

It's a Crime, but Is It a Blunder? The Efficacy of Targeting Civilians in War

Kathryn McNabb Cochran and Alexander B. Downes
Department of Political Science
326 Perkins Library, Box 90204
Duke University
Durham, NC 27708
(919) 660-4345
downes@duke.edu

Abstract

Is systematically targeting an adversary's civilians in war an effective military strategy? This paper assesses the impact of civilian victimization on interstate war outcomes from 1816 to 2007. Although targeting civilians is positively correlated with victory, this general finding is misleading. In fact, there are two distinct types of civilian victimization: coercive victimization—in which a belligerent targets an adversary's civilians to persuade their government to surrender—and eliminationist victimization—where a belligerent removes members of a target group from a piece of territory it wishes to annex from another state. Coercive targeting is effective only when used against anocracies, but case evidence suggests that it plays a role only when the target state is essentially militarily defeated. Countries that employ eliminationist victimization are more likely to win, but this is primarily because conquering territory is often a prerequisite for implementing this type of strategy. Once we correct for endogeneity, the relationship between eliminationist targeting and victory disappears.

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It is often argued that targeting civilians in war is—to quote Talleyrand—worse than a crime, it's a blunder. According to this view, strategies that seek victory (or some other objective, such as control over territory) by killing noncombatants are not only immoral and contrary to long-standing international norms and international humanitarian law, they consistently fail to provide the coercer with much leverage over the opponent. Leading studies of strategic bombing, naval blockade, and economic sanctions have found that these strategies rarely succeed (Pape 1996; Horowitz and Reiter 2001; Olson 1963; Hufbauer, Schott, and Elliott 1990; Pape 1997). The literature on insurgency has long maintained that indiscriminate violence in particular is counterproductive, generating desires for revenge among the victimized and prompting people to join insurgencies to protect themselves from state violence (Cooper 1979; Kalyvas 1999, 2004, 2006; Kocher, Pepinsky, and Kalyvas 2010). Recent studies of terrorism reach a similar conclusion, finding that when terrorists target civilians rather than military forces, they rarely achieve their goals (Abrahms 2006, Abrahms forthcoming).

Yet this view is not unanimous. Much of the recent literature on the causes of civilian victimization suggests that belligerents implement these strategies because they believe that targeting civilians can help them accomplish their objectives (Kalyvas 1999, 2004, 2006; Valentino 2004; Valentino, Huth, and Balch-Lindsay 2004; Valentino, Huth, and Croco 2006; Downes 2008). There has been no shortage of military and political leaders historically who have expressed this view, from the nineteenth century generals William T. Sherman and Helmuth von Moltke, to early twentieth century airpower theorists like Giulio Douhet and Hugh Trenchard, to great democratic statesmen like Franklin D. Roosevelt and Winston Churchill. Some scholars have argued that—at least when combating insurgencies—it pays to be brutal (Merom 2003, 33-

47). Recent research has also found support for the argument that violence against noncombatants yields political and military dividends (Pape 2003, 2005; Lyall 2009).

Do military strategies that target civilians in armed conflicts help belligerents achieve their aims? Are there conditions under which it is more or less efficacious? We argue that to determine the effectiveness of this phenomenon, three steps are necessary. First, it is essential to narrow the scope of the inquiry so that only similar units are included. The likelihood of civilian victimization helping a belligerent achieve its objectives is probably affected by different factors when used in guerrilla conflicts than when it is employed in more traditional, conventional wars. To ensure that we examine the effectiveness of civilian victimization in similar settings, we limit our sample of cases to interstate wars, which primarily involve conventional combat. Second, civilian victimization must be disaggregated. Studies that have concluded that targeting civilians is ineffective have tended to focus on what we call “coercive victimization” or what others have called “punishment,” a strategy intended to compel an adversary to surrender by inflicting pain on its civilian population. Yet there is a second type of anti-civilian strategy that occurs regularly in conventional wars that may succeed more often: the targeting of noncombatants intended to “cleanse” them from a piece of coveted territory. We term this type of violence “eliminationist victimization.” Although we provide an assessment of the effectiveness of civilian victimization in general, we analyze the coercive and eliminationist forms of victimization separately because we believe pooling the two may mask interesting differences in efficacy between them. Finally, it is important to consider the possibility that these different types of civilian victimization may be more effective in certain circumstances rather than others. In particular, previous studies suggest that the target state’s political regime could condition the effect of coercive strategies.

