

THE LOGIC OF VIOLENCE IN CIVIL WAR

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Two related, but distinct, phenomena have been attracting increasing attention: ethnic violence and civil war. This interest is driven by two political developments: first, the decline of interstate wars and the concomitant rise of internal or civil wars (David 1997); and second, the decline of civil wars that are classified as “ideological” or class-based and the concomitant rise of conflicts classified as ethnic (Brubaker and Laitin 1998). Most research has focused on the causes of ethnic civil wars (Fearon and Laitin 1999). We know far less about the dynamics of civil war violence *per se*.

First, I introduce three conceptual distinctions: (a) between “violence” and “(violent) conflict,” (b) between “violence in times of peace” and “violence in times of war,” and (c) between different types of violence based on the intersection of two criteria: the purpose and the production of violence. Second, I sketch a simple model of violence in civil war based on a corresponding theoretical understanding of the phenomenon. Third, I present preliminary systematic empirical evidence from Greece. Because the data come from a civil war which lacked the kind of deep ethnic, religious, and even class, cleavages deemed necessary for the eruption of large-scale violence, this paper provides a warning against making attractive but problematic connections between ethnic cleavages and high levels of violence. Likewise, this paper suggests that the widespread perception of civil war violence as a random, chaotic, and anarchical process (first suggested by Thucydides and Hobbes) or a phenomenon better (or even exclusively) approached from the perspective of passions and emotions are not warranted.

1. Conceptual Issues

I. Violence, Violent Conflict, and Civil War

The overwhelming majority of research on civil war has overlooked the issue of violence. Most studies have focused, explicitly or implicitly (in the form of studies of revolution or ethnic conflict)¹ on the causes of civil war (Skocpol 1979; Tilly 1978),² civil war termination (Walter 1997; Licklider 1993),³ the political and social consequences of civil war (Rich and Stubbs 1997), the factors accounting for the success or failure of the belligerents (Race 1972; Leites and Wolf 1970),⁴ and the individual and group motivations underlying rebellion (Popkin 1979; Scott 1977).

¹Ranzato (1994) discusses in detail the lack of conceptual autonomy of civil war.

²Most studies of revolutions, as well as the literature on peasant rebellion, fit in this category.

³This literature belongs mostly to International Relations and is conceptually related to the study of (interstate) war termination. It also includes the policy-oriented post-civil war field projects of a number of NGOs—such as the War Torn Societies Project (WSP).

⁴This literature includes both the “practical guides of revolution” such as Mao Zedong’s and Che Guevara’s, as well as the “counterinsurgency” literature developed in the 1960s and 1970s. Leites & Wolf (1970:2) summarized this research program in the following terms: “How can an insurgency be made to wax and win, wane and wilt?”

One of the major (if not the major) aspect of civil war, violence against (and between) *civilians*, has been severely neglected. The centrality of violence in civil wars has been emphasized by observers and participants alike since Thucydides.⁵ Ten out of the thirteen deadliest conflicts in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were civil wars. Yet civil war violence is not just a function of body count. One feature that sets interstate and civil wars apart is that in the latter civilians are the primary and deliberate target: at least eight out of ten people killed in contemporary civil wars have been civilians (Kriger 1992:1). What is more, violence in civil wars is frequently exercised between people who happen to know each other and have had a long record of peaceful interaction: neighbors, friends, even relatives.

Indicative of this neglect is the fact that “violence” is a term lacking conceptual autonomy: it is typically used as synonymous with “conflict.” Hence most references to, say, ethnic violence refer to ethnic conflict, rather than the actual violence which takes place in the context of the conflict. However, as Brubaker and Laitin (1998:425) pointed out in a recent review of the literature on ethnic and nationalist violence, “violence is not just a degree of conflict but a form of conflict, or a form of social and political action in its own right.”⁶ Hence what I ask is not what causes a civil war but rather what causes violence within civil war.⁷

II. Violence, War, and Peace

Civil war is not “civil unrest,” a term that includes limited political violence (such as acts of “terrorism,” individual assassinations, etc.), sporadic violent collective action (such as riots), or nonviolent and mildly violent collective action (such as protests, demonstrations, etc.)--all of which tend to take place in times of peace. This difference is both one of degree and kind. Data from eighty-seven countries in the 1960s show that the typical country had five times as many man-days of participation in protest as rebellion, but rebellion was far more deadly than protest. The total deaths in all reported episodes and campaigns of protest was approximately 10,000 contrasted with more than 3 million in all rebellions (Gurr 1986:52). Second, there is a difference

What programs can be formulated to propitiate insurgency or deter it, or control or suppress it once it has started?” These studies treat violence as an independent rather than as a dependent variable.

⁵Thucydides (III:81) describes the civil war in Corcyra as a situation in which “there was death in every shape and form. And, *as usually happens in such situations*, people went to every extreme and beyond it. There were fathers who killed their sons; men were dragged from the temples or butchered on the very altars; some were actually walled up in the temple of Dionysus and died there” (emphasis added).

⁶Arendt (1970:19) makes a similar point. This is not to say that violence receives no attention. Human Rights Organizations and the Mass Media devote much attention to violence. However, this attention is purely descriptive (e.g. Human Rights Watch 1995). Leites & Wolf’s (1970:v) remark about the study of insurgent conflict applies to civil war violence: it is “a subject whose wealth of detail is accompanied by a poverty of theory.”

⁷Obviously the two are related; however, the focus on conflict and the neglect of violence can lead to serious biases, whereby violence is explained with reference to the causes of the conflict rather than the dynamics of the conflict proper. To use an analogy, even though elections “cause” policy, we study the two as distinct processes.

of kind. Civil war violence should be distinguished from violent collective action (such as riots and pogroms) because war structures choices and selects actors in fundamentally different ways than peace--even violent peace. For example, riots tend to be a mostly urban phenomenon (Wilkinson 1998), whereas civil war violence tends to affect mostly rural areas; the study of the riots which take place in democracies may require a special focus on electoral incentives (Wilkinson 1998), an irrelevant factor for the study of violence in civil war. As McCormick and Mitchell (1997:525) point out, “those interested in generating useful knowledge on individual crimes, rather than state crimes, do not employ a one-dimensional crime scale that combines nonviolent and violent crimes. They disaggregate shoplifting from rape and seek explanations for these substantively different types of criminal activity.”

III. Purpose and Production of Violence

The intersection of two key attributes of violence, its purpose and its production, provides another key distinction--necessary in delimiting the analytical boundaries of this study. Mass political violence can be used to achieve primarily compliance or extermination (physical or spatial); and it can be produced in a unilateral or a bilateral (in some cases multilateral) fashion.

Political actors may intend to govern the people against whom they are using violence, or they may not. In the second case, the purpose of violence is exhausted by its use, whereas in the first, it lies in the purposive creation of fear: violence is a means, not an end; a resource, not the final product. Violence is, then, a tool for shaping individual behavior by attaching a cost to particular actions. This is often called “terror.”⁸

The second distinction focuses on the production of violence: it may be provided unilaterally--when only one actor uses violence, or it may be provided bilaterally, when two actors rely on violence. The intersection of the two attributes generates four categories of mass political violence: state terror, genocide and (ethnic) cleansing, ‘reciprocal extermination’, and civil war violence. These are ideal-typical analytical categories rather than universal definitions or moral categories.

[Table 1 about here]

State Terror

⁸A possible way to discriminate between these uses of violence is to examine whether targets of violence have the option to surrender. In many civil wars, for instance, incumbents tend at some point to heavily promote amnesty programs that encourage insurgent defection, whereas in genocides the surrender of victims does not prevent their murder but expedites it.

