

SUDIHOFF ANNUAL INTERDISCIPLINARY SEMINAR ON GENOCIDE PREVENTION

Advancing Research on Mass Atrocities Perpetrated by Non-state Actors: Annotated bibliography

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Rebel Groups

Kathman, Jacob and Reed Wood. "Competing for the Crown: Inter-rebel Competition and Civilian Targeting in Civil War." *Political Research Quarterly* 68 (2015): 167 - 79. [[pdf](#)]

Kathman and Wood use monthly data for conflicts in sub-Saharan Africa between 1989 and 2010 to assess the determinants of mass violence against civilians by rebel groups. While existing scholarship on rebel atrocities understands political and military competition between non-state actors as a constant feature of violent conflict, Kathman and Wood suggest that this dynamic evolves across time. Drawing theoretical insights from the scholarly literature on criminal violence, the authors suggest that increases in competition between rebel groups correlate to increased violence against civilians. The authors' findings suggest that additional research into the impact of factionalism, political contestation, and dynamics of territorial control between non-state groups on the scope and risk of mass atrocities against civilians is warranted.

Mampilly, Zachariah. *Rebel Rulers: Insurgent Governance and Civilian Life during War*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011. [[link](#)]

Mampilly uses ethnographic data gathered from communities affected by the activities of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in Sri Lanka, the Rally for Congolese Democracy (RCD) in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement / Army in southern Sudan to assess variations in rebel political activities in areas under their territorial control. Mampilly describes rebel governance--the establishment of institutions of local administration by non-state forces--as a significant if underexamined determinant of the lives and livelihoods of civilians within rebel territories. As Mampilly suggests in subsequent research, the varied participation of local communities in rebel institutions may be an important driver of levels of rebel violence against civilians.

Salehyan, Idean, David Siroky, and Reed Wood. "External Rebel Sponsorship and Civilian Abuse: A Principal-Agent Analysis of Wartime Atrocities." *International Organization* 68, no. 3 (Summer 2014): 633 - 61. [[pdf](#)]

Salehyan, Siroky, and Wood use data on rebel rents from 1989 to 2009 to assess the relationship between external support for rebel group activities and the use of one-sided violence against civilians by those groups. Conflict scholars--in particular, Weinstein--have argued that early access to lootable resources increases the likelihood of rebel violence against civilians, as associated resource rents change the dynamics and requirements of

membership in rebel organizations. The authors suggest that rebel access to external support functions in much the same way, deepening the risks of civilian victimization by violent organizations. They suggest that such violence also functions as a signaling mechanism for externally-supported rebel groups, to indicate that their paramilitary activities have generated results. As with Carey, Colaresi, and Mitchell, this finding suggests policy responses that seek to support rebel groups against perpetrators of mass atrocities may carry unintended costs to civilians.

Stanton, Jessica. *Violence and Restraint in Civil War: Civilian Targeting in the Shadow of International Law*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, Forthcoming. [[link](#)]

Description: “Media coverage of civil wars often focuses on the most gruesome atrocities and the most extreme conflicts, which might lead one to think that all civil wars involve massive violence against civilians. In truth, many governments and rebel groups exercise restraint in their fighting, largely avoiding violence against civilians in compliance with international law. Governments and rebel groups make strategic calculations about whether to target civilians by evaluating how domestic and international audiences are likely to respond to violence. Restraint is also a deliberate strategic choice: governments and rebel groups often avoid targeting civilians and abide by international legal standards to appeal to domestic and international audiences for diplomatic support. This book presents a wide range of evidence of the strategic use of violence and restraint, using original data on violence against civilians in civil wars from 1989 to 2010 as well as in-depth analyses of conflicts in Azerbaijan, El Salvador, Indonesia, Sudan, Turkey, and Uganda.”

Weinstein, Jeremy. *Inside Rebellion: The Politics of Insurgent Violence*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006. [[link](#)]

Weinstein uses ethnographic data gathered from communities in Uganda, Mozambique, and Peru to assess variations in the use of violence against civilians by rebel groups. Based on this data, Weinstein determines that rebel groups that rely heavily on lootable material resources as a source of revenue are more likely to use violence against civilians as a warfighting strategy. The author argues that the incentives for participation in groups that use such resources--short-term, high reward--require predatory relationships between rebel groups and communities in which they operate. By design, Weinstein suggests, these “opportunistic” rebellions embrace indiscipline--and, consequently, atrocities--as a central operating principle of their policy and military strategies. Subsequent studies, however, demonstrate that there are important variations in rebel violence against civilians as these organizations evolve across time.