Thus, we investigate the contribution of coercive victimization to victory conditional on the target's level of democracy.

Assessing the effectiveness of coercive and eliminationist victimization is tricky because these strategies are not applied randomly and the factors that influence whether states choose to target civilians also influence the likelihood of victory. States engaged in costly wars of attrition, for example, often employ coercive targeting of civilians, but these wars are the most difficult type to win because they are typically fought by highly resolved states. This selection effect could bias the estimated effect of coercive victimization downward. On the other hand, states must first advance into an enemy's territory to implement an eliminationist strategy, making "winning" a prerequisite for targeting enemy civilians in these cases. This creates an endogeneity problem that could bias the estimated effect of eliminationist victimization upward. We use matching to correct for selection bias in cases of coercive victimization and instrumental variables analysis to correct endogeneity in cases of eliminationist victimization.

Our statistical analysis of interstate war outcomes between 1816 and 2007 yields a nuanced understanding of the effect of civilian victimization on war outcomes. At the most general level, we find that employing a strategy of civilian victimization significantly increases belligerents' chances of winning an interstate war. This correlation, however, obscures more than it reveals. When we divide civilian victimization into coercive and eliminationist types and correct for nonrandom selection in the former and endogeneity bias in the latter, the results indicate that neither form of victimization is reliably correlated with victory. As far as conditional effects are concerned, contrary to some previous studies (Pape 2003, 2005; Allen 2008a) but in line with others (Pape 1996, Horowitz and Reiter 2001), we find that coercive victimization directed against democracies contributes little to victory; if anything, democracies

are less vulnerable to this form of civilian victimization. Interestingly, the only circumstance in which coercive victimization appears to contribute to victory is when it is employed against anocratic regimes (states in the middle of the autocracy-democracy spectrum; see Allen 200b). Examination of the cases, however, casts doubt on the causal force of this relationship, and further suggests that the role of coercive victimization in obtaining a target's surrender is limited to explaining when states that have largely been defeated on the battlefield will seek terms.

The paper unfolds as follows. In the first section, we briefly review the literature on the causes of civilian victimization, emphasizing why leaders choose to target civilians. Next, we draw on the literature to develop hypotheses regarding the effectiveness of different types of civilian victimization as well as circumstances under which these strategies may be more or less effective. Third, we describe the data and methods we use in our statistical analysis. Fourth, we present the results of the analysis, while in the fifth section we explore some of these results in greater depth to determine if they represent causal relationships. We conclude by offering some suggestions for further research.

The Strategic Logic of Civilian Victimization

The last decade has witnessed a surge of scholarly interest in the causes of various forms of civilian victimization, such as genocide, mass killing, and the intentional targeting of noncombatants in civil and interstate wars. One of the most important findings to emerge from this literature is that violence directed against the defenseless is not primarily a function of hatred, wickedness, barbarity, or innate evil. These and other factors no doubt contribute to civilian victimization, but the new literature claims that the bulk of the targeting of civilians that occurs is instrumental: it is not an end in itself, but rather a means to an end. According to

Valentino's "strategic perspective," for example, mass killing of noncombatants "is most accurately viewed as an instrumental policy—a brutal strategy designed to accomplish leaders' most important ideological or political objectives and counter what they see as their most dangerous threats" (Valentino 2004, 3). This strategy is typically pursued to accomplish the communization of society, rid a country of ethnic groups the leadership finds threatening or undesirable, or defeat powerful and dangerous insurgencies. Similarly, Downes (2008, 39) argues that civilian victimization in the context of interstate war is a "calculated risk, not an irrational gamble" that occurs in wars of attrition and territorial annexation. In the former, leaders resort to civilian victimization in a desperate bid to win and reduce their human costs of fighting. In the latter, groups viewed as likely to be sympathetic to the enemy are targeted to deter them from providing support or to remove them from the area entirely. Valentino, Huth, and Croco concur that "the killing of noncombatants during war is often a calculated military strategy designed to achieve victory by coercing the adversary or by undermining the war-related productive capacity of his civilian population" (Valentino, Huth, and Croco 2006, 340).

