Theorizing Anti-Civilian Violence in Civil War: Extending Fagerlund (2011).

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The incidence of violence against civilians in the context of civil war has been used within the popular press to frame contemporary armed conflicts, and the rebel groups who engage in them, as brutal, anarchic and senseless. A recent article in Foreign Policy Magazine designated modern civil wars in Africa 'un-wars' and the author, Jeffrey Gettleman, went on to state;

"Even if you could coax these men out of their jungle lairs and get them to the negotiating table, there is very little to offer them. They don't want ministries or tracts of land to govern. Their armies are often traumatized children, with experience and skills (if you can call them that) totally unsuited for civilian life. All they want is cash, guns, and a license to rampage. And they've already got all three. How do you negotiate with that?"

(Gettleman, 2010)

This argument is not only misinformed but critically, denies the legitimacy of negotiation within the context of peace processes. If one is to engage meaningfully with the root causes of violence perpetrated against civilians, it is necessary to seek to understand the motivations of armed groups and the varied incentives to engage in different kinds of violence. Fagerlund (2011, this edition) explores this issue in relation to three specific episodes of violence perpetrated by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) against civilians in Sri Lanka. The selected time periods explored in the article are the month of August 1990 when 294 Tamil Muslim and 200 Sinhalese civilians were killed, May 1995 which was the month of the Kallarawa massacre of 43 Sinhalese victims and the killing of a public critic of the LTTE who was a Buddhist priest and February 2007, the murder of a Hindu priest which the LTTE have denied. Fagerlund is chiefly concerned with whether the LTTE targeted civilians to shape the behaviour of the government, drawing on the work of Lisa Hultman (2007) or that of the civilian population, in the vein of Stathis Kalyvas (2006). Through exploring *patterns* of violence in addition to magnitude she considers the targeting of Sinhalese civilians to function as a strategic proxy attack on the Sinhalese government, while the targeting of Tamil Muslims is understood as an attempt to control the behaviour of this group, particularly in reaction to Tamil Muslims enlisting in local government forces in conflict with the LTTE.

Violence is 'by nature instrumental' in Arendt's terms (1970), however,applying strict rational violence models to civil wars requires a nuanced approach. Violence against civilians may follow a logic related to the internal needs of the rebel

armyrather than solely to achieve military ends. Jeremy Weinstein's quantitative and ethnographic work in Uganda, Mozambique, and Peru demonstrates that insurgencies that rely on foreign support or mining revenues, and thus do not need the support of local populations to survive, are much more likely to commit violence against civilians (Weinstein, 2007). This may not solely occur due to independence from community support, but a response to the needs of outside financiers, which may conflict with the insurgents' aims of winning hearts and minds. Lucy Hovil and Eric Werker of Makarere University in Uganda caution against the selection bias inherent in focusing on case studies of salient wars, causing theorists to overestimate the advantage to rebel groups of violence against civilians. Their research in Western Uganda indicates that the financier-insurgent relationship demanded civilian casualties in order for the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) to keep their external funding, despite the damaging affect it had on their military strategy. In the authors' terms "the mere presence of targeted civilians doesnot, of course, ensure that an ingenious campaign is being mounted" (Hovil and Werker, 2005). The authors identify underlying assumptions in the rational violence literature that firstly, violence is calculated and chosen from among a space of potential tactics, "rather than confront the enemy army or purchase atank, for instance, the war maker consciously and deliberatelyexpends his resources on forcibly displacing a population." and secondly, the violence against the civilians is crucialto the war aims and a fundamental part of the war strategy (Hovil and Werker, 2005).

Rather than theorizinganti-civilian violence as a calculated military strategy, as per these assumptions, there seems to be a more complex relationship between insurgent capacity, counter-insurgency tactics and violence against the local population. In northern Uganda, for example, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) engaged in periods of extreme violence against the local Acholi population understood as responses to a perceived lack of support for the rebel group (Dolan 2009; Finnström, 2008; Branch, 2005). The LRA, as a relatively weak rebel group have an incentive to target civilians, particularly through abduction, as they lack the capacity to attract volunteers or cultivate a loyal support base. The LRA responded to the counter-insurgency tactics of the Ugandan government such as Operation North in 1991, Museveni's ultimatum and subsequent breakdown of the peace process in 1994, policies of forced displacement in 1996 and Operation Iron Fist in 2002 and the Operation Lightning Thunder in 2008 in the Democratic Republic of Congo with campaigns of abduction and mass violence against civilians. This violence is sub-optimal as a military strategy and erodes civilian support, yet is used in situations where the rebel group is weak with a very limited zone of control. The case of northern Uganda illuminates the mechanisms by which both rebel groups and state actors conduct wars 'through' civilians (Kalyvas, 2006), whether this involves attacking the local population to undermine the other party or restricting access to civilian bases of support. Kalyvas' work in Greece provides a warning against 'making attractive but problematic connections between ethnic cleavages and high levels of violence' (Kalyvas, 2006). In northern Uganda, as in many other conflicts internationally, initial ideological support for state or non-state actors are

affected by armed conflict and shared identities may be redefined over the course of the conflict.These shifts occur in response to the dynamics of war and particularly in response to violence targeting civilians perpetrated by governments and rebel groups.

An interesting development in relation to anti-civilian violence is that it is rapidly decreasing. The most recent Human Security Brief (2007), based on the Uppsala Conflict Data Programme data set indicates that campaigns of 'one-sided violence' against civilians declined by two thirds between 2002 and 2006 and the death toll of these dropped by more than 80 percent. Preventing anti-civilian violence demands that, far from dismissing violence perpetrated by rebel groups as 'senseless,' one must engage with the root causesof that violence, the economic and social mechanisms produced by contracts with external financiers, limited resources, military attacks on rebel groups and state violence against civilians. However, as Fagerlund argues, it is also important to understand the functional significance for armed groups of the deliberate targeting of civilians in armed conflict.

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