Wood, Elisabeth. “Armed Groups and Sexual Violence: When Is Wartime Rape Rare?” *Politics & Society* 37 (2009): 131 - 62. [[pdf](#)]

Using the case of limited sexual violence committed by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) during Sri Lanka’s civil war, Wood assesses variations in the use of sexual violence against civilians by rebel groups during civil conflict. Wood applies various meso-level explanations for the use of sexual violence by armed actors to the LTTE case, including

variations in leadership strategy, military hierarchy, norms of individual behavior, and group cohesion. She finds top-down explanations for the relative rarity of sexual violence by LTTE forces most convincing, as the group's levels of regimented control varied significantly from similar groups in other conflicts. She proposes, however, that the cases of the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) in El Salvador, the Inkatha Freedom Party in apartheid-era South Africa, and Shining Path in Peru favor a plural explanation for the rarity of sexual violence during conflict.

Pro-Government Militias

Ahram, Ariel I. "The Role of State-Sponsored Militias in Genocide." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 26, no. 3 (2014): 488 - 503. [[pdf](#), gated]

Ahram situates the emergence of state-sponsored militias in genocide within a broader context of military formalization in developing states. He describes the use of state-sponsored militias by developing states as a strategic alternative to military centralization. He suggests that third-party governments should look to armed non-state actors, rather than state governments, to reduce mass atrocities against civilians. Separate scholarship on conflict termination and third-party intervention, however, suggests that this support carries significant principal-agent problems, especially in ensuring the relative restraint of non-state clients.

Carey, Sabine, Michael Colaresi, and Neil Mitchell. "Governments, Informal Links to Militias, and Accountability." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 59, no. 5 (August 2015): 850 - 76. [[pdf](#), gated]

Building on a database of informal government-militia relationships that the authors developed, Carey, Colaresi, and Mitchell argue that governments use militias to commit mass violence against civilians to diffuse accountability costs. According to the authors, the use of mass violence exposes government authorities to financial and political repercussions from both domestic and international actors. Carey, Colaresi, and Mitchell's analysis suggests that weak democracies, as defined by the Polity2 scale, and governments that receive assistance from democracies are especially vulnerable to these repercussions. They are, therefore, more likely to use informal government-linked militias as a substitute for government-directed repression. These findings suggest that external pressure on governments to halt mass atrocities may encourage those governments to seek alternative forms of repressive violence against civilian groups.

Cohen, Dara Kay, and Ragnhild Nordas. "Do States Delegate Shameful Violence to Militias? Patterns of Sexual Violence in Recent Armed Conflicts." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 59, no. 5 (August 2015): 877 - 98. [[pdf](#)]

Cohen and Nordas use a dataset of reported sexual violence by government and pro-government militia forces to assess the strategic logic of these atrocities. According to the authors, the common consensus about militia atrocities among scholars of sexual violence during conflict--namely, that states delegate atrocities to militia groups to avoid international attention and pressure--is mistaken. Instead, Cohen and Nordas suggest that militia sexual

violence complements similar and, in some cases, higher levels of state-directed sexual violence against civilians. This finding yields two determinants of heightened militia violence: the recruitment of child soldiers, which suggests low levels of intra-group cohesion, and a prior history of paramilitary training by government forces. For the authors, the latter determinant suggests that government forces transfer a common repertoire of mass atrocities to militia groups as their principal-agent relationship deepens.

Jentzsch, Corinna, Stathis Kalyvas, and Livia Schubiger. "Militias in Civil Wars." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 59, no. 5 (August 2015): 755 - 69. [[pdf](#)]

In this introduction to a *Journal of Conflict Resolution* special issue on militias, Jentzsch, Kalyvas, and Schubiger identify an emerging research agenda surrounding the formation, violence, and internal politics of militia groups in civil wars. While scholars of civil conflict and political violence have used various methods to study the phenomenon of militia activity, the articles contained in the JCR special issue suggest this topic is becoming a larger priority for scholars of civil wars. Evaluating the logics of violence associated with militias and with rebel groups in civil wars, Jentzsch, Kalyvas, and Schubiger argue for more interaction between empirical scholarship on both types of non-state actors. This finding also extends to the use of mass atrocities against civilians by diverse non-state groups.