Scholars studying violence in civil wars have reached broadly similar conclusions. Kalyvas, for example, notes that "even a cursory reading of descriptions points to the predominance of instrumental violence in civil war contexts" (Kalyvas 2004, 99). Kalyvas argues that armed groups use violence to punish defection by civilians and hence deter it. The goal is to produce compliance, a situation where the population acquiesces to an actor's rule and refrains from providing information or other support to rival actors (Kalyvas 2004, 98).

Valentino, Huth, and Balch-Lindsay (2004) claim that large-scale violence by governments engaged in counterinsurgency is adopted to destroy the civilian base of powerful and threatening rebel movements. Hultman (2007a) contends that civilian victimization is a means for struggling

rebels to raise the government's political and military costs, thereby adversely influencing the government's perception of the cost and likelihood of victory. Wood (2010) similarly argues that weak rebel groups rely more on violence to terrorize noncombatants into compliance because they are less able to provide services in exchange for support and less able to confront government soldiers in battle. Balcells (2010), in an examination of conventional civil wars, suggests that actors use violence to consolidate their control over territory by preventively eradicating potential enemy supporters. Such violence tends to be employed where it is most useful, i.e., in communities where supporters of the contending factions are closely balanced.

In short, much of the literature on the causes of civilian victimization concludes that such violence is rational and instrumental, implemented by actors who variously wish to extract compliance from populations, secure control over territory, or achieve victory in war. When these objectives are placed in jeopardy—as when civilians start defecting to the enemy, or wars bog down into costly and protracted stalemates—governments and rebels often choose to enact strategies of civilian victimization. But do these strategies work?

Civilian Victimization: Definition, Typology, and Hypotheses on Effectiveness

We define civilian victimization as a military strategy that either kills noncombatants intentionally, or wields force in such an indiscriminate manner that it cannot help but kill thousands of civilians (Downes 2008, 14-21).¹ As a strategy, civilian victimization is decided upon by top political and military elites, and consists of an extended campaign of military action (e.g., the bombing of Germany or the Siege of Leningrad) rather than a single incident (the bombing of Dresden or the My Lai Massacre). Strategies that target civilians intentionally qualify as civilian victimization whether or not they kill large numbers of people. Neither

German V-1 flying bombs and V-2 rockets fired at Britain during World War II, nor Iraqi Scud missiles fired at Iran in the 1980s killed exorbitant numbers, but they each constituted a purposeful effort to kill civilians and terrorize others and thus count as campaigns of civilian victimization.² In other instances the intent of belligerents is more ambiguous, but the means employed cannot discriminate between combatants and noncombatants, or belligerents make no attempt at any such discrimination. Classic cases include U.S. radar bombing of Germany from 1943 to 1945 and the Rolling Thunder air campaign against North Vietnam from 1965 to 1968 (Davis 1995; Pape 1996). We code strategies of indiscriminate force as civilian victimization if they kill at least ten thousand civilians. Collateral damage that is inflicted in the course of strikes on military targets is excluded except if it is part of an indiscriminate campaign and meets the threshold for civilian fatalities specified above.

Coercive Civilian Victimization

In interstate wars there are two varieties of civilian victimization. The first is what we call coercive victimization, which typically takes the form of starvation blockades—such as the siege of Jerusalem (70 A.D.), the Allied blockade of the Central Powers (1915-19), and the blockade of Biafra in the Nigerian Civil War (1967-70)—or aerial bombardment of civilians, as in the German “Blitz” on Britain or the British bombing of Germany in World War II.³ Coercive victimization is largely synonymous with what others have called punishment. According to the logic of punishment, leaders target an adversary’s civilian population in the hope that the costs to its society will induce the enemy regime to renounce its war aims, or alternatively that the suffering meted out to noncombatants will cause them to rise up and demand an end to the war (Pape 1996, 58-86). In the first of these pathways, leaders of the target country may decide to

call a halt to the war if the costs to noncombatants exceed the value of the issue in dispute. This mechanism assumes that leaders care about the suffering of their civilian population such that pain inflicted on civilians constitutes a real “cost.” Coercive victimization of civilians can also affect a target’s calculations about continuing to resist by influencing the behavior of the population itself: the fear of violent death that results from being the target of deadly attacks could motivate civilians to demand that their leaders stop the war. This mechanism assumes that civilian targeting dampens the resolve of the public and that the population has the means to influence its leader’s wartime decisions.⁴

