Wartime violence

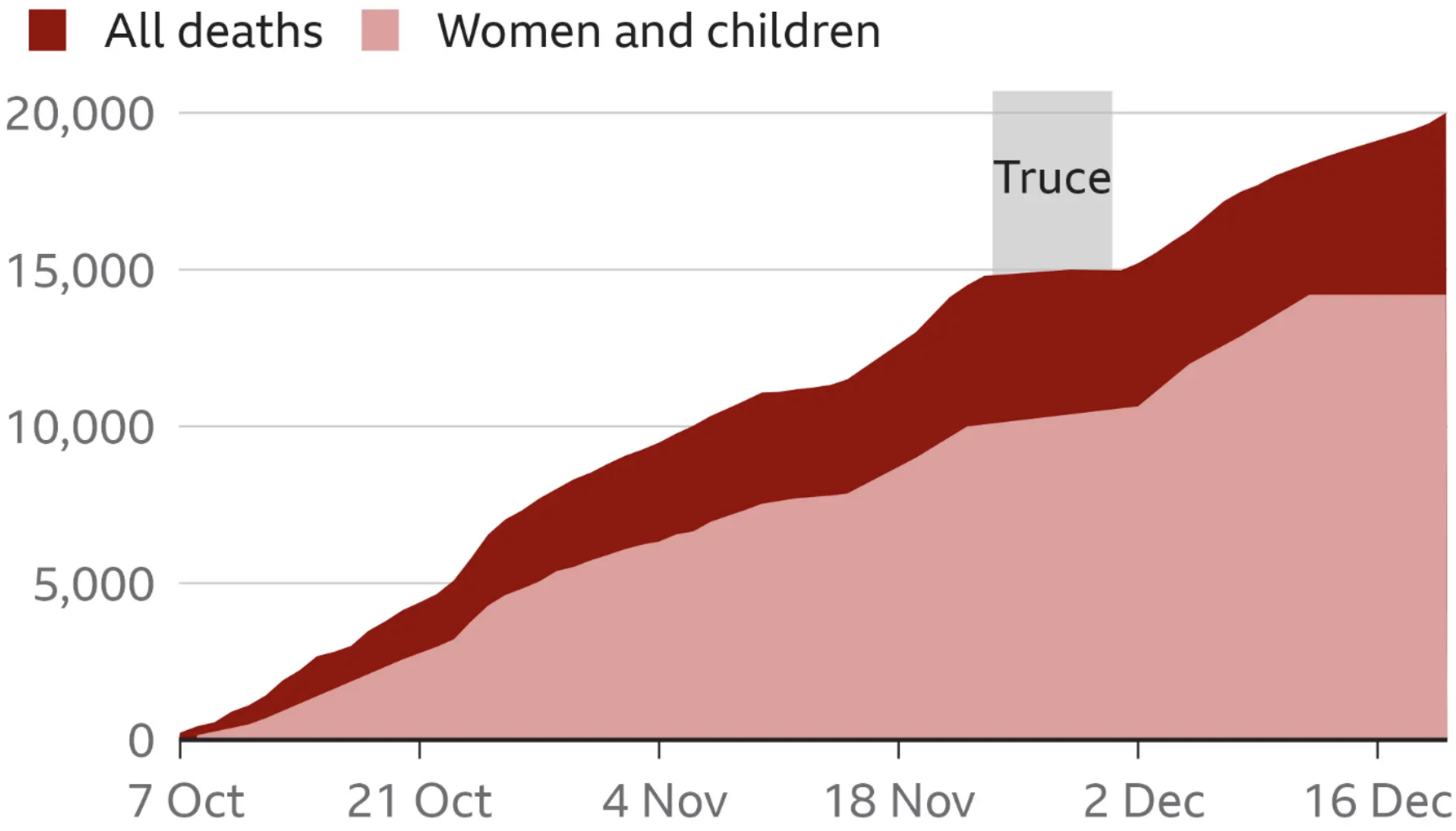
Francisco Villamil

War, peace, and political violence

UC3M, Fall 2024

At least 20,000 reportedly killed

Cumulative daily reports of deaths in Gaza, 7 Oct-20 Dec



Note: Deaths of women and children are not always reported separately. The latest report is from 12 Dec

Source: Hamas-run Gaza Health Ministry and Government Media Office

BBC

Collateral Genocide: Inside Israel's Official 'Legalisation' of Mass Civilian Killings

Israel's key defence is that it is not intending to destroy Gazans, but to destroy Hamas – so whatever happens is therefore not intentional

