Why do some insurgent groups and some state militaries engage in broad repertoires of violence, including selective assassinations, massacres, sexual violence, torture, forced displacement, etc., while others limit their violence to selective assassinations? Why do some insurgent groups and some state militaries target civilians indiscriminately or according to civilians’ political or ethnic identity while others target civilians only because of some prohibited behavior? Why does the technique by which, say, killing is carried out vary as well?

In this seminar we will analyze the differences in the patterns of violence against civilians by armed organizations. Participants will discuss various theoretical approaches, including the role of territorial control and combat in patterns of selective vs. indiscriminate violence in civil war, the wielding of violence by combatants as a principal agent problem confronting the organization, the role of internal group institutions in controlling violence, the contrast in recruits to groups controlling economic vs. social resources, the role of socialization both formal and informal, the consequences of witnessing and wielding violence in terms of the brutalization of combatants, and the origins of leaders choices concerning violence.

Among other issues, participants will focus on the puzzle posed by restraint (narrow repertoires and targeting combined with low frequency), particularly in conflicts that are asymmetric in the sense that one party to the conflict engages in a narrow repertoire while the other does not, or targets civilians to a very limited extent while the other does so on a much wider scale.

Course reading draws on relevant literatures in political science, history, anthropology and sociology. Throughout the course we will consider the policy implications of our discussion: how might actors intervene to narrow repertoires and civilian targeting and to decrease the frequency of violence against civilians?

The course, a research seminar intended for graduate students and senior undergraduates, is organized as follows. After an initial session intended to introduce major concepts and themes, participants will spend several weeks analyzing the extent to which principal agent approaches to violence explain observed patterns of violence on the part of different organizations. The discussion then goes beyond such approaches to take a more dynamic perspective. In the remaining weeks of class, participants will discuss drafts of their final papers.

Pre-requisites: Undergraduate participants must have taken Introduction to Comparative Politics (PLSC 116) or its equivalent. Familiarity with Stathis Kalyvas’s The Logic of Violence (2006) is assumed. For all participants, permission of the instructor is required.

Class Meeting: Wednesdays 3:30 – 5:20 pm. Rosenkranz, Rm. 102
Office Hours: Thursdays 4:00 - 6:00 (sign up on office door), Rosenkranz 234.
Requirements: Participation in class discussion is expected.
Participants are required to submit 6 2-page reviews of the weekly reading.
Participants will write a short paper analyzing what is known and what is not about the patterns of violence by an armed organization of their choice (approved by the instructor). Due February 22.
Undergraduate participants will write a final paper of 15-20 double-spaced pages for the course, or a senior essay. Those writing senior essays will submit more than one draft.
Graduate students can write either a final research paper, a dissertation prospectus, or a research proposal. All participants will submit an abstract, outline, and bibliography (due March 6), a first draft of the final paper (due April 10), and the revised version (due May 6).

Most course readings will be posted on the classesv2 website. One book will be available for purchase at the Yale Bookstore:


Course Outline and Reading

January 16. Introduction: variation in patterns of violence

January 23. Overview: the challenge of organized violence

“The direction, operation, and control of a human organization whose primary function is the application of violence is the peculiar skill of the officer.” Samuel P. Huntington, The Soldier and the State, 1957: 11

on the experience in armed organizations


on the challenges of empirical work on violence


on types of explanations for variation in patterns of violence


You may need to read/reread sections of Kalyvas' *The Logic of Violence* to understand the article (and the next)


check out http://esoc.princeton.edu

Recommended


Michele Leiby. 2012. Unpublished paper on rape as counterinsurgent violence in Peru


January 30. Violence as a Principal Agent Problem


James Q. Wilson. Chapter 9, Compliance. *Bureaucracy: What Government Agencies Do And Why They Do It*


Recommended:


February 6. Choices by leaders, from total war to restraint


Recommended


February 13. Economic vs. social endowments


February 20. Group formation and the social psychology of violence


Dara Kay Cohen. Female Combatants and Violence in Armed Groups: Women and Wartime Rape in Sierra Leone. Unpublished paper


Joshua Goldstein. 2003. War and Gender: Cambridge


February 27. The social psychological dynamics of warfare: the barbarization of warfare


Recommended:


March 6. Armed group institutions

Amelia Hoover Green. 2012. Selections, PhD dissertation, Yale

Recall Wood 2009


Due: abstract, outline and bibliography (post on server)

March 27. Unordered violence


Devorah Manekin. 2012. Selections, UCLA PhD dissertation

April 3. Beyond the principal agent approach: on international influences on patterns of violence

Review if you need to: Mao's *On Guerrilla Warfare* and US COIN Manual


April 10. Beyond the principal agent approach: dynamics

Hultmann, Lisa.


Gutiérrez Sanín and Wood. 2013. The puzzle of (non) convergence


Recommended


Kalyvas and Kocher. *World Politics*

April 17 and 24. Discussion of paper drafts

Final papers due May 6 (posted on server)