Stanton, Jessica. "Regulating Militias: Governments, Militias, and Civilian Targeting in Civil Wars." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 59, no. 5 (August 2015), 899 - 923. [[pdf](#), gated]

Stanton uses data on violence by pro-government militias from 1989 to 2010 to assess the relationship between pro-government militia activity and the occurrence of mass violence against civilians. While previous studies of militia activity suggest that the use of pro-government militias increases the likelihood of mass violence against civilians, Stanton proposes multiple conditions that might limit civilian victimization by militias. Among these factors are the communities from which the militia recruits its members; Stanton finds that militias are less likely to use mass violence against civilians if it recruits its members from the same constituency as do its rebel adversaries. This fundamental relationship between the communal origins of militia groups and levels of civilian victimization suggests that there are few mechanisms through which external actors can influence levels of civilian victimization by pro-government militias.

Terrorism

Asal, Victor, Luis De la Calle, Michael Findley, and Joseph Young, eds. "Killing Civilians or Holding Territory? How to Think about Terrorism." *International Studies Review* 14, no. 3 (September 2012): 475 - 97. [[pdf](#)]

This symposium offers alternative interpretations of the empirical category of "terrorism," a contested concept in the political science literature on political violence. The contributors present two competing frameworks for observing terrorism: *action-based*, as a form of violence characterized by a specific event; and, *actor-based*, as a form of violence characterized by the type of organization responsible for its occurrence. The symposium provides an introduction to the categorical dilemmas that shape the relationship between the

empirical literature on terrorism and other forms of political violence, including the use and control of physical territory, the individuals and groups targeted by terrorist violence, and the ideological basis for terrorist activity.

Fortna, Virginia Page. "Do Terrorists Win? Rebels' Use of Terrorism and Civil War Outcomes." *International Organization* 69, no. 3 (June 2015): 519 - 56. [[pdf](#)]

Fortna uses a dataset of rebel groups from 1989 to 2004 to assess the strategic logic of terrorist violence, which she defines as "a systematic campaign of indiscriminate violence against public civilian targets [intended] to influence a wider audience." In contrast to widely cited studies of terrorist violence, Fortna argues that terrorist violence by non-state groups does not "work." According to Fortna, terrorist groups rarely achieve total victory against adversaries, rarely extract significant political concessions, and decrease the effectiveness of their military or paramilitary operations. Terrorist violence, however, is correlated with longer civil war duration and, consequently, longer organizational lifespan for terrorist rebel groups. Based on this finding, Fortna suggests a paradox relevant to the broader phenomenon of mass atrocities committed by non-state actors: the civilian violence that weakens non-state organizations may also help it survive.

Intercommunal Violence

Varshney, Ashutosh and Joshua Gubler. "The State and Civil Society in Communal Violence: Sparks and Fires." In *Routledge Handbook of Indian Politics*, edited by Atul Kohli and Purna Singh, 155 - 66. New York: Routledge, 2013. [[pdf](#)]

Varshney and Gubler use three cases of intercommunal violence in India to illustrate the state's role in the onset and escalation of that violence. The three cases--the pogroms in Gujarat in 2002, the violence in Ahmedabad in 1969, and the deescalation of intercommunal violence in Bhiwandi after 1988--demonstrate the state's variable contributions to civic discord between non-state ethnic groups. Varshney and Gubler conclude that a combination of state-led incitement and intracommunal civic engagement increases the likelihood that intercommunal violence will escalate, while state efforts to further *intercommunal* civic engagement decrease the likelihood of new violence. These findings suggest that the state's behavior contributes to the trajectory of mass atrocities committed by non-state actors.

Genocide and Mass Atrocities

Balcells, Laia. "Rivalry and Revenge: Violence against Civilians in Conventional Civil Wars." *International Studies Quarterly* 54, no.2 (June 2010): 291 - 313. [[pdf](#)]

Balcells uses a dataset of 1,062 municipalities of Catalonia during the Spanish Civil War (1936 - 9) to assess the determinants of violence against civilians during conventional civil wars. Balcells identifies a positive correlation between close pre-conflict competition between electoral factions and the likelihood of face-to-face--that is, almost-certainly intentional--violence against civilians. For Balcells, the dynamics of political competition shape the trajectory of mass atrocities after the point of onset. As Balcells notes, these findings suggest that mass atrocities by both state and non-state groups are a continuation of

close political competition outside the context of conflict. Perpetrators, therefore, use mass atrocities to achieve specific political outcomes.