Nafeez Ahmed 12 April 2024



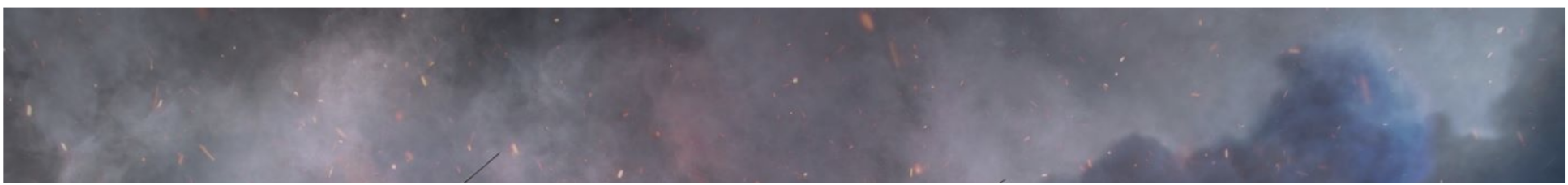
Israel, Just War, Long Reads, War

The West Has Forgotten Why Collateral Damage Is Morally Justified

March 14, 2024 | By Shlomo M. Brody

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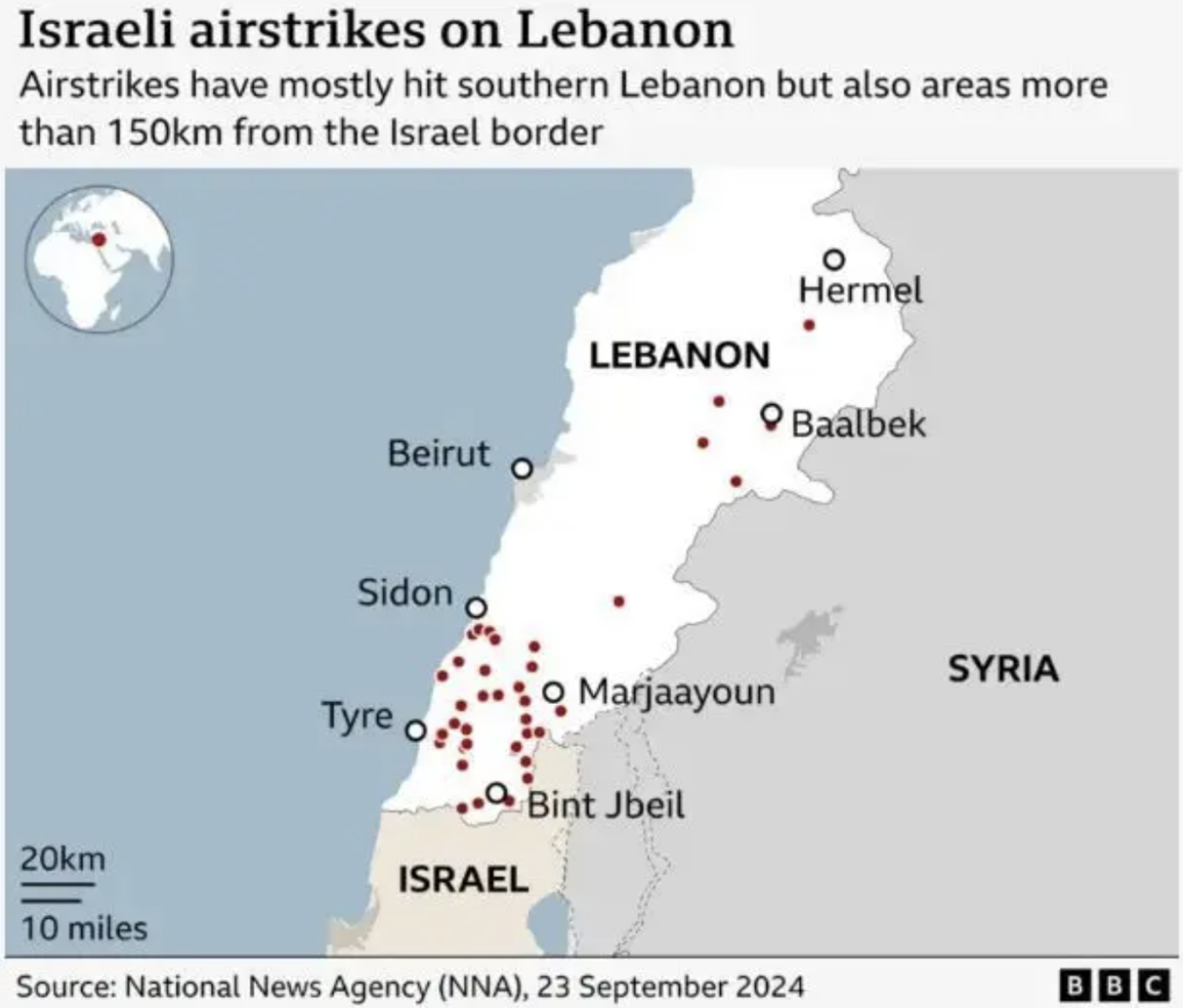
Ultimately, the defeat of these terrorist groups is the primary ethical imperative. This will benefit not only Israel but also the Gazan civilians who suffer longer under their terrorist leaders and the continuous warfare that they breed. There is a moral cost to not acting decisively, and a strategic cost to forgetting the moral justification for killing in war.



Israel takes revenge on Palestinian armed factions by mass killing civilians in Gaza



Where Israeli strikes on Hezbollah hit yesterday?



Key question

- **Why do civilians die in a war?**

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- We can also ask the same about **battle violence**

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- Focus on whole conflicts/events
  - → WWII, Sri Lankan Civil War, Israel-Gaza conflict, etc

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  - → Why did e.g. the Second Congo War break out? What countries are at risk of conflict?

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Violence patterns during WWII