The unilateral use of terror by the state to enforce compliance is known as state terror. Mitchell, Stohl, Carleton, and Lopez (1986:5) define it as government by intimidation, which “involves deliberate coercion and violence (or the threat thereof) directed at some victim, with the intention of inducing extreme fear in some target observers who identify with that victim in such a way that they perceive themselves as potential future victims. In this way, they are forced to consider altering their behavior in some manner desired by the actor.” As a Spanish Inquisitor put it in 1578: “We must remember that the main purpose of the trial and execution is not to save the soul of the accused but to achieve the public good and put fear into others” (quoted in Kamen 1998:174).

Genocide and (Ethnic) Cleansing

When the intended purpose of violence is the physical extermination of an entire group rather than the submission of this group to a given political authority, we are dealing with genocide. Genocide is not a continuation of severe repression through other means, but a phenomenon of an altogether different kind. Therefore, it is wrong to think about genocide in terms of a continuum that goes from no group destruction to complete destruction. Analytically akin to genocide is the spatial extermination of a group. Because purposeful and permanent forced population exodus is not restricted to ethnic groups, “cleansing” needs not be ethnic.

Reciprocal Extermination

Bilateral or reciprocal extermination or “cleansing” programs could be dubbed ‘reciprocal extermination’ or ‘reciprocal cleansing’ for lack of a better term. The Lebanese civil war or the Croat-Serb conflict probably fit in here. Generally, however, exterminational violence on a mass scale tends to be unilateral as opposed to reciprocal—a situation reinforced (or even caused) by the lack of a balance of power between political actors.

Civil War Violence

Unlike authoritarian repression 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, fragmented, and shifting, since the ultimate objective of civil war is either the re-establishment of a monopoly of legitimate violence or its replacement by a permanent local monopoly of legitimate violence (secession). Contrary to unilateral production, the targeted audience often enjoy a degree of choice in shifting loyalty and resources to the rival actor; and such shifts matter because they affect the outcome of the conflict. It is this characteristic that gives civil war violence its strategic dimension. The focus of this paper (and of my research in general) is on this category of violence--whose properties and dynamics and fundamentally

different from state terror and genocide.⁹

2. A Theory of Civil War Violence

The great majority of civil wars are fought as “irregular” or “guerrilla” wars. Usually, there are two competing actors: insurgents and incumbents. On the one hand, incumbents tend to rely on regular armies which undertake large mopping-up operations to eliminate pockets of insurgency. Insurgents, on the other hand, shy away from direct confrontation and rely on ambush and attacks against isolated garrisons in order to set-up “liberated areas” or “bases.”

Contrary to conventional war, civil war displays a ‘triangular’ character. This is a war that involves not just two (or more) competing actors, but also civilians. Civilian support (or collaboration) matters for the outcome of the conflict. Civil war is, hence, fundamentally different from conventional war in that it involves little military action between combatants¹⁰ and much action, military or non-military, in which civilians play a prominent role. The fight must be conducted *through* the people--“like a man who has to hit an opponent through the body of the referee” (quoted in Durrell 1996 [1959]:224).

What determines the distribution of civilian support? Often, the answer to this question suffers from a sociological bias: the assumption that civilian support is preordained by social cleavages (be they of class or ethnicity) and that it is exogenous to the war itself. While it is true that pre-existing conflicts affect the initial preference structure of given groups, it is also the case that initial preference structures are affected by the war: preferences and identities may be redefined in the course of the war, in response to the dynamics of the war--especially in response to violence.¹¹

No matter how much sympathy a local population feels vis-à-vis a political actor, there will likely

⁹The divergence between the fundamental dynamics in violence for each of these categories does not preclude the similarity between some of their aspects.

¹⁰Thompson (1966:88) provides some typical monthly figures for minor operations in Vietnam during 1964: 59,996 operations: 451 contacts with the Viet Cong; 72,794 operations: 406 contacts; 73,726 operations: 491 contacts.

¹¹It has been argued that ethnic conflicts are informed by rigid and transparent identities “fixed by birth,” where hardly anyone ever fights for the opposing ethnic group and leaders cannot broaden their appeals to include members of opposing groups--whereas “ideological” wars are competitions between the government and the rebels for the loyalties of the people, that is, contests between factions within the same community over how that community should be governed; in other words, they are informed by individual loyalties which are quite fluid and changeable, with the same population serving as the shared mobilization base for both sides (Kaufmann 1996:138-41). However, a number of valid objections can be put forward. On the one hand, ethnic identities are not necessarily fixed by birth but are often redefined in the course of conflicts; changing sides is not impossible in ethnic conflicts, remaining uncommitted is often an option, and intra-group conflicts can become more important than inter-group conflicts; on the other hand, many non-ethnic environments have displayed extremely high levels of violence (e.g. Cambodia) as well as rigid and quite transparent identities (the Spanish civil war).

be strong incentives for at least a few individuals to “defect,” i.e provide information of the rival organization, conspire against it, etc. Full civilian collaboration certainly depends on the provision of selective material and nonmaterial benefits, but it ultimately hinges on the establishment of a monopoly of violence--or control. In this sense, the key to defeating an opponent in a civil war is to control access to the civilian population--and, hence, deny one’s opponent access to civilians. This is the goal of both insurgents and incumbents. On the one hand, insurgents establish their own monopoly of the means of coercion in a (usually remote) area of the country. Part of their strategy is to eliminate the representatives of the state, both formal (police, etc.) and informal (suspected civilian informers and collaborators). On the other hand, incumbents rely on a set of strategies (often known as “counterinsurgency”) whose main objective is to deprive insurgents of civilian support. This can be accomplished in a variety of ways. For example, incumbents can institute a set of draconian reprisals against civilians and institute collective punishment for individual cases of collaboration with insurgents: this method was pioneered in such distinct settings as the Boer war and the anti-U.S. Filipino rebellion at the turn of the century, and was perfected by the Nazis in occupied Europe as well as by some Latin American governments more recently. Likewise, incumbents often 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.

Although material and non-material benefits matter in 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 political preferences. Most civilians will come to increasingly value their own survival and this consideration will weigh on the choices they will make. Nordstrom (1992:266) quotes a peasant from Mozambique: “The only ideology the *people* have is an anti-atrocity ideology.” Likewise, as the war develops, 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 (be they material goods or ideological ones) also need to resort to violence in order to “match” their opponent’s violence. In short, the central effect of civil war is the primacy of violence as a political resource, “the virtual equation of power and injury” in Berry’s words (1994:xix).

Incumbents and insurgents rely on a variety of strategies and they are constrained by resources and norms. However, war induces learning. A robust stylized fact is that in the course of civil wars, political actors tend to escalate the violence they use. They also switch from more indiscriminate to more selective violence. Political actors don’t want to use violence in haphazard way because doing so is counterproductive. They follow Machiavelli’s recommendation that punishment “should be used with moderation, so as to avoid cause for hatred; for no ruler benefits

by making himself odious.” The switch from indiscriminate to selective violence is well documented. However, the reason why this switch takes place is less so. As it turns out, short of quasi-complete extermination, the use of indiscriminate violence against civilians who have been collaborating with a non-weak opponent, is counterproductive: it offers incentives for civilians to join discriminate actor.¹² In order to be efficient, violence generally needs to be selective.

Selective violence is difficult to achieve because it requires information--typically private information. Private information is asymmetrically distributed between political actors and individual civilians. This is 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,” remarked Tocqueville. Although some information can be extracted violently, there is no substitute for consensual provision. However, channeling such information to political actors often hinges on intra-community dynamics. These dynamics are rarely studied. Indeed, the best insights can be found in either social anthropology or literary works. The most obvious cause of this neglect is the difficulty of researching or collecting systematically data at this level.

