet Cong. They did not expect the average farmer or housewife to provoke retaliation by providing them information simply because they acted as decent human beings. So could the Viet Cong” (West 1985:146).

Conclusion

This paper suggests that civil war violence does not always resemble the Hobbesian world of random and generalized mayhem of all against all one typically depicted by the media. A significant number of people and communities escape the violence that engulfs neighboring places; many people are victims of selective rather than indiscriminate violence; although few individuals perform the actual killings, far more people make what are violent choices by providing information leading to the violence--often for reasons unrelated to the conflict's political agenda. Violence in civil wars does not necessarily presuppose the processes of "dehumanization of the other" that one usually expects (at least not initially): informing on one's neighbor is often motivated by the kind of petty and trivial conflicts and feuds which constitute the stuff of everyday life and under normal conditions do not lead to homicidal violence. Processes of dehumanization take time to develop and tend to emerge only after a number of iterations. Violence is not a haphazard process, but a highly regulated one, taking place in a sequential fashion. New informal and formal institutions emerge to regulate violence: denunciations and the violence that follows are often shaped by these institutions. To return to the initial question of this paper: violence in civil war contexts is often the result of choice under varying degrees of certainty; but these choices entail a joint logic, one that entails the convergence of two distinct choices: of political actors *and* civilians.

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