Battle of Normandy

Violence patterns during WWII



Pearl Harbor

Violence patterns during WWII



London Blitz

Violence patterns during WWII



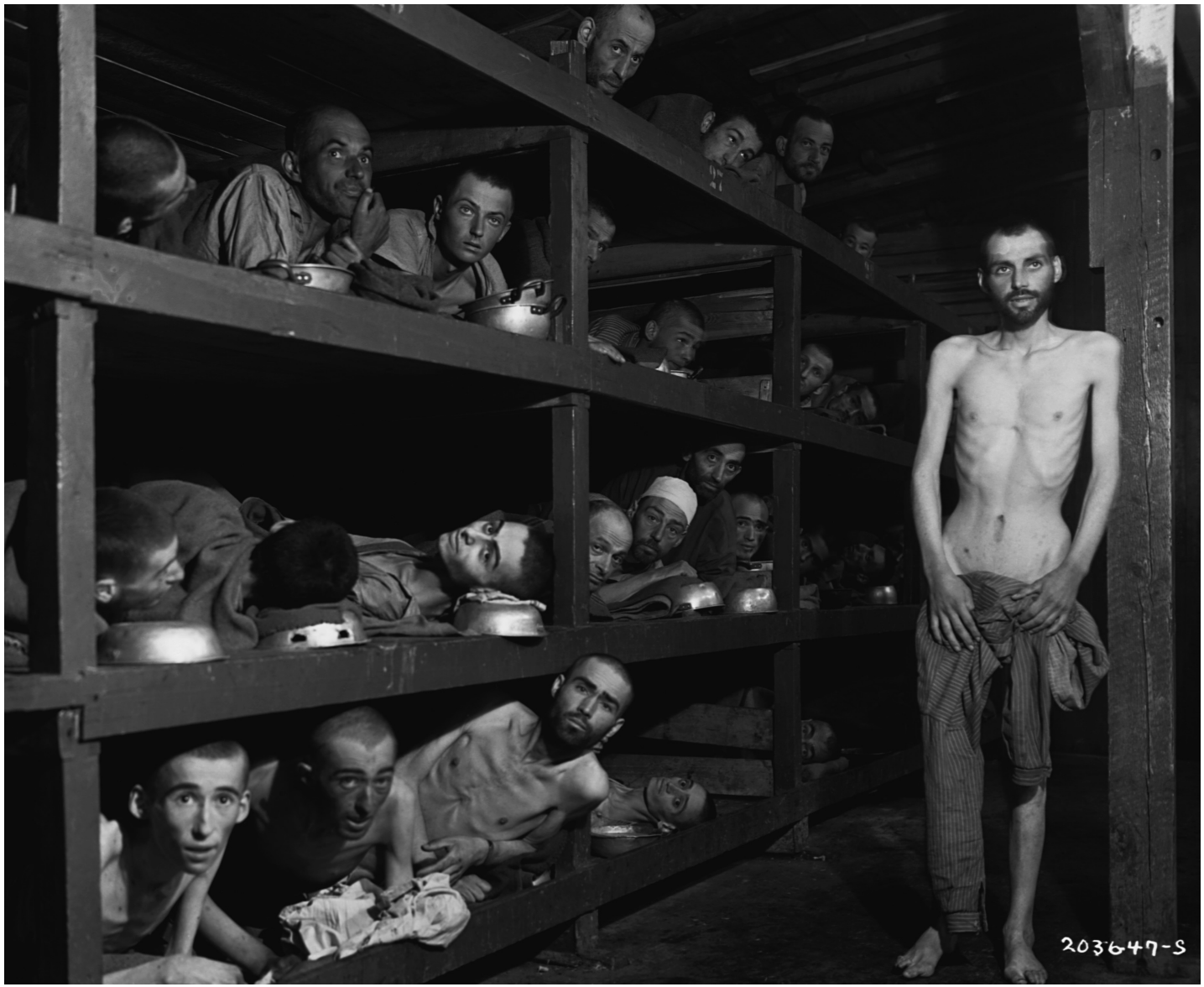
French Resistance

Violence patterns during WWII



Women accused of collaboration with the Nazis, Paris 1944

Violence patterns during WWII



Holocaust against Jews

Violence patterns during WWII



Political prisoners in Sachsenhausen camp

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- Violence *varies* and is *not random* at all

Violence in civil wars

- Key aspect: distinction between battle violence and violence against civilians
  - → Blurry in civil wars: what distinguishes a combatant from a civilian?
  - → Compare with idea of civilians in interstate wars and *jus in bello* (IHL)

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  - → military contest vs barbarian chaos, battle for hearts and minds, ...

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(*) 'Informality' of civil wars (less rules, less hierarchy, less central planning)

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- (What's the difference between **state-based violence and state-based conflicts?**)

Types of violence

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- But when we look at how violence is *used*, there is a lot of variation

Patterns of political violence (Gutierrez-Sanín & Wood 2017)

Table 1
Definition of "pattern of violence"

Dimension	Definition	Examples (not exhaustive)
Repertoire	The forms of violence in which the organization regularly engages	Homicide, torture, forced displacement, rape, forced abortion, etc.
Targeting	For each element of the repertoire, the social groups against whom the organization regularly engages with that form of violence.	An ethnic group, male members of an ethnic group, political prisoners, prisoners of war, LBGTI persons, combatants of rival organizations, residents of "enemy" village or neighborhood, etc.
Technique	How the organization carries out that form of violence against that social group	Techniques of killing include execution by firearm, execution by machete, shelling, suicide bombing, etc.
Frequency	The count (of events or victims) or the rate of attacks, of victimization or of perpetration by the armed organization using a specified repertoire element, targeting and technique (or their specified aggregates, e.g., the frequency of torture with any technique). If a count, ideally it would include some estimate (however rough) of its uncertainty. If a rate, both the numerator and the denominator should be clearly specified.	For example, take a case in which the repertoire element is torture and the social group is political detainees. (Assume that the analyst is not concerned with differences in technique). If it is possible to estimate frequency, the count would be the incidence (the number of incidents of torture or of persons, along with an estimate of its uncertainty), prevalence,[a] or rate of perpetration,[b] depending on the purpose of the analysis.

A. The number of persons tortured at least once/the number of detainees

B. The number of incidents or persons tortured/the number of members of the relevant unit of the armed organization (all members or the members of the responsible unit, depending on the purpose of the analysis)

- Applied to armed groups (rebels, states, etc)

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- For example, what's the pattern of Hamas? Israel IDF ?

Patterns of political violence



Sometimes groups are infamously famous for their repertoire

Understanding violence against civilians

- Now the important question, why we observe civilian victimization?

Understanding violence against civilians



Understanding violence against civilians

Lawrence Eagleburger (US Secr. of State) on Yugoslavia, in 1992:
"this war is not rational. There is no rationality at all about ethnic conflict. It is gut, it is hatred; it's not for any set of values or purposes; it just goes on"

Understanding violence against civilians, pre 2000

- Violence against civilians seen as collateral violence
  - → Differences because of external factors: available weapons, population density, etc

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- Sometimes *intentionality* could not be ignored (e.g. genocides, ethnic violence): ancient hatreds

Collateral Genocide: Inside Israel's Official 'Legalisation' of Mass Civilian Killings

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Nafeez Ahmed 12 April 2024



Israel takes revenge on Palestinian armed factions by mass killing civilians in Gaza



IDEAS • MIDDLE EAST

Let's Be Honest About the Hate That Drove the Hamas Attack

5 MINUTE READ



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  (There was an exception, actually: those who studied terrorism did view violence against civilians as instrumental)

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- Violence is an extension of war and an extension of politics

Civilian killings and war

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- Civilians are **not bystanders** to a war, they play a central role (offering support, human resources, etc) and, sometimes, they become the object of war
- Most attention on *state-led* violence against civilians: because of their capacities (to inflict violence & to control territory and have access to the civilian population), states have usually been the main perpetrators

  (Not always: ISIS' infamous record, West African rebel groups, ...)

Civilian killings and war

- **Technology of rebellion** and **counter-insurgency** strategy explain very well patterns of violence against civilians

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- "The guerrilla must move amongst the people as a fish swims in the sea" (Mao Tse-Tung)
- Response by the state? General Ríos Montt in Guatemala: drain the sea in which the guerrilla swim
- More civilian victimization when state is not able to withdraw **support** to the rebels or defeating them in some other way
- This logic easily leads to mass killing episodes, or ethnic cleansing in contexts whether support is assumed to follow ethnic lines

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- Terrorism is a classic example: use of civilian killings to extract concessions from governments (particularly in democratic regimes, where people have more leverage)
- But rebel groups can also use violence to **gain cooperation from civilians** (typically, with territorial control)
  - → If you depend on civilian cooperation for critical resources, you don't kill them, but if you extract your wealth from natural resources or external financing, you have less incentives not to kill (Weinstein's *Inside Rebellion*)

The politics of civilian killings

- Another point of view focuses on the political logic of victimization, which also applies to civilian killings *outside* war
  - → What are the incentives of elites to engage in or promote violence against civilians?