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.¹³ 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 empirical micro-level evidence suggesting (a) that groups (including ethnic ones) are more often than not internally divided, and (b) that much violence takes place within the group--either directly or indirectly, through intra-group dynamics. In fact, the source of private information that allows political actors to use violence efficiently (i.e. selectively) typically lies in intra-group dynamics.

I call this feature of violence *jointness*: a large part of violence in civil war is the outcome of transactions between on the one hand “outsiders” (both insurgent or incumbent political organizations), and on the other hand “insiders” (local civilians—political cadres, sympathizers,

¹²There are two mechanisms. First, if one actor relies on indiscriminate violence and the other on selective violence, individuals are better off collaborating with the selective actor. If, for example, incumbents threaten to wipe out a village of 500 people in an area of 100,000 who collaborate with rebels, the individual probability of being killed is .005; whereas if a person defects to the incumbents, the chance of being killed by incumbents is extremely high. Second, indiscriminate violence generates a benefit that did not exist before: protection. If the rebels can offer protection against incumbent indiscriminate violence they can attract people who only seek to be protected.

¹³The mirror image of a group as a collective actor is that of a group as the collective victim of violence.

and ordinary people).¹⁴ In short, selective violence is *jointly* produced by insiders and outsiders, locals and nonlocals, civilians and soldiers. Figure 1 describes the sequence of the process, whereby an organization first decides whether to use violence or not and then individuals decide to denounce or not.

[Figure 1 here]

Denunciations are caused by many kinds of local conflicts. These can be purely private (e.g. a recurring family feud);¹⁵ they can be a local reflection of a larger cleavage (e.g. a feud between a wealthy and a poor family); they can become attached to the conflict (e.g. adversaries in an old family feud might join opposite political camps); or they can be produced by the conflict (e.g. political actors may increase the pool of available resources 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). Indeed, the few existing systematic archival studies on denunciation (Fitzpatrick and Gellately 1997) suggest that the great majority of denunciations are malicious. Note that this distinction does not overlap with correct or false denunciation. A denunciation may be simultaneously malicious *and* accurate. Individuals who are often willing to denounce their neighbors in order to gain material or other benefits, and who might even be happy to see them disappear 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 deterred by the sanctions associated with murder in normal times--or both. Denouncing personal enemies when a political organization assumes all the costs of violence, abolishes sanctions, or even replaces them with moral and/or material benefits, becomes an attractive option. To use Arendt’s expression (1963:134), these are situations in which evil almost loses the quality of temptation. 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.”

Acts of violence which on the surface (and to outside observers) appear to be generated by exclusively political or ideological motivations, ascriptive or not, often turn out on closer examination to be “caused not by politics but by personal hatreds, vendettas, and envy” (Harding

¹⁴Although 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 sides which demand information.

¹⁵Abraham 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).

1984:75). My own research suggests that behind ostensibly political motivations often lurk personal enmities, family feuds, and local factionalism.

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 a town of Northern Spain, Vega de Pas, reports that the main cleavage in the central neighborhood, the Casco, 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.

The purge of landlords that took place in North Vietnam during the 1950s led to the denunciation of many poor peasants by neighbors who wanted "to pay off old scores" (Crozier 1960:94). Paul and Demarest's in-depth study of a death squad in the small town of San Pedro la Laguna, in Guatemala, is replete with similar examples. "Personal vengeance was a recurrent motive" behind the violence, they found (1988:125). Particular cases include the killing by a death squad leader of his brother-in-law because "he had long been envious of the advantages [he] enjoyed as the scion of an intact family of moderate means," the abduction of a man as a 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 cases recur in the most varied historical and geographical contexts. An anthropologist who studied a Greek village 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). 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.”

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 Risorgimento in Southern Italy (Pezzino 1994:62), the American Civil War in frontier states (Fisher 1997:63--Eastern Tennessee; Fellman 1989--Missouri), Nazi-occupied Poland (Paczkowski 1999:311), 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), WW2 and immediate postwar Yugoslavia (Djilas 1980:78), the ongoing civil war in Algeria (Kalyvas 1999; Gacemi 1998; Abdi 1997), the Palestinian rebellion of 1936-1939 (Swedenburg 1995), 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), the civil war in Sierra Leone (Richards 1996:8), and the Spanish Civil War (Harding 1984; Freeman 1979), presumably among many others. 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 of a

student of the violence that erupted in Western Poland during the Soviet occupation of 1939: “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” (emphasis mine) (Gross 1988:42).

In ethnically fragmented societies (as well as in more homogeneous ones), the personalistic nature of conflict runs the risk of getting lost--or worse be misinterpreted as a reflection of the cleavage that informs the conflict. A 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).

The joint production of violence requires institutions. Levels of institutionalization may vary and institutions which make decisions 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: solicitation, credible guaranties of anonymity, information-evaluating bureaucracies, 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 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

for settling private scores. A common way to ensure some sort 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 agent ? 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 grandmother. Finally, and most importantly, political actors judge the accuracy of denunciations by looking at the geographical origins. Since defection is more likely in areas which are accessible to the rival organization, they are likely to be more accurate than in areas where the opponents never visit.

The joint production of violence emerges for five reasons. First, as I pointed out, indiscriminate terror is generally inefficient in civil wars because it is likely to be counterproductive. Unlike state repression, civil war is a competitive process in which the misuse of violence can push security-minded civilians into the opposite camp. Second, 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. Third, while resources for establishing and maintaining control are often limited, control requirements in civil wars are higher than what they typically are 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. Fourth, 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 violence. While the initial targets of violence are easy to spot (usually information about a well-known informer, a gendarme, or a political activist is in the public domain), it is far more difficult to identify 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, actual and 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. Fifth, because organizations depend heavily on their local agents they usually refrain from carrying violent acts against a local civilian without

their consent. In other words, local agents often have veto power over violence.

Denunciation does not only bring benefits; it also carries considerable risks: individuals will denounce their neighbors when the benefits of such action exceeds its cost. The calculus of (potential) denouncers is essential, even though neglected by both anthropologists and historians because it is so hard to observe. The main cost of denunciation is the risk of future sanctions facing the denouncer. In rural societies where visibility is high and denunciations can be traced to their origins with relative ease (since local feuds are public knowledge), sanctions take the form of retaliation against the denunciator by the victim's kin. As an Algerian militiaman put it: "They can kill me, but if they kill one of my relatives I will kill their entire families; this is the only language that terrorists [i.e. the rebels] understand" (Amnesty International 1997:18).

However, retaliation is almost never immediate or direct. The victim's kin carries its retaliation through the rival organization. This requires that such an organization be available for such an action. In other words, the victim's kin must have access to the rival organization to achieve retaliation.

Consider the following example. Village x is controlled by the rebels. A_x denounces B_x to the local committee of the rebels as a government informer and causes his death. B_x 's family wants to exact revenge against both A_x and the committee members. However, since the village is under rebel control, such an opportunity simply does not exist: even if a member of family B_x wanted to personally assassinate A_x he would have to factor in the harm that his reckless act might cause to his own family: the rebels would be likely to punish severely any such act. The situation is different in village y where rebel control is weak because of its location close to army bases--or in village x after the rebels have been pushed out by the army. In village y , family B_y can get the army to retaliate on its behalf in exchange for private information about collaborators of the rebels; the army will likely shield family B_y from further retaliation by A_y 's family (although family B_y may have to move in into an army base)¹⁶ through their control of the village. Knowing that such a probability exists, A_y (or the local committee of village y) will refrain from denouncing B_y in the first place (or approving his murder). In fact, the committee members will have a strong incentive to actually veto rebel violence. Thus, the level of risk facing villagers has an important effect on the level of (selective) violence in a village. 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.