Downes, Alexander. *Targeting Civilians in War*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008. [\[link\]](#)

Downes uses several historical cases of large-scale war to assess variations in mass civilian victimization. Downes concludes that governments use mass violence against civilians--including unintended collateral violence--as strategies of desperate coercion and territorial conquest. In particular, the author sees democratic governments as more likely to use mass violence against civilians, most often in the context of wars of attrition, than are non-democratic governments. This finding suggests competing outcomes of the institutional accountability inherent in democratic political systems: while democratic regimes may be less likely to commit violence against their own civilians, democracies' accountability to their citizens--and ensuing demands for military victory--may make violence against foreign civilians more likely.

Kalyvas, Stathis. *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006. [\[link\]](#)

Kalyvas combines a deductive theory of violence during civil war with an inductive interpretation of the Greek Civil War, which took place from 1943 to 1949. These methods generate a middle-range explanation of variations in levels of violence across time and between different levels of political organization. Kalyvas concludes that violence during civil war is a dynamic process as well as an outcome. According to the author, violence against civilians is a product of an organization's limited political control, as suggested by the relative counterproductivity of indiscriminate violence for security forces that use it. The outcomes of violence also are a product of local agents, rather than extra-local decisionmaking. In clarifying the importance of local factors, Kalyvas underscored the important "microdynamic turn" in the study of mass atrocities during civil war.

The Stanley Foundation. *Violent Nonstate Actors as Perpetrators and Enablers of Atrocity Crimes*. Report, The Stanley Foundation, 2016. [\[pdf\]](#)

Based on a discussion between scholars, policy specialists, and NGO leaders at The Stanley Foundation's annual Strategy for Peace conference in October 2015, this policy memo outlines trends in international efforts to prevent and respond to mass atrocities committed and enabled by non-state actors. Participants in the discussion noted that the diversity of non-state actors responsible for mass atrocities limits the development of standard policy tools for preventing these atrocities. This dilemma has borne out in overlapping, and sometimes conflicting, policy efforts to counter terrorism, counter violent extremism, and prevent mass atrocities. The discussion underscored the relatively uncertain record of policy initiatives devoted to preventing atrocities by non-state groups.

Straus, Scott. *Fundamentals of Genocide and Mass Atrocity Prevention*. Washington, DC: U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2016. [\[link\]](#)

Straus assesses the normative and operational evolution of international efforts to prevent genocide and mass atrocities. Surveying the postwar history of these efforts, Straus concludes that anti-atrocity practitioners have made limited progress in protecting civilians from mass atrocities, building institutions to prevent these acts, and deterring perpetrators from further violence. Straus highlights recent notable cases of non-state violence, such as the self-proclaimed Islamic State and Boko Haram, as examples of an uncertain trend of mass atrocities committed by non-state actors. He notes that the policy strategies developed to confront state-led mass atrocities may not apply to similar acts of non-state violence.

Valentino, Benjamin, Paul Huth, and Dylan Balch-Lindsay. "Draining the Sea: Mass Killing and Guerrilla Warfare." *International Organization* 58, no. 2 (Spring 2004): 375 - 407. [[pdf](#)]

Using a dataset of state-led mass killing events from 1945 to 2000, Valentino, Huth, and Balch-Lindsay identify a strong correlation between the likelihood of state-led mass killing and the use of counterinsurgency tactics against guerilla rebels by government forces. Though scorched-earth counterinsurgency strategies have proven ineffective in defeating rebel forces across cases, government forces continue to rely on mass civilian violence as a warfighting strategy. Valentino, Huth, and Balch-Lindsay suggest that governments rely on mass killing because alternate strategies for defeating guerilla groups have proven ever less successful. As the authors note, however, their findings do not necessarily translate determinants of mass atrocities committed by non-state groups.

Cross-national Datasets

One-sided violence against civilians: Eck, Kristine and Lisa Hultman. "One-Sided Violence Against Civilians in War: Insights from New Fatality Data." *Journal of Peace Research* 44, no. 2 (March 2007), 233 - 46. [[pdf](#), [gated](#)]

Description: "This article presents new data on the direct and deliberate killings of civilians, called one-sided violence, in intrastate armed conflicts, 1989—2004. These data contribute to the present state of quantitative research on violence against civilians in three important respects: the data provide actual estimates of civilians killed, the data are collected annually and the data are provided for both governments and rebel groups. Using these data, general trends and patterns are presented, showing that the post-Cold War era is characterized by periods of fairly low-scale violence punctuated by occasional sharp increases in violence against civilians."