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  - → What are the incentives of elites to engage in or promote violence against civilians?

- Main idea: political elites obtain political **benefits by promoting violence**
  - → Does not necessarily lead to mass violence, but it can

The politics of civilian killings, some examples

- Ethnic outbidding
  - → I might gain political capital by being more radical than my competitors
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- Getting away with violence
  - → Use more violence against opposition, media control, public cost vs private incentives, etc
  - → Non-violent actors ally with violence specialists

The microdynamics of civil wars

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- Quantitative analysis, archival data, case studies, etc
- Goal: know *what* happened during a conflict and *why* we see different levels of violence across different regions or municipalities

The microdynamics of civil wars

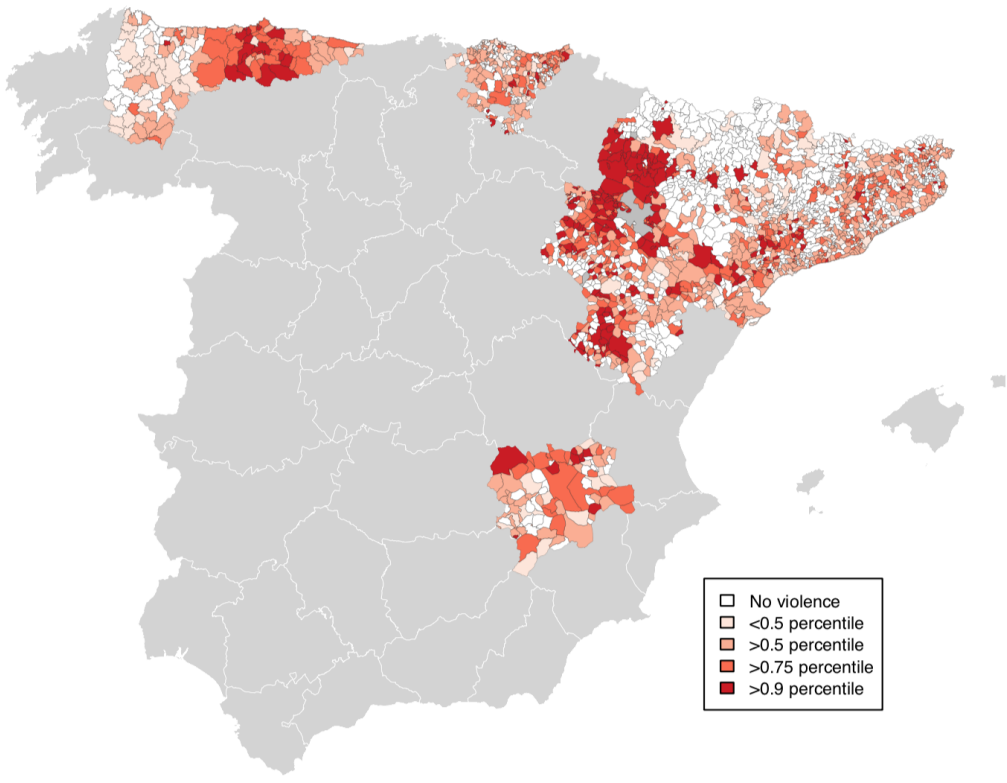


Figure 5.2: Wartime victimization by Francoist forces (1936-1942)

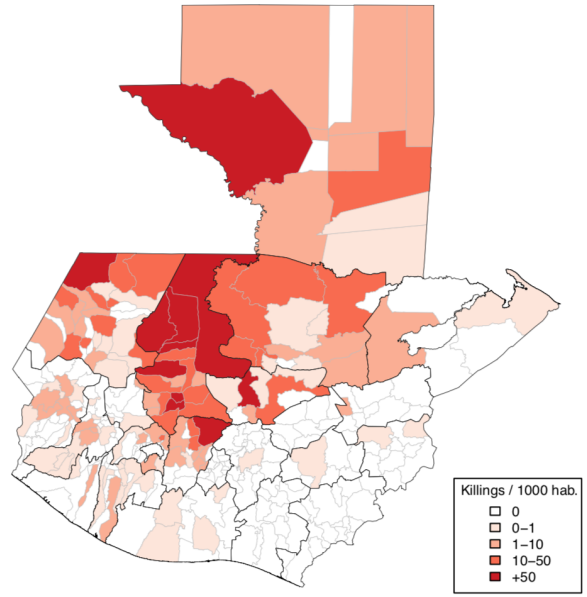


Figure 6.6: State violence against civilians in Guatemala, 1978–1985

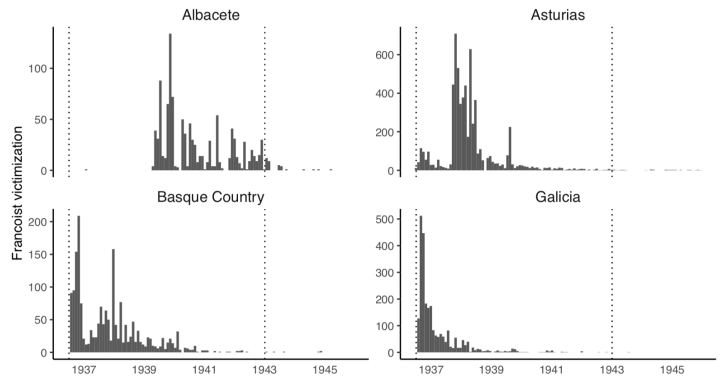
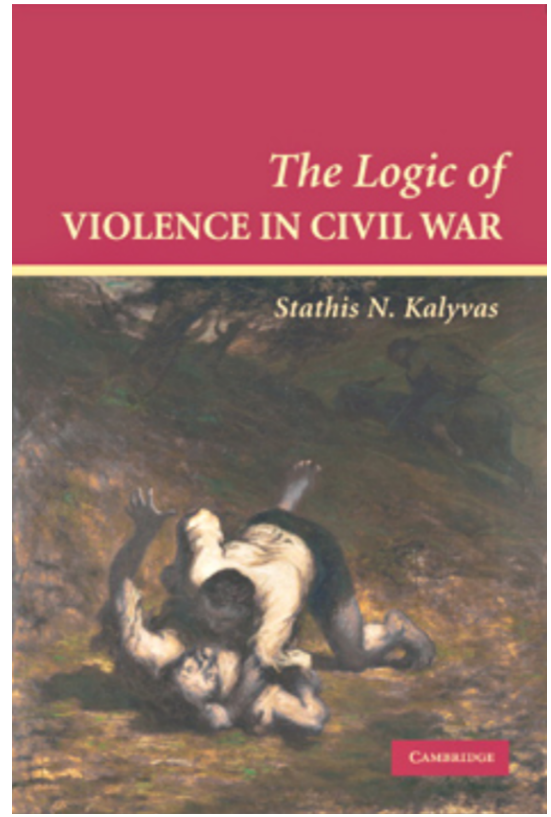