¹⁶The additional cost of relocating is acceptable in situations of revenge (because revenge for a recent death carries a higher utility than a regular feud).

[Figure 2 about here]

A simple model of violence in civil war

Civil wars are processes of competition over sovereignty. At least two political actors exercise variable sovereignty over parts of a state. Control, as we may call the exercise of sovereignty, is strong in some places and weak in other places. Sovereignty is divided in some areas, meaning that both actors claim control over the same territory. In this context, as I pointed out, the role of civilians is crucial.

Organizations seek to punish and prevent civilians from committing actions that can harm them. These actions (which can be labeled “defection”) include passing information to the enemy, conspiring against the organization, etc. The goal is to punish actual defection and deter future defection. Because defection requires access to the rival organization (it is impossible to inform the other side if there is no other side around), it is largely a function of control. Where an organization enjoys a monopoly of violence, defection will be unlikely; it will be most likely where sovereignty is divided. 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 power is weak. This is 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.”

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 f and the cost of violence i . Organizations will use violence when $i < f$ and will refrain from using violence when $i > f$.

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 $i > f$. Since violence is likely to be indiscriminate in the absence of information, organizations will be unwilling to resort to violence.¹⁷ Denouncers have their own private agendas, as described above. As I pointed out, the truth of a denunciation is ascertained indirectly by organizations through the use of a proxy: their estimation of the likelihood of defection, $k(c)$. Since, in places where an

¹⁷Denunciations which are vetoed by local committees are equivalent to no denunciations.

organization exercises strong control defection is unlikely, most denunciations in those places will likely 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 most denunciations there will likely be true.¹⁸

Now consider the calculus of denouncers. Let the benefit of denouncing (the individual gratification plus any rewards from the organization) be b and the cost of being retaliated against $e > b$.¹⁹ 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. In these areas, the victim's kin enjoy the option of retaliation: they can bring in the rival organization to exercise retribution. The expected benefit of denouncing someone is $b - r(c)e$. Setting the value of the status quo to the individual to 0, villagers will denounce if $b > r(c)e$. 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 $b < r(c)e$)--hence no violence either since it would be indiscriminate in the absence denunciations ($i > f$).

Since retaliation is not possible in areas of high control, denunciation is very likely there (because $b > r(c)e$). In other words, 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), i.e. where their denunciations will tend to be false. As I pointed out, the reliability of denunciation reaches 0 at c^{**} .²⁰ Above c^{**} no violence will take place because it would be indiscriminate in the presence of false denunciations ($i > f$).

If we plot 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

¹⁸Note again that privately motivated denunciations are not necessary false. One may denounce a true defector because of a private dispute.

¹⁹At 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 (I return to this). 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.

²⁰Initially, individuals will give false denunciations; after a number of iterations, when they realize that organizations discount them (or even punish them), false denunciations will decline and disappear. Likewise, political actors may even stop soliciting denunciations from contested areas. In the contested South Vietnamese of Binh Nghia, "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).

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 here]

These predictions are paradoxical in the following way: organizations won't use violence where they need it most (where $c < c^*$) because in those areas individuals face strong counterincentives to denunciation. 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.

Operationalization

Control is primarily a function of geography (Fearon and Laitin 1999).²¹ Rebels are strong in remote mountain areas where the army never or rarely visits or in border areas where crossing the border means finding sanctuary in another country. Conversely, incumbents are stronger in plains or close to cities where they have large camps and outposts.

Consider a geographical space with five zones of control. On the one hand, incumbents enjoy strong control in some places (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 face an insurgent clandestine organization as well as infrequent visits by rebels. On the other hand, insurgents enjoy strong control in some other 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 precisely to achieve defection. Defection is also likely in zones 2 and 4 (although less than in zone 3), and least likely in zones 1 and 5. Denunciations in zones 1 and 5 are, thus, highly likely to be false. They are likely to be true in zone 3—and credible in zones 2 and 4. The

²¹Political and social variables matter, but after the first round of violence, geography plays the most important role. For example, using a list drawn by the state authorities to assess the political allegiance of villages in the Ille-et-Vilaine in July 1795, Dupuy (1997:194-97) finds that their allegiance during the civil war (known as the Vendée war) is predicted less by their initial expressed preferences prior to the war (1789-1792) and more by the local military balance of power and the village's geographical position, hence the extent of control exercised in the area by a political actor. When the counterrevolutionary rebels were able to impose their rule in most of the countryside (for reasons largely related to the military weakness of the revolutionaries), all neutral villages as well as an important part of staunchly republican villages, turned counterrevolutionary. The archival material quoted by Dupuy is replete with remarks about “republican communes” whose “republicanism is diminishing” because of their “geographical position” and the “difficulty of communications,” and of villages that will turn counterrevolutionary “if additional forces are not sent in.”

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 3).

[Figure 4 here]

The model's main underlying assumption is that the future does not matter--that individuals believe that levels of control are stable. For example, if they live in an area which is strongly controlled by the rebels (5) at t_1 , they believe they this area will be under the same degree control at t_n . This is a realistic assumption to make if the civil war is a one-shot game (which it often is for a number of areas); it is also a realistic assumption for the first round of violence (individuals tend to underestimate the duration of wars)²² and even for the following couple of rounds when local perceptions of the war may create a sense of (false) certainty. After some point, of course, uncertainty will prevail. Under uncertainty (i.e. a substantial probability that control will shift from one political actor to the other), it will be irrational to denounce anywhere (or it may appear rational to preempt by denouncing everyone).²³ If both organizations resort to indiscriminate violence because of the absence of denunciations, it is likely that people will flee their villages and the zones of violence will become deserted--a common situation in many civil wars. I also assume that the past does not matter, i.e.both people and organizations behave in the same way if, say, a zone 4 used to be a zone 2 a few days before and if it has always been a zone 4. In the last section I discuss these assumptions.

The model carries an interesting implication: since no denunciations will be forthcoming in contested areas, violence there is likely to be indiscriminate. Such violence is counterproductive and should not take place in equilibrium; but if does occur (especially during initial stages) it is likely to occur in precisely these areas.

Besides the predictions about the clustering of violence in zones 2 and 4, this model offers two counterintuitive predictions about the absence of violence (a non-issue in many studies of violence which consistently sample on the dependent variable): first, the areas of highest control (1 and 5) will be nonviolent. This runs against the arguments of the state terror literature which point out that government terror is a direct function of government control. Second, contested areas (3), where one would expect that violence is *most* likely will be least likely to be violent. The underlying logic here is one of mutual deterrence: potential denouncers are deterred because the

²²For example, "No one, North and South, anticipated the duration or devastation of the American Civil War" (Fellman 1989:23).

²³And if organizations pressure people too much, people will abandon their villages.

victims' kin can easily retaliate. 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 and the Viet Cong ruled by night. Although the local VC did not dare visit their home in the village on a regular basis,

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 (West 1985:5; 219-20).

The same logic is apparent in the following example from Greece. A leftist Greek villager (Antonopoulos 1993:149-51) recalls how, in 1948, he escaped death at the hands of an army colonel, whom he describes as being extremely violent ("worse than the butcher of Lyon"). The colonel and his men were beating him up and another villager, for three days in a row, to get him to confess the location of a cache with partisan weapons. This villager was a suspect because all his four brothers were partisans, roaming around the village. On the third day, a man from a neighboring village, whom the villager 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 colonel refused to listen and the two men got into a dispute. At some point the militiaman even threatened the colonel: "I don't want to leave my family in the street. If you do something [to these leftists] 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 sympathy with the suspect, but by fear of retribution by the man's 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, what will we do later?" The prisoners were promptly freed.

