

Civilian Violence in Wars of Occupation

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Introduction

We know an awful lot about what led to the declines in violence against Americans:

Targeted Public Goods Spending (Berman, Shapiro, Felter 2011) & Troop Density (Berman, et al 2013).

Deaths in Iraq by Year

	Americans	Iraqis
2007	904	25,000+
2008	314	10,100+
2009	149	5,153

Introduction

Why do we care?

This case can perhaps tell us about larger issues related to post-conflict stability

- Some factors might suggest order will persist after the occupier departs...
- Others, perhaps less so.

The factors contributing to these dynamics are just as crucial to mission success and advancing our knowledge of counterinsurgency warfare as those that explain attacks on counterinsurgents.

Introduction

My Argument: Civilian violence is unlikely to decline due to the efforts of the occupying counterinsurgents.

Instead, any declines are likely to stem from the activation of informal mechanisms within the population that work to reduce or prevent large-scale breakdowns in social order.

Introduction

Road Map

- Brief discussion of civilian experience in civil wars
- Two hypotheses derived from existing literature
- Intra-communal policing mechanisms
- Statistical test using data from the Iraq War
- Conclusion

Civilians in Civil War

- Can play a role in war outcomes through collaboration with warring sides.
 - Decision to collaborate thought to be a function of
 - Who is in control (Kalyvas 2006)
 - Level of goods and services provided (Berman, Felter, Shapiro 2011; Berman et al 2013; Beath, Christia, and Enikolopov 2012)
 - Extent of civilian victimization (Lyall, Blair, and Imai 2013; Condra and Shapiro 2012)
- Can also be targeted for violence as a result of belligerents' strategic choice
 - Draining the swamp (Valentino, Huth, Balch-Lindsay 2004)
 - Prevent defections (Kalyvas 2006)
 - Need to acquire resources (Humphreys and Weinstein 2006; Weinstein 2007)

Civilians in Civil War

- But while these interactions can produce declines in attacks against counterinsurgents, “a civil war is likely to open a Pandora’s Box of violence” (Kalyvas 2006: 20).

At first, the dominant presence of the U.S. military -- with its towering vehicles rumbling through Baghdad's streets and its soldiers like giants with their vests and helmets and weapons -- seemed overwhelming...Now in Baghdad, you can go days without seeing American soldiers. Instead, it feels as if Iraqis are occupying Iraq, their masked militiamen blasting through traffic in anonymous security vehicles, shooting into the air, angrily shouting orders on loudspeakers, pointing their Kalashnikovs at passersby. Today, the Americans are just one more militia lost in the anarchy.

- Nir Rosen, *Washington Post*, May 28, 2006

Existing Theory

Huge flows of aid spending have been directed to these areas on the theory that rebuilding economies can help rebuild societies, addressing donors' security concerns while improving the lives of those directly affected by the lack of order. Yet, little if any empirical research has evaluated these efforts to see where, when, and how efforts to improve material conditions in conflict zones actually enhance social and economic order.

Berman, Shapiro, and Felter (2011:767)

Existing Theory

A key assumption in existing research: the conditions that create security for the occupier (public goods spending and elevated troop presence) also create security for the noncombatant population.

- Populations wouldn't provide intelligence or collaborate unless their lives were improving

H1: Civilian violence will decline in a given area as targeted development spending and counterinsurgent troop levels increase.

Existing Theory

Not an unreasonable idea, but...

- Small numbers of collaborators may be enough to make a difference
 - Those who are direct recipients of spending
 - People with a weakness identified by the occupier
- Most people in civil wars want to remain on the sidelines and uncommitted
- Perhaps most importantly, occupying counterinsurgents may lack incentives to get involved in violence not directed at them.
 - Detracts from effort to end insurgency
 - Costs of doing so may be prohibitive
 - Might also require a more indefinite presence, to which contemporary occupiers are unlikely to commit

Existing Theory

A reasonable response to this problem may be to increase domestic capacity.

- Host nation capacity is imperative (FM 3-24)
- Perhaps better at gathering information than outside occupiers (Gellner 1983; Polk 2007; Lyall 2010a)

H2: Civilian violence will decline in a given area as security responsibility transitions to indigenous security forces.

Existing Theory

But again, problems...

- Domestic security forces are likely to have hostile relationship with communities where insurgencies are based
- They, and the occupier, represent a status quo that typically leaves that community on the outside of power looking in.
 - May have formerly been in power
 - Seeking to (re)claim it
- Incumbent government in control of security forces will need to consolidate power, and that means providing goods to its supporters

Intra-group Policing

The limited reach of the state opens up a space for more local and decentralized mechanisms for resolving these dilemmas [i.e., opportunistic violence directed at civilians]. Often, these mechanisms developed long before the present-day state apparatus and persist after it appears.

Fearon and Laitin, 1996:718

H3: Civilian violence will decline in a given area as local intra-group policing mechanisms activate.

Intra-group Policing

Why would communities engaged in a struggle for power want to police their own?

- A minority community may know defeat is inevitable; stability is preferable to elimination.
 - By cracking down, less of a chance of indiscriminant violence from larger group
- A majority community may realize that elimination/submission of the minority group may be more costly than a political settlement.
 - Dynamics are fluid: fractures, realignments, etc.
- Citizens within either community may tire of opportunistic and predatory violence within their own communities.