Figure 5.3: Wartime victimization by Francoist authorities over time

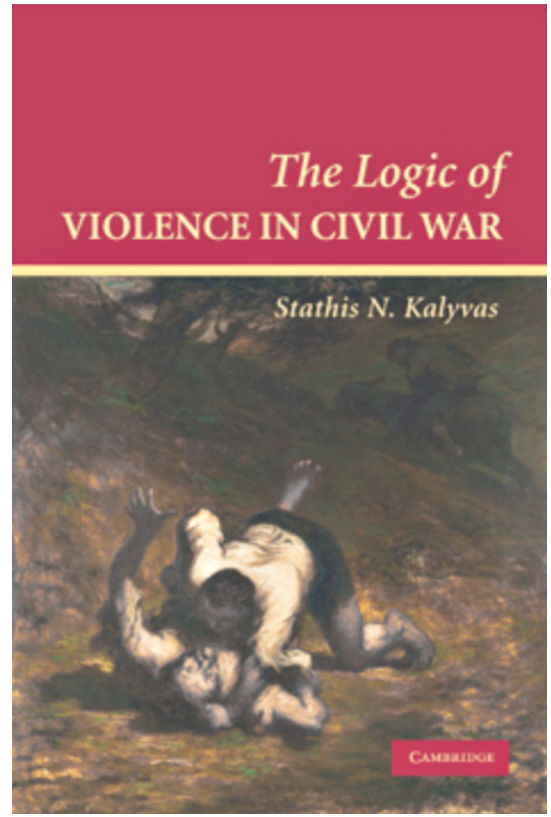
The microdynamics of civil wars



Stathis Kalyvas (2006)

The microdynamics of civil wars

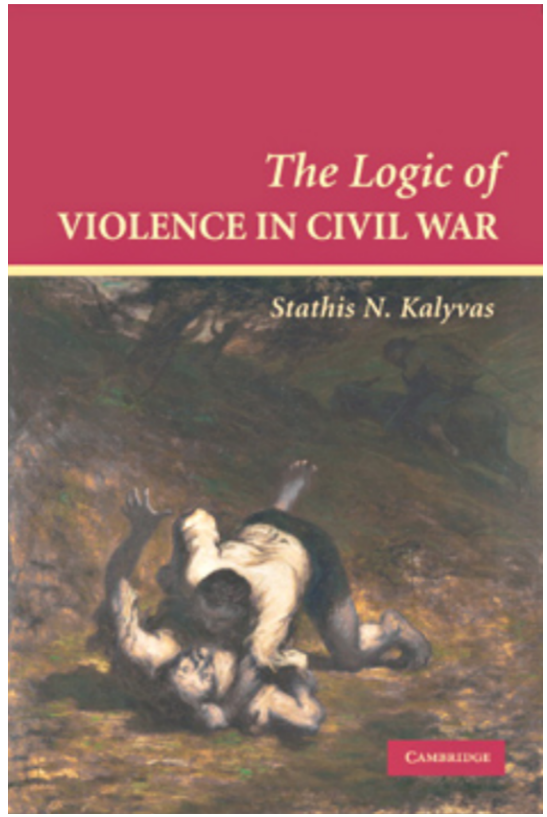
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Stathis Kalyvas (2006)

The microdynamics of civil wars

- **Main idea**: violence is not about master cleavages, but about endogenous local conflicts motivated by private reasons: vendettas, local feuds, etc
- The setting: collaboration between local actors and external enforcers
  - → what do I gain or lose from collaborating with an armed actor? (e.g. rebels)
  - → and when do armed actors have incentives to use violence?



Stathis Kalyvas (2006)