3. Empirical Findings

Research Design

A fundamental problem in the study of civil war violence is the dearth of systematic and comprehensive data. This is mainly due to the difficulty of gathering such data. Violence is a key political resource in the conduct of civil wars. Competing sides have a vested interest in minimizing the atrocities they have committed (or are committing) and inflating those committed by their adversary; civil wars tend to be decentralized processes often taking place in remote areas of poor countries where few means of communication are available even in times of peace; as a result, an important proportion of violence remains invisible; finally, the rural societies in which civil wars typically take place lack adequate “record-keeping” institutions even in times of peace. The obstruction of systematic investigation is reinforced by a number of additional factors once the war has ended. These range from the unwillingness of the war’s winners to allow an investigation of the violence they are responsible for to the reluctance of social and political actors on both sides to stir painful and potentially hazardous, memories (Aguilar Fernández 1996). Recent efforts by human rights organizations to collect and publicize human rights violations, as well as the “truth and reconciliation commissions” formed in a few countries after the end of the war,²⁴ are good but partial correctives.

First, data collection is rarely comprehensive and suffers from sampling on the dependent variable—concentrating on the most violent places and events and ignoring less violent ones. There is a particular fixation on massacres—even when massacres turn out to constitute only a small part of the overall violence—as in Algeria (Kalyvas 1999). Second, data on violence are typically torn from their context and truncated from crucial events that precede and follow it. Black-Michaud’s (1975:35) depiction of the evidence on tribal feuds applies to civil war violence: “Accounts that purport to describe actual ‘feuds’ either only narrate a single sanguinary episode in a long chain of such events, or, alternatively, provide a much abridged ‘history’ of feud, which usually ignores several variables without which all attempts to give a sociological explanation of the pattern of hostilities in a particular case must remain abortive.” Finally, Human Rights organizations are not always free from bias (Stoll 1999; Prunier 1995), a factor that affects the reliability of their data. Ethnographic accounts which are both contextual and insightful (e.g. Bax 1997; Geffray 1990) suffer from sampling problems and are not systematic enough to allow for the rigorous testing of theoretically formulated hypotheses. Short of a systematic and comprehensive international data collection effort, the dearth of data calls for creative solutions.

The solution I use is a micro-comparative research design. Moving down the “ladder of

²⁴El Salvador, Guatemala, and South Africa.

aggregation,” and using the village as a unit of analysis brings two advantages. First, it provides a contextualized understanding of violence. Since individually based data on violence are generally unavailable, a dataset had to be created from scratch, something that proved possible only at the level of the region (as opposed to that of the country). I conducted an exhaustive and systematic regional study of a Greek region which underwent an intense civil war between 1943 and 1949. Using archival research and extensive interviewing (about 200 interviews), I mapped *all* violent *civilian* deaths in *all* villages, in two districts of the region of Argolis, in southern Greece.²⁵ This area includes 56 villages with a total rural population in 1940 of 39,036 inhabitants. Although the Greek Civil War took place from 1943 to 1949, its intensity varied across regions. In the south it was particularly violent from September 1943 to September 1944, when Greece was under German occupation. About 700 civilians were killed during this period in the region I studied, close to 2 percent of the population.

Violence was unequally distributed across villages and time. Some villages did not have a single death, whereas other villages lost close to 10 percent of their population. September 1943 was peaceful as was September 1944; but May 1944 was extremely violent. Some villages experienced their first deaths in October 1943, while others in July 1944.

Every single instance of violent homicide was coded as an event in a given space and time, surrounded by its political, social, cultural, and institutional context and placed within a sequence of events. In short, all these observations come with their story. Another advantage of this research design is that it goes beyond the anecdotal and often biased dimension of single-case studies typically produced by ethnographic investigation and the kind of unsystematic reporting usually produced by human rights organizations. Studying one entire region and focusing on all cases of violence in all localities within it allowed me to introduce a variety of sociological and cultural controls. This design also makes possible the identification of several puzzles since violence varies from village to village but key variables, such as political actors, culture, history, and social context vary little or not at all. In short, this is a research strategy in which ethnographic detail and empirical thickness do not come at the expense of systematic and large-scale research; abstract and deductive reasoning faces the realm of real individuals; systematic analysis is combined with richly contextualized and sequenced data.²⁶

²⁵ The proportion of combatants' deaths was very low. It was safer to be a combatant than a civilian.

²⁶ The main disadvantage of this research design lies in its generalizability. How do we know that hypotheses which are confirmed in a single region of one country carry universal validity? My objective at this point is not general validity; I, rather, seek to understand the mechanisms that drive violence, rethink the categories we use to study the issue and run a first empirical test. In the larger research project I conduct two “tests” of generalizability.

The Civil War in Argolis

The Civil War in Argolis was fought most intensely during the last year of the country's occupation by Germany, in 1943-44. The last phase of the Civil War (1947-9) was fought mostly in Northern Greece because of the depth of the mountain areas there and the proximity to the borders of Albania and Yugoslavia. The capitulation of Italy (whose troops formed the main occupation army in Greece) in September 1943 provided the opportunity that the communist-led resistance movement EAM (National Liberation Front) needed to grow with astonishing speed. As the German forces were overstretched in a region that included mountainous areas which were not easily accessible, EAM came to dominate the countryside and set an alternative state which performed all state functions, including taxation, recruitment, policing, and justice. The German army partially controlled the two towns of the region (zone 2). The villages of the plain were a contested area, being accessible on a regular basis to both sides (3); the villages of the outer plain were "relatively secure" from the point of view of the rebels (4), while hill and mountain villages were tightly controlled by the rebels (5).²⁷ In fact, most mountain villagers were only visited once or twice by occupation troops during the entire occupation period. Although the distance between the coast and the mountain villages is short (it takes today between 1 and 3 hours to drive there from the coast), it took in the 1940s 9 hours of hiking in treacherous terrain to reach the mountain villages.

While repressive, the occupation of Argolis had produced few deaths until September 1944. On the one hand, the occupation authorities did not feel threatened since there was no armed resistance in the area. On the other hand, clandestine resistance organizations assassinated a few well-known local collaborators who were publicly known and universally despised for using collaboration as a means of extortion, but there were very few such cases. Nothing presaged that a bloody civil war would follow as the bulk of the rural population was strongly behind EAM which was seen more as a nationalist than a communist movement, fighting against foreign invaders--very much along the lines of the Chinese communists fighting against the Japanese. Moreover, for most peasants this was not a matter of choice: EAM was the ruling authority in their village.

First, I use a dataset with about 100 villages from all around Greece to see whether the patterns of Argolis hold. Second, I use case studies from a wide variety of wars to see whether similar dynamics take place.

²⁷I coded control independently from violence, relying on both archival sources and interviews. What I looked for was permanent presence (camps and outposts) and frequency of visits by both sides. For example, reports by British agents who visited the area in 1943 provide the list of "free villages," i.e. villages which they could visit without problems. Interviewees were able to state with a high degree of consistency whether their village was controlled by one or the other side, or if it hung on the balance between the two.