Data from Iraq

Captures spatial and temporal variation at the district-half-year level in Iraq from 2004-2008

- DV: Attacks against civilians
- Hypothesis 1 IVs:
 - Goods spending from Berman et al 2011
 - Troop Strength from Lee Lindsay 2013
- Hypothesis 2 IV:
 - Governorate security handover from US to Iraqi Forces
- Hypothesis 3 IVs:
 - Anbar Awakening from Biddle, Friedman, and Shapiro 2012
 - Madhi Army ceasefire

Data from Iraq

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

<i>Variable</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Standard deviation</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>
Civilian Attacks/1,000	904	0.031	0.083	0	1.449
CERP (per capita)	1040	10.899	31.166	0	522.8124
Troops (Mean Battalion Total)	1031	0.595	1.054	0	7.917
Sons of Iraq	1025	0.068	0.252	0	1
Iraqi Security Forces	1024	0.184	0.387	0	1
Mahdi Ceasefire	1025	0.143	0.351	0	1
Counterinsurgent Attacks/1,000	1040	0.671	1.81	0	22.754
Sunni Vote Share	1040	0.208	0.284	0	0.917
Shia Vote Share	1040	0.409	0.384	0	0.902

N=District-halfyear

Results

Table 2. Attacks on Civilians, Per 1,000 (Ordinary Least Squares)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
CERP	0.00104** (0.000452)					0.000720 (0.000440)	0.000193 (0.000257)
Troops		0.0114*** (0.00341)				0.00693** (0.00334)	0.00476 (0.00405)
Iraqi Security Forces			-0.0357*** (0.00680)			-0.0280*** (0.00676)	-0.0455*** (0.00945)
Sons of Iraq (SOI)				0.0375*** (0.0114)		0.0105 (0.0130)	-0.0162 (0.0188)
JAM Ceasefire					0.00127 (0.00991)	0.00419 (0.0112)	-0.00817 (0.00907)
Attacks on Troops/1,000							0.0165 (0.0114)
Sunni Vote Share							-0.0213* (0.0121)
Shiite Vote Share							-0.0133* (0.00741)
Constant	0.0284*** (0.00614)	0.0251*** (0.00542)	0.0440*** (0.00688)	0.0346*** (0.00644)	0.0382*** (0.00715)	0.0258*** (0.00599)	0.00654* (0.00365)
Observations	904	904	904	904	904	904	904
R-squared	0.050	0.043	0.029	0.022	0.000	0.090	0.277

Note: Following Berman, Shapiro, and Felter (2011), incidents are measured per 1000 population. Troop strength is measured in battalions per district. Regressions are weighted by population. Robust standard errors, which are in parentheses, are clustered by district.

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Results

$$v_{i,t} - v_{i,t-1} = \beta_1(s_{i,t} - s_{i,t-1}) + \beta_2(f_{i,t} - f_{i,t-1}) + \beta_3(v_{i,t-1} - v_{i,t-2}) + \beta_4(SOI_{i,t-1}) + \beta_5(ISF_{i,t-1}) + \beta_6(JAM_{i,t-1}) + \beta_7(c_{i,t}) + \delta_t + \epsilon_{i,t}.$$

Table 3. Attacks on Civilians, Per 1,000 (First Differences)

	(8)	(9)	(10)
CERP	-0.000350* (0.000179)	-0.000320 (0.000251)	-0.000233 (0.000276)
Troops	-0.00230 (0.00334)	-0.00219 (0.00366)	-0.00154 (0.00395)
CERP × Troops		-4.68e-06 (8.76e-05)	-7.85e-05 (0.000146)
Lagged Troops		-0.00563* (0.00332)	-0.00532 (0.00335)
CERP × Troops × SOI _{t-1}			0.000166 (0.000230)
CERP × SOI _{t-1}			-0.000462 (0.000760)
Troops × SOI _{t-1}			-0.00201 (0.0149)
SOI _{t-1}	-0.0295*** (0.0112)	-0.0296*** (0.0113)	-0.0299*** (0.0114)
Iraq Security Forces _{t-1}	0.0203* (0.0115)	0.0186 (0.0116)	0.0190 (0.0117)
JAM Ceasefire _{t-1}	-0.0796** (0.0359)	-0.0827** (0.0362)	-0.0843** (0.0364)
Attacks on Troops	-0.00861*** (0.00297)	-0.00845*** (0.00298)	-0.00847*** (0.00300)
Attacks on Civilians _{t-1}	-0.0900** (0.0409)	-0.0942** (0.0410)	-0.0956** (0.0411)
Constant	0.00905 (0.00865)	0.00745 (0.00889)	0.0314 (0.0224)
Observations	717	717	717
R-squared	0.170	0.174	0.175

See Note from Table 2

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Conclusion

“We're all prisoners here, the entire neighborhood,” said Mohammed, a 30-year-old [Sunni] car mechanic who, like others interviewed, requested that his full name not be used for security reasons. Mohammed said he had spent a week trying to get his elderly father out of jail after a recent police sweep landed dozens in custody. At one point, he said, a dismissive police guard told him, “You are all Al Qaeda,” referring to all Sunnis.

Patrick K. McDonnell, *Los Angeles Times*, July 20, 2014