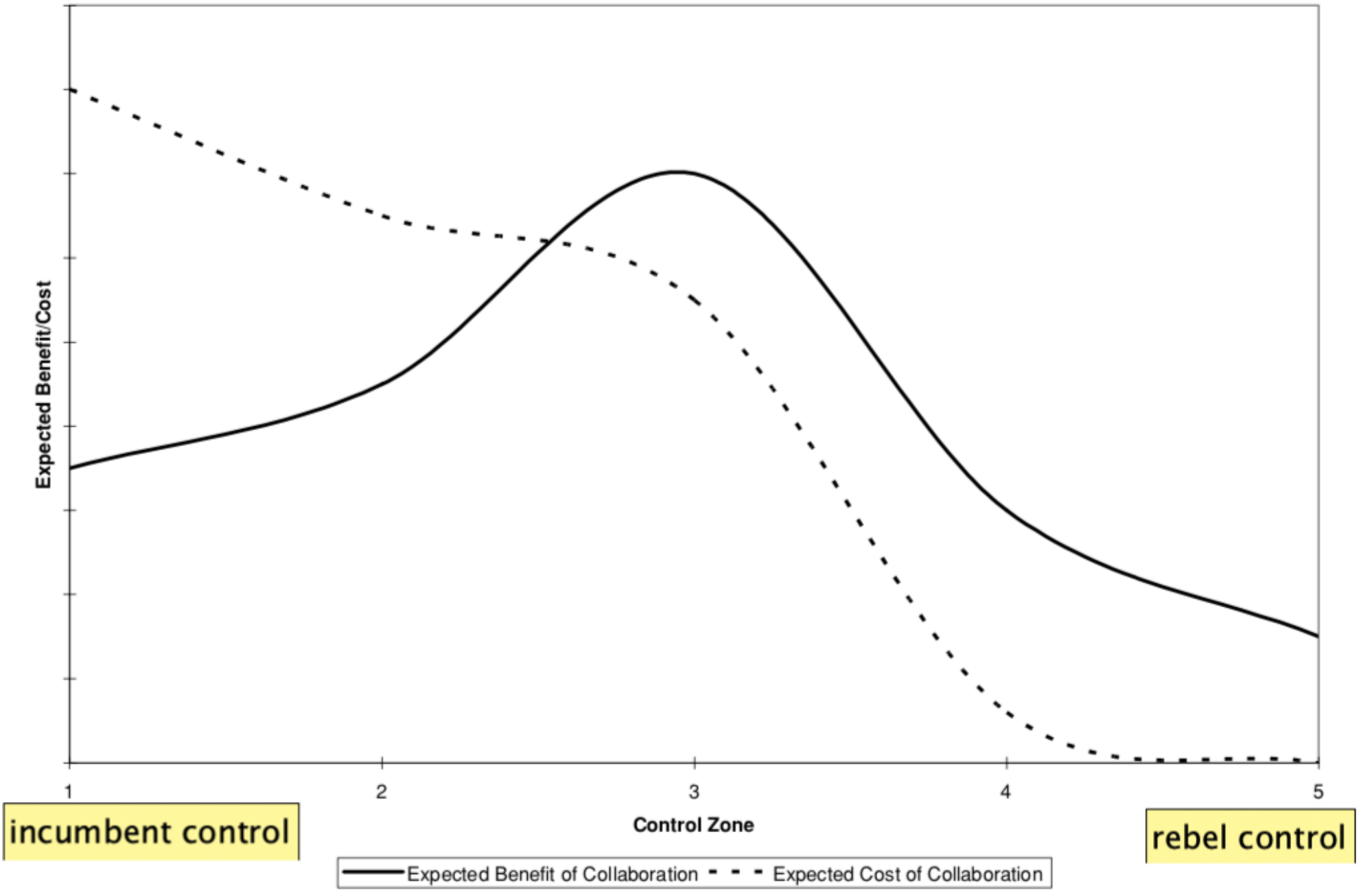


FIGURE 7.2. Payoffs and Expected Cost of Collaboration with (or Defection to) Insurgents

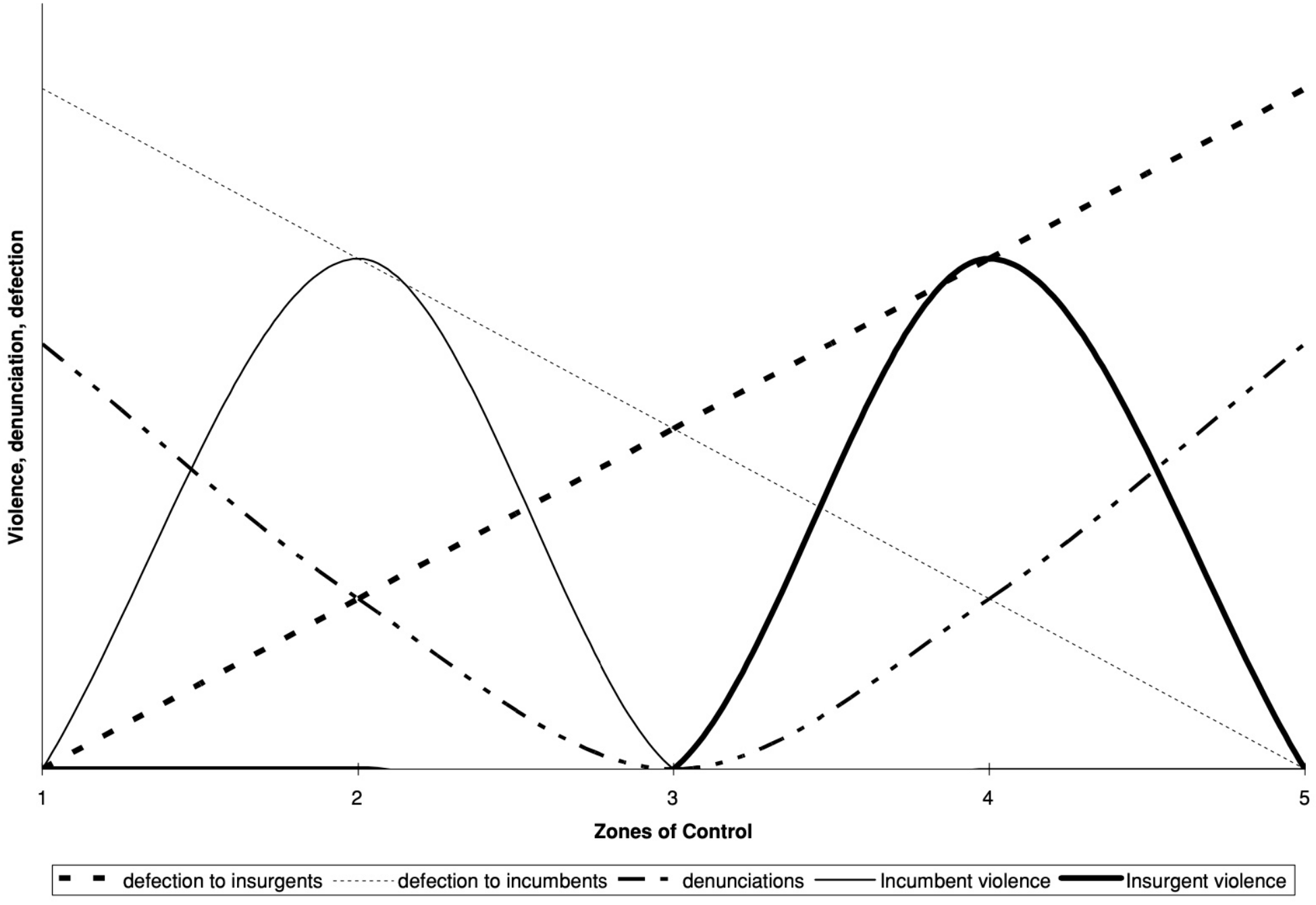
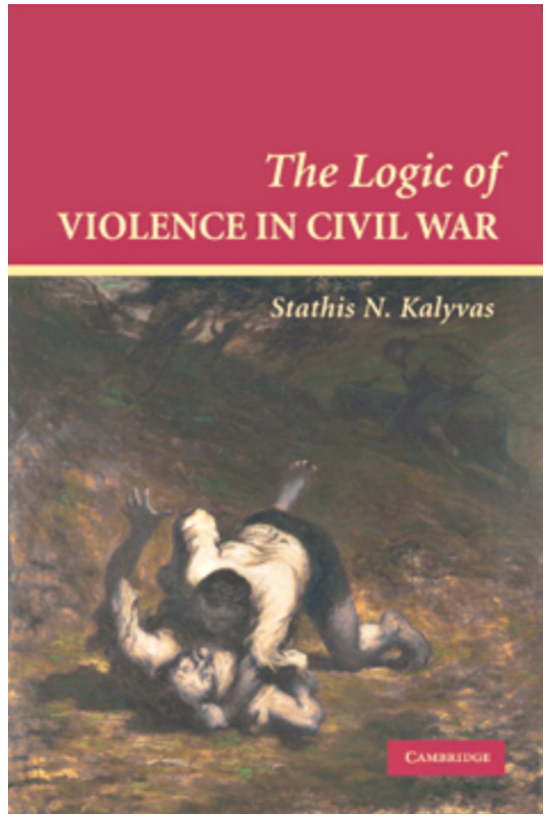