It is possible to analyze the Civil War, as it unfolded in Argolis, in four periods. Between October 1943 and May 1944 (t_1) EAM began a campaign of preemptive violence to consolidate its control over the countryside it controlled. The targets were mainly mayors and local leaders who were unfriendly (though compliant) to EAM--and who were labeled "reactionaries." What triggered this campaign was the decision of the Athens collaborationist government to form local militias that would fight against EAM. EAM feared that these local leaders might join these militias as soon as they were formed and would, thus, deal a severe blow to the resistance. This campaign produced 32 assassinations in the period of October 1943 to early May 1944,²⁸ a small number compared to the overall violence, but a significant one nonetheless since it was really the first sustained campaign of violence targeting the Greek population of the area. To implement this campaign, EAM representatives asked local village organizations to select the targets and authorize the killing. Participants in these meetings gave me detailed descriptions (which fit with depositions made in courts during the 1940s).

The occupation authorities began retaliating in late May and June 1944 (t_2). On the one hand they recruited local people into a pro-German militia, named Security Battalions and launched mopping-up operations in the hills which produced mostly indiscriminate violence (close to 150 deaths). At the same time they created new outposts in the villages of the plain and the outer plain, turning them into relatively secure areas. Using denunciations, they killed many members and sympathizers of EAM in these villages. About 90 people were killed during this period in this manner. At the same time, the rebels also killed about 100 people in zones which were located near the fighting so as to prevent defections from taking place.²⁹

July 1944 (t_3) was a time of high violence. As the hills were turned into relatively secure areas for the occupation army and the pro-German militia, many hill villages joined them thinking that the rebels had been defeated. They received weapons from them and sent young men (often former guerrillas) to enrol in the militia. At the same time, the mountain areas which up to then had been peaceful saw an intense campaign of assassinations by the rebels: with the militia down in the hills, defection became possible in the mountains. In July, the Germans and the militia raided the mountain villages as well. About 60 people had been killed by the rebels before the raid. About 50 more were then killed by the incumbents.

²⁸The numbers cited here are still preliminary: I am presently in the process of confirming them, using both oral and written sources.

²⁹Another 150 people were killed in mostly indiscriminate violence that took place during a mop-up operation of the Germans and the militia.

However, in August and September 1944 (t_4), the Germans began retreating back to the plain in preparation for the evacuation of Greece, which was made imperative by the breakthrough of the Soviet army in Romania. As the hill villages which had defected in June were reconquered by EAM, they were punished for having defected. 170 people were killed in a series of massacres.

How does the model predict the variation of violence across space? Table 2 summarizes the results. The unit of analysis is village by time period. Insurgents are the only “players” in t_1 and t_4 .³⁰ There are 336 observations in total.³¹ A village can be predicted, on the basis of the model, as being violent or nonviolent. It can then be observed as being violent or non violent. One death is enough to qualify the village as violent. In this paper I do not examine the issue of the relative size of casualties in each village. Table 2 summarizes the results.

[Table 2 here]

The model does a good job in predicting both violence and nonviolence. Correct predictions never fall under 50%. The model seems to capture the dynamics of violence fairly well. In addition I am in process of conducting a battery of tests to check whether the observed variation may be due to other factors, including sociostructural variables. The preliminary results show that a number of structural variables (education, patterns of land tenure, etc.) as well as political variables (electoral returns before the civil war) are not associated with levels of civil war violence. In addition, my fieldwork and archival research allowed me to reconstruct the decision-making process that led to violence or nonviolence, which increases my confidence that the model’s predictions are due to the specified mechanisms. For example, when I asked the members of EAM organizations in the villages of the plain why there had been no denunciations in these villages (located in zone 3 at t_1), as opposed to the villages of the outer plain (4) during the same period, they first asserted that their village were more solidary, that people had fewer disputes and hence fewer reasons to denounce each other. After I controlled for local disputes by examining pre-civil war court records which indicated that the villages of the two zones were not distinguishable, I read again the interviews and went back to the same persons with more questions. I, thus, learned that these people blocked all denunciations from reaching the rebels because otherwise “the Germans would be in our village the next morning,” brought in by the relatives of the victims intent on exacting punishment. The fact that they avoided violence when

³⁰Insurgents play first because they are the challengers: they have to consolidate their power; they also play last because incumbents in this particular case, lost: they left the country, while the collaborationist militia surrendered.

³¹56 villages per time period per political actor.

neighboring villages did not, spawned immediately *afterwards* a narrative of local solidarity which was used to explain the absence of violence *during* the war!

Another interesting finding is that the joint character of violence is reflected on the individual identity of the targets. For instance, most victims of insurgent violence in the period I examined above turned out to be people whose identity flagged them as potentially disloyal (mayors or former members of the Greek army--mostly NCOs). On the surface, this would suffice to explain the violence against them. However, among the total number of mayors and army members living in these villages only a few were killed--and as the interviews suggest, they cannot not be singled out by their political activity. Instead, what led to their being targeted is that they were involved in local (mostly personal and prewar) conflicts with supporters of the insurgent organization. For example, the mayor of one village who had frequent contacts with the Germans (and was, thus, suspect in the eyes of the rebels) was denounced because he had reneged on his promise to marry a local committee member's sister!

Failures and Limitations

However, besides the relative accuracy of the model's predictions, it is both important and interesting to analyze the failures of the model and discuss its assumptions.

There are two ways in which the predictions fail: they may either overpredict or underpredict violence. Violence is overpredicted when a predicted nonviolent village turns out to be violent (or when there is no violence in a village located *within* the space of violence); conversely, violence is underpredicted when a predicted nonviolent village turns out to be violent (or when there is violence *outside* the space of violence) (Table 3).

[Table 3 here]

1. Overpredicting violence

Probably the question with the biggest policy relevance is the how certain villages manage to remain nonviolent in zones where all the incentives are staked in favor of violence. My intuition at this point, based on the data I have examined so far, is that at initial stages (in the first round of violence), idiosyncratic factors play an important role. People are not arrested after they are denounced because they happen to know officials in charge of their case or, if arrested, they may escape execution for the same reason. Another factor is the strength of the local organization. In initial stages, strong local incumbent or insurgent organizations can block the pressure from above (for information) and the pressure from below (denunciations). More interesting, is the

overprediction of violence in subsequent rounds. There is evidence suggesting that the fact that violence is avoided at round 1 *even though* the village is located inside a “zone of violence,” spawns a virtuous cycle. No denunciations take place at subsequent rounds suggesting that a norm of reciprocity is activated. This insight suggests two limitations of the model: first, a limitation of individual rationality induced by existing norms; second, the fact that the future often matters. Introducing path dependency suggests that a village located in zone 4 at t_2 after being located in zone 1 at t_1 may behave differently than a village located in zone 4 at t_1 . At the same time, however, the overall quality of the predictions also suggests that these two limitations have a restricted effect. I am presently exploring this issue by looking at control cases with more rounds of violence from other regions.

2. Undepredicting violence

Why would villages behave violently even when they are located outside the zone of violence? There are two answers: either organizations decide to use violence in spite of the costs, or individuals denounce even though the risk of retaliation is high. The former applies when, mainly because of a number of principal-agent problems, political actors resort to indiscriminate violence. The latter is more interesting. The data suggest that individuals tend to be less risk-averse when denouncing out of revenge caused by civil war violence than out of a private dispute. There are a number of cases where individuals either denounce in contested areas (3) or in safe areas (2 and 4) even when these appear likely to change hands, thus placing their families at risk. The reason they do so, I believe, lies in the power of emotions--especially the desire for vengeance. This is a passion which often defeats outcome-oriented action (Frijda 1994). In other words, the immediate past (in the form of recent violence) also matters. What I would like to emphasize here is the fact that pointing to the limitations of rationality in a rigorous way is made possible by a formal treatment of the issue at hand based on rationalist assumptions.