Atrocity events: Schrodtt, Phil. "Political Instability Task Force Worldwide Atrocities Dataset." *Political Instability Task Force*. Accessed 27 May 2016. <http://eventdata.parusanalytics.com/data.dir/atrocities.html>. [[link](#)]

Description: "The Political Instability Task Force (PITF) Worldwide Atrocities Dataset is a global dataset that describes, in quantitative terms, the deliberate killing of non-combatant civilians in the context of a wider political conflict. This data collection project, which is still ongoing, is intended to advance efforts to understand and anticipate atrocities, i.e., the deliberate use of lethal violence against non-combatant civilians by actors engaged in a wider

political or military conflict. The practical objective of this project is to create a dataset representing a reasonably systematic sample of atrocities occurring worldwide in recent decades in order to: (1) enable the development of statistical models that might be used to identify countries vulnerable to the occurrence of atrocities or, if atrocities are already occurring, to an escalation in their rate or intensity; and (2) create a descriptive record that might be used by researchers with an interest in particular countries or conflicts. The effective date of data in this dataset is 1 January 1995 to the present date. Data are updated monthly.”

Terrorist violence: National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism. “Global Terrorism Database.” *University of Maryland*. Accessed 27 May 2016.

<https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/>. [link]

Description: “The Global Terrorism Database is a compilation of distinct data collection efforts from 1970 to the present. From 1970 to 1997 the data were constructed primarily from incidents recorded in real-time by PGIS using a broad-based definition of terrorism. Data from this period are updated and corrected on an ongoing basis. The data from 1998 through 2007 were primarily collected retrospectively, while data on more recent events are being collected in real-time and with the benefit of more robust media archives and improved collection methodology. Users should note that differences in levels of attacks and casualties before and after 1997, 2008, and 2012 may be at least partially explained by differences in data collection; researchers should adjust for these differences when modeling the data.”

Sexual violence: Cohen, Dara Kay and Ragnhild Nordas. “Sexual Violence in Armed Conflicts: Introducing the SVAC Dataset, 1989 - 2009.” *Journal of Peace Research* 51, no. 3 (May 2014), 418 - 28. [pdf, gated]

Description: “The dataset, coded from the three most widely used sources in the quantitative human rights literature, covers 129 active conflicts, and the 625 armed actors involved in these conflicts, during the period 1989–2009. The unit of observation is the conflict-actor-year, allowing for detailed analysis of the patterns of perpetration of sexual violence for each conflict actor. The dataset captures six dimensions of sexual violence: prevalence, perpetrators, victims, forms, location, and timing. In addition to active conflict-years, the dataset also includes reports of sexual violence committed by conflict actors in the five years post-conflict.”

Non-state actors in civil wars: Cunningham, David, Kristian Gleditsch, and Idean Salehyan. “Non-state actors in civil wars: A new dataset.” *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 30, no. 5 (November 2013): 516 - 31. [pdf, gated]

Description: “This paper introduces the Non-State Actors in Armed Conflict Dataset (NSA), which contains detailed information on the state–rebel group dyads included in the Uppsala Conflict Data Project Dyadic Dataset...The NSA data provides additional information on the organizations involved in conflict dynamics. We describe the structure of the NSA data and the variables included, provide descriptive statistics of the indicators, and discuss areas for future research on non-state actors to enhance our understanding of conflict processes.”

Pro-government militias: Carey, Sabine, Neil Mitchell, and Will Lowe. “States, the security sector, and the monopoly of violence: A new database on pro-government militias.” *Journal of Peace Research* 50, no. 2 (2013): 249 - 58. [[pdf](#), gated]

Description: “In this article we give an overview of the PGMD, a new global dataset that identifies pro-government militias from 1981 to 2007...The database shows the wide proliferation and diffusion of these groups. We identify 332 PGMs and specify how they are linked to government, for example via the governing political party, individual leaders, or the military. The dataset captures the type of affiliation of the groups to the government by distinguishing between informal and semi-official militias. It identifies, among others, membership characteristics and the types of groups they target.”

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