FIGURE 7.7. Predicted Pattern of Selective Violence, Defection, and Denunciation

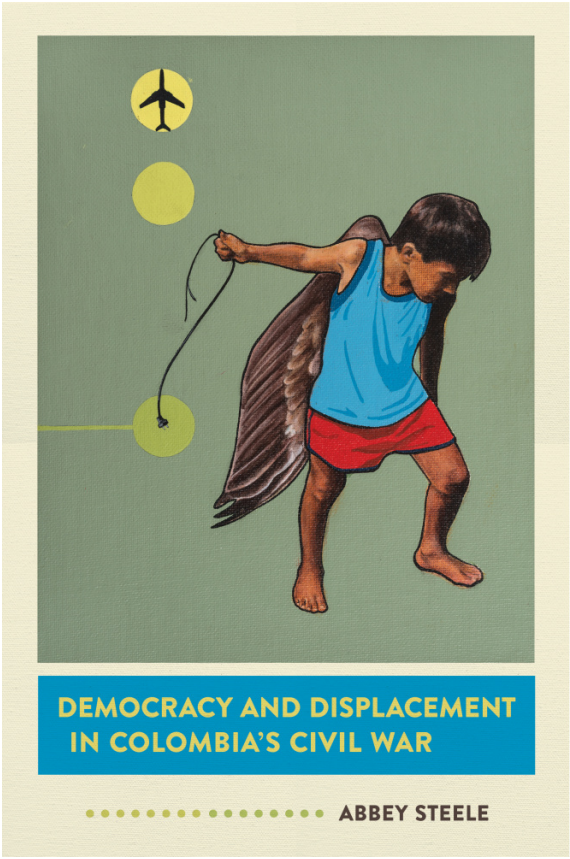
The microdynamics of civil wars

- **Main idea**: violence is not about master cleavages, but about endogenous local conflicts motivated by private reasons: vendettas, local feuds, etc
- The setting: collaboration between local actors and external enforcers
  - → what do I gain or lose from collaborating with an armed actor? (e.g. rebels)
  - → and when do armed actors have incentives to use violence?
- We should see more violence in areas where territorial control is not full

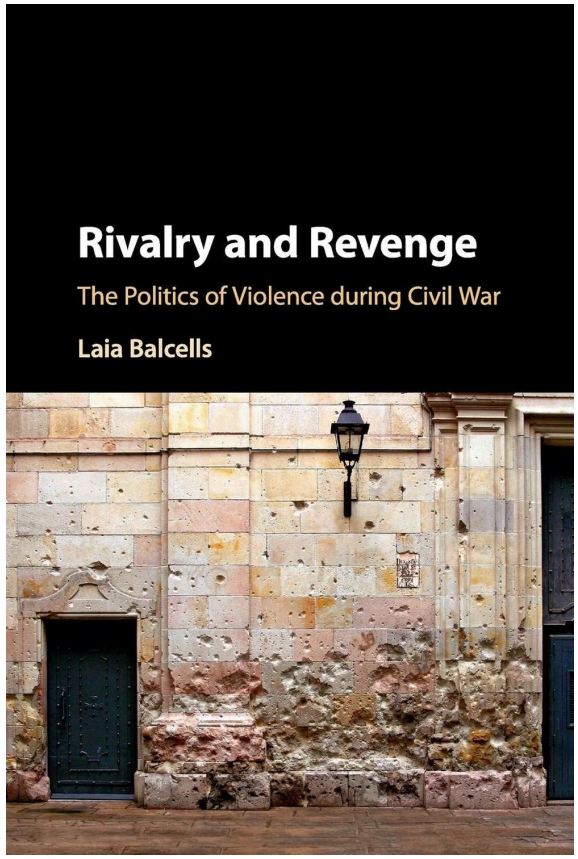


Stathis Kalyvas (2006)

Personal motives or politics?



Abbey Steele (2017)



Laia Balcells (2017)

- Two extensions to Kalyvas' model highlighting the role of *political identity* in understanding wartime violence

Personal motives or politics?

- Kalyvas' perspective emphasized that civil war violence emerges out of local grievances or feuds, private conflicts, vendettas, etc... and was *later* interpreted along the master cleavage of the war

Personal motives or politics?

- Kalyvas' perspective emphasized that civil war violence emerges out of local grievances or feuds, private conflicts, vendettas, etc... and was *later* interpreted along the master cleavage of the war
- But do political identities play a role?
- Think about the Spanish Civil War: is it that 'reds' killed 'blues' and vice-versa, or was violence produced by land disputes and enmities among neighbors who took advantage of the war to settle these conflicts?

Personal motives or politics?