In short, the failures of the model also point to the limitations of the assumptions on which it is based. These assumptions posit that individual expectations (the “future”) and events during previous rounds (the “past”) don’t matter: people perceive the zone where they live as being stable and make decisions based on rational and informed perceptions of danger. These are realistic assumptions under two conditions: (a) the violence which takes place during the first few rounds of violence (people often tend to assume that the war will not last and that control will be stable), and (b) the civil war does not last long and only generates few rounds of violence. Both conditions apply in the case at hand, hence the overall quality of the predictions. However, after the first few rounds, extreme uncertainty prevails: the only certainty is that control is unstable. In these situations, people will most probably flee since they will become aware of both the high

probability of them making mistakes and the high cost of those mistakes. Indeed, many civil wars tend to give rise to deserted areas. Civil wars are also path-dependent processes where past violence generates future non-instrumental violence via emotions, as argued above. Such violence cannot be predicted by the model. However, this failure of the model provides an indicator for actually measuring the relative importance of emotions.

In general, protracted civil wars will either produce mass waves of refugees (if the war is intense) or widespread informal accommodation (in areas 2 and 4) based on norms of reciprocity (if the war is less intense).

A final point concerns ascriptive (especially ethnic) cleavages. The model presented here is based on the assumption that the information which makes selective violence possible is private. In many civil wars, however, information about actual or potential defectors is initially public. In civil wars based on ascriptive cleavages, individual identities are signaled in a variety of ways; in turn, these identities may convey information about the likelihood of future action. Likewise, civil wars based on non-ascriptive cleavages can be highly polarized. Where polarization is pronounced *ex ante*, information about identities is as public as in ascriptive environments. 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 plays an important role, it may become joint). The first round of violence will often be an attempt to exterminate the (publicly known) local leaders of the rival faction.

After 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 “cleansing.” In the newly homogenized environments, information about potential defectors tends to be private. This information becomes extremely valuable where and when a political actor launches programs of cooptation. 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 to exterminate them. As a result, the rival political actor, usually insurgents, resorts to selective violence against its “own” people to police them (“intra-group” violence).³² As a Tamil woman told Nordstrom (1992:263) in Sri Lanka: “The [Sinhalese] soldiers aren’t the only ones, our boys [Tamil guerrillas] have done things too. The other day, maybe you saw, there was a young girl killed for

³²In fact, it has been argued that initial insurgent violence in ethnic insurgencies “is usually directed primarily against their own people, in order to ensure their support for the revolt, however reluctant or however passive” (Paget 1967:32). Likewise, incumbents now need information to discriminate between non-ethnics.

supposedly talking to Sinhalese soldiers, but I don't think she did." Conversely, [Sinhalese] death squads in northern Sri Lanka severed the heads of scores of Sinhalese youths "suspected of left-wing collusion" and placed them around a lake in the center of major city (Nordstrom 1992:263).

Hence, despite claims positing the impossibility of defection in ethnic (Kaufmann 1996; Ranzato 1994) or even non-ethnic conflicts (Zulaika 1988:32), such defection is possible provided it is solicited. In protracted civil wars, incumbents tend to solicit it, thus causing intra-group violence. Considerable empirical evidence suggests that intra-group violence is a very significant component of violence in ethnic wars--sometimes it even exceeds inter-group violence.³³ The model applies to these cases.

Conclusion

Selective violence against civilians is a central form of civil war violence. This violence does not resemble the Hobbesian world of random and generalized mayhem one often imagines (and superficially observes). A significant number of places manage to escape the violence that engulfs surrounding places; face to face violence is not a generalized phenomenon: very few individuals perform the actual killings; however far more people provide information and collaboration leading to the violence--often for reasons unrelated to the conflict. Violence is generally not a haphazard process, but a regulated one, taking place in sequential fashion. New informal and

³³A few examples: EOKA (the Greek Cypriot rebels) killed more Greek Cypriot civilians than they did British and Turkish Cypriot civilians (203 Greek Cypriots, as opposed to 26 British, and 7 Turkish Cypriots); the Kenyan Mau Mau also killed many more of their own than they did Europeans: by the end of 1953 they had killed 1,000 fellow Kikuyu as opposed to 21 Europeans; conversely, local Kikuyu militias collaborating with the British killed an estimated 42 percent of Mau Mau rebels (Paget 1967). More Algerians were assassinated by the Algerian Independentists than the French settlers during this country's war of independence (Crozier 1960:170). Likewise in Angola, while Europeans were killed during the war of independence, the number of blacks and of mestizos and assimilados who came to grief was far greater (Laqueur 1998:311). In Sri Lanka, according to Daniel (1996:207), "violence is no longer interethnic but intraethnic, with more Tamils killing Tamils and Sinhallas killing Sinhallas than Sinhallas killing Tamils or Tamils killing Sinhallas; with the Sri Lankan state killing the most, Tamils and Sinhallas" (see as well Byman 1998:160). The breakdown of the victims of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) until the first two months of 1998 was as follows: 15 officers of the Ministry of Interior Forces, 13 Serb government officials and civilians, and 11 Kosovar Albanians accused of being collaborators (Hayden 1999:44). All six victims of ETA political assassinations in the village of Itziar, in the Basque country, during 1975 and 1980 were Basques, five of them either villagers or married to villagers (Zulaika 1988:86). Intra-ethnic violence is reported from the Kashmir insurgency (Bhinda 1994:62). Even when interethnic violence exceeds intra-ethnic violence, the latter is substantial. Consider the agents and targets of violence in Northern Ireland between 1969 and 1989 (O'Leary and McGarry 1993:24): Catholic paramilitaries killed 379 Protestant civilians as opposed to 173 Catholic ones; Loyalist paramilitaries killed 506 Catholic civilians as opposed to 114 Protestant ones; the security forces killed 149 Catholic civilians as opposed to 25 Protestant ones (O'Leary and McGarry 1993:24). A good proxy for intra-group violence in enrollment in militias which fight against their co-ethnics. In the Soviet Union during the Second World War, over 1,000,000 Soviet citizens fought on the German side, whereas the total number of Soviet Partisans was about half of that (Klonis 1972:91). In Algeria (1960), an estimated 158,000 Algerians had joined auxiliary units fighting with the French, whereas the strength of the insurgent *Armée de Libération Nationale* (ALN) was between 75,000 and 90,000 (Roux 1991:140-1).

formal institutions emerge to regulate violence: denunciations and executions are often decided in the context of these institutions. Often, their form has an effect on the level and form of violence. 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 initially motivated mostly by the kind of petty 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 appear to emerge only after a number of iterations. Finally, my empirical research in Greece suggests that civil war violence is not a mere translation of pre-existing political polarization. Political variables, such as the strength of the identification of a village with a party, or the extent to which a village was divided politically turned out to be bad predictors of violence.³⁴

A theory of civil war violence must generate hypotheses that are able to explain the variation of violence across space, time, and actors. Variations across these three dimensions must be accounted for by hypotheses that are both consistent with each other and generated from the same core of assumptions. A micro-comparative research strategy, such as the one used in this paper, is the best starting point for such a test which can then be extended further with crossnational data--when they become available.

³⁴For example, strongly leftist villages were as likely to suffer from violence as were weakly leftist or strongly rightist villages.