- **Colombia**: after elections were held, paramilitary groups could identify civilians perceived as loyal to the insurgents and implement political cleansing on those municipalities
- **Spain**: more *direct* violence against civilians in those municipalities where electoral competition was higher, and a second round of violence motivated by revenge after territorial control changed
- Also in **Spain**: *indirect* violence (e.g. bombings) directed at those areas that had politically supported the opposite side before the war

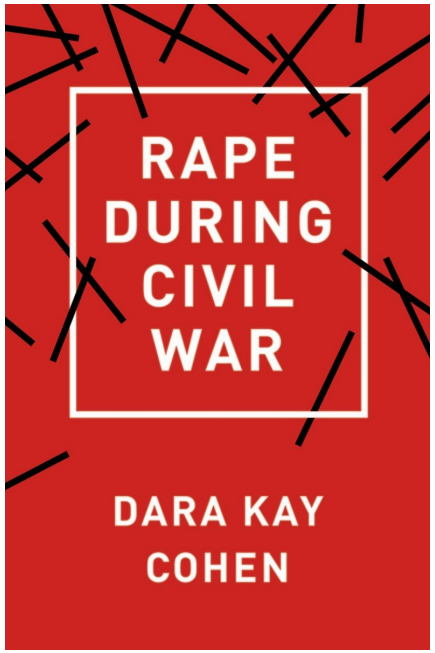
Explaining killings

- The key idea is that killing civilians often responds to **strategic incentives**, not so much to irrationality
- The Q (or what changes from context to context) is about those incentives
- Understanding the structure of incentives helps understand most violence against civilians

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- The Q (or what changes from context to context) is about those incentives
- Understanding the structure of incentives helps understand most violence against civilians
  - → cases of *irrational* violence?

Beyond fatal violence

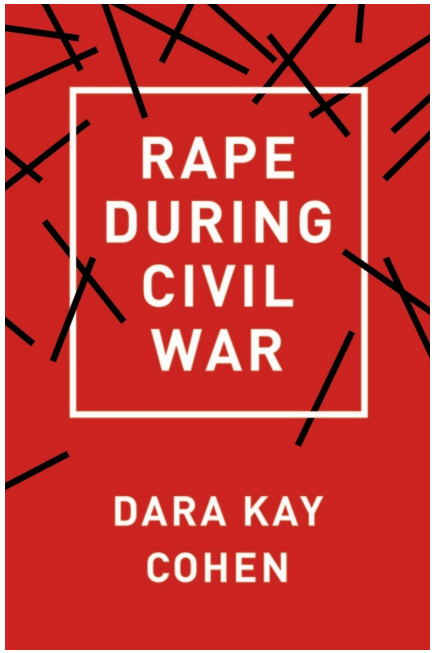


Dara Kay Cohen (2016)

Beyond fatal violence

1. Opportunistic rape

   (earlier perspective, anarchy during civil wars)



Dara Kay Cohen (2016)

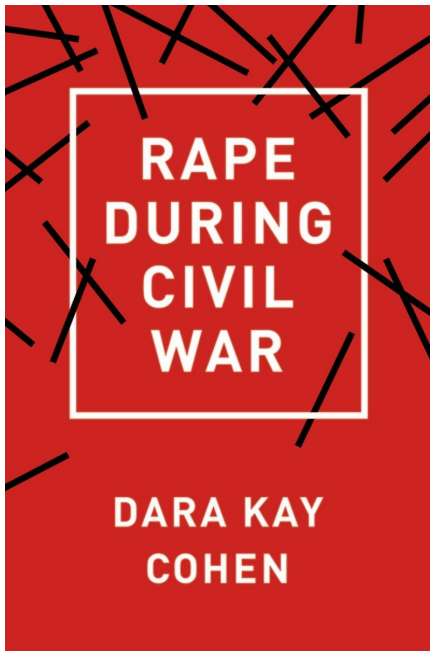
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   (sowing fear, damaging the enemy, spoils of war, ...)



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Beyond fatal violence

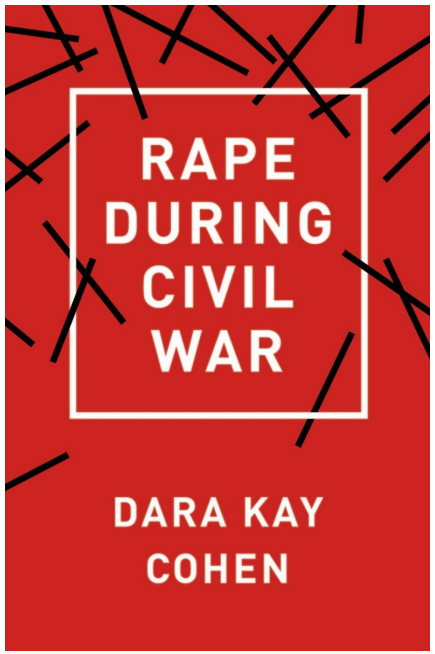
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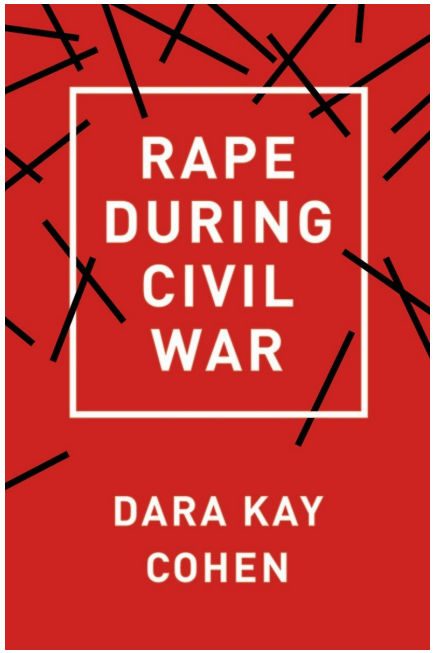
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   e.g. Cohen (right): gang rape as a socialization practice within armed groups, more likely when there is *forced recruitment*



Dara Kay Cohen (2016)

Other examples from the Spanish civil war?

- Low-level internal purges and collective targeting
  - → Purges of schoolteachers ('The Double Logic of Internal Purges')
- Preemtive violence and local mobilizers
  - → Anticlerical violence

Zooming out: Why are civil wars so violent?

Grand perspectives:

1. Hobbessian anarchy

   (collapse of political authority)

2. Transgression (of the norms of war and violence)

   (no rules apply during a war)

3. Schmittian polarization

   (political or ethnic rivalry)

4. Technology of warfare

   (explained by the way a civil war is fought)

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