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Table 1
A Typology of Mass Political Violence

| Production of Violence | Purpose of Violence | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------|
| | Compliance | Extermination |
| Unilateral | State terror | Genocide & (ethnic) cleansing |
| Bilateral (or multilateral) | Civil war violence | “Reciprocal extermination” |

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% |

Table 3
Observations and Predictions

| Observations | Predictions | |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| | Violence | Nonviolence |
| Violence | Correct violence prediction | Violence underpredicted |
| Nonviolence | Violence overpredicted | Correct nonviolence prediction |

Figure 1
The basic sequence

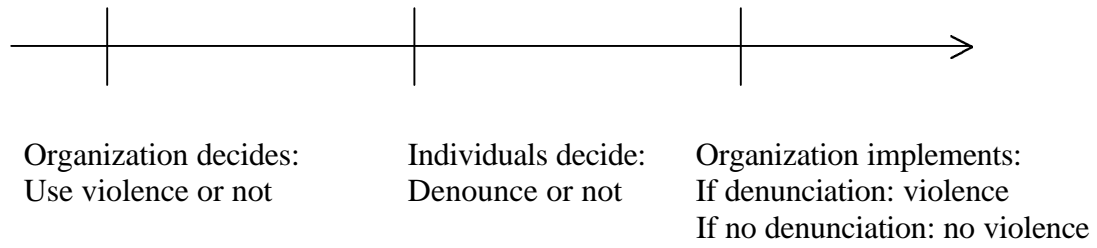
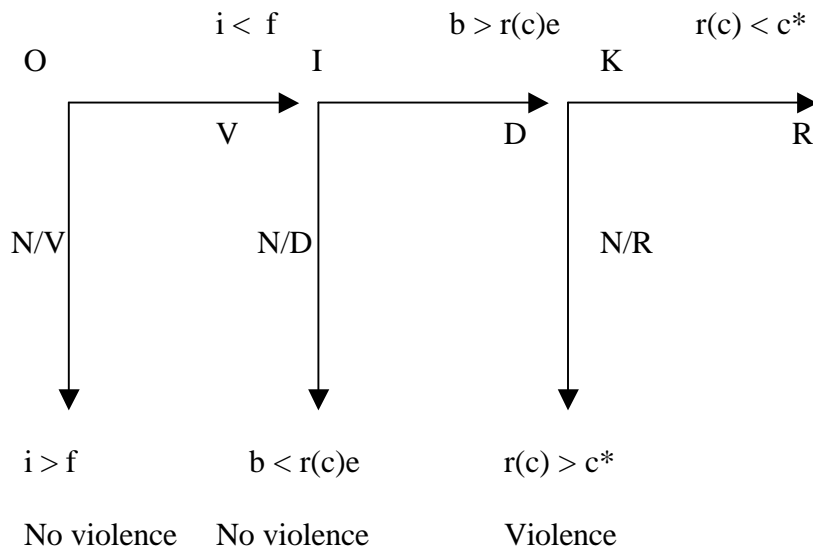


Figure 2
The Logic of Violence



O: Organization
I: Individuals
K: Victim's kin

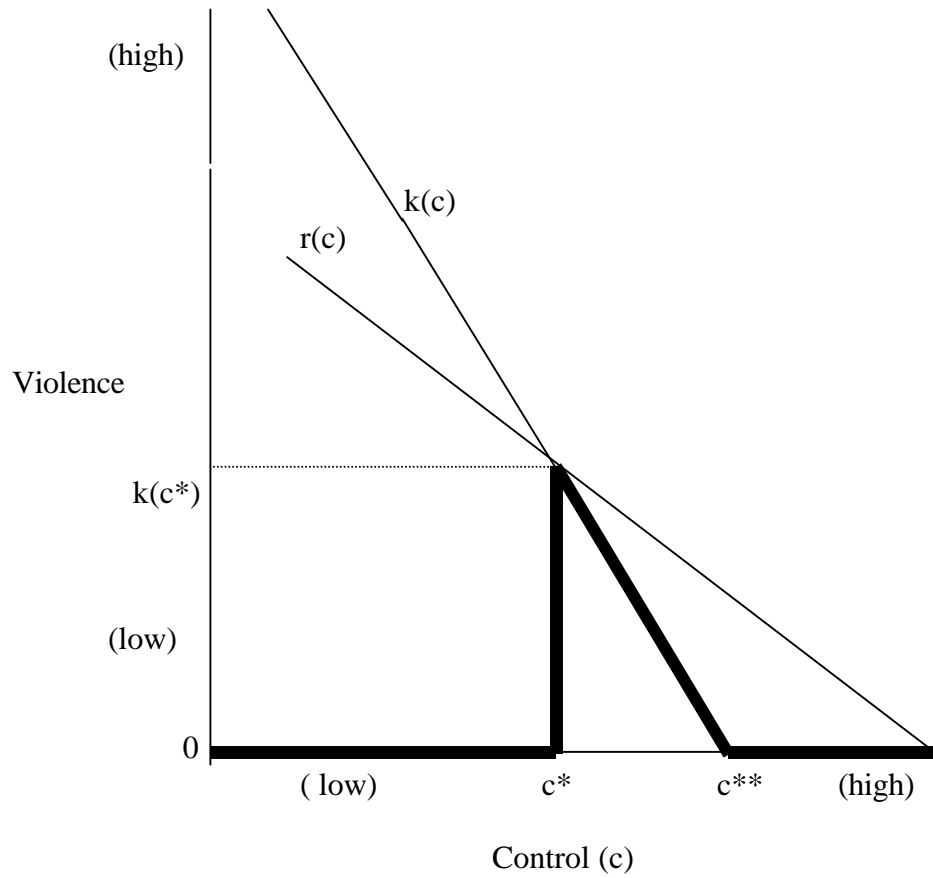
V: Decision to use violence
N/V: Decision not to use violence

D: Denounce
N/D Not Denounce

R: Retaliate
N/R: Not Retaliate

Figure 3

Control and Violence
(One organization)



Below c^* : $i > f$, because $b < r(c)e$

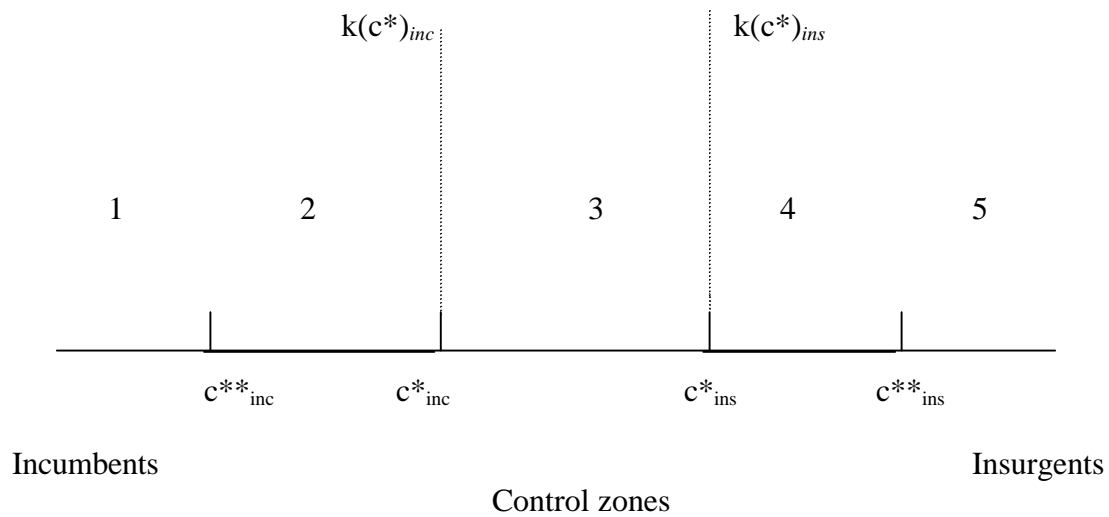
From c^* to c^{**} : $i < f$, because $b > r(c)e$ and $k(c) > 0$

Above c^{**} : $i > f$ because $k(c) < 0$

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

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)