There is no shortage of statements by policymakers and military officers expressing the belief that targeting civilians can successfully coerce an end to wars. In one of the most famous formulations of this view, Union General William T. Sherman, accused by Confederate officers of barbarism at Atlanta during the American Civil War, famously responded, “War is cruelty. There is no use trying to reform it. The crueller it is, the sooner it will be over” (Sherman 1892, 126). Former British Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin argued during the interwar period that the belligerent that could kill more enemy civilians would prevail in future wars: “the bomber will always get through. The only defense is in offense, which means that you have to kill more women and children more quickly than the enemy if you want to save yourselves” (quoted in Hastings 1979, 43). One of Baldwin’s successors, Winston Churchill, wrote during World War II that the surest way to defeat Nazi Germany was “an absolutely devastating, exterminating attack by very heavy bombers from this country upon the Nazi homeland” (quoted in Garrett 1993, 47).

Most of the scholarly literature on civilian victimization suggests that contrary to the views of these military officers and policymakers, coercing states by targeting civilians during war is not effective. Pape’s survey of all cases of strategic bombing from World War I to the

Persian Gulf War finds hardly any cases in which punishing civilians persuaded states to make major concessions (Pape 1996; see also Horowitz and Reiter 2001). Olson's study of three blockades of Britain shows that despite the fact that the embargoes became progressively more encompassing, Britain's vulnerability to hunger actually decreased as the state was able to adjust and compensate (Olson 1963; see also Pape 1997 on sanctions).

Coercion in general is difficult for a variety of reasons. Modern states are highly nationalistic, so making substantial concessions offends the national pride of the population and thus leaders who make concessions to adversaries could face removal or punishment after the fact at the hands of angry constituents. This is compounded by the fact that because coercive strategies work relatively slowly they leave coercers vulnerable to the growth of domestic opposition to the war (Pape 1996, 21; Arreguín-Toft 2001). Furthermore, in disputes that escalate to war targets tend to be highly resolved. The limited destructive power of conventional weapons and the ability of governments to adjust to attacks by enacting civil defense measures make it unlikely that non-nuclear coercion can raise costs to an intolerable level (Pape 1996, 22, 23). Olson contends that the combination of strong bureaucratic state structures and the size and wealth of states allows them to lower their vulnerability to blockade by rationing food, substituting one good for another, or cultivating more land to increase food production (Olson 1963). Finally, punishment theory assumes that a population cowering in shelters under massive bombardment or weakened by hunger and disease can act collectively to force its leaders to submit to the enemy's demands. On the contrary, the bombing campaigns of World War II generated political apathy as people struggled to survive on a daily basis and inhibited their ability to engage in collective action.

The beliefs of the military and political leaders who implement coercive victimization notwithstanding, previous scholarly empirical studies on the effectiveness of coercion and punishment suggest that it possesses little utility for winning wars.

- *Coercive Hypothesis 1 (CHI)*: Coercive civilian victimization does not increase a state's likelihood of victory.

Eliminationist Civilian Victimization

We label the second type of civilian victimization eliminationist. Rather than seeking to coerce the surrender of an adversary government by targeting its civilian population, eliminationist victimization is intended to gain or maintain control over territory. Eliminationist victimization occurs when a belligerent believes that it will be unable to extract compliance from a particular group. This can occur for multiple reasons, although the most common is that the group in question shares the ethnicity or ideology of the belligerent's opponent, or has a history of collaboration with the enemy (Bulutgil 2010). In some cases, belligerents have already tried selective forms of violence without success. Believing the group to be disloyal and willing to aid the enemy at the first opportunity, belligerents decide to eliminate the population rather than try to control it. In conventional wars, eliminationist victimization takes the form of cleansing or massacre in pursuit of territorial conquest designed to induce the targeted group to flee or, less commonly, to destroy it by mass murder.

Does eliminationist victimization help states win wars? Surprisingly, there is little systematic evidence with which to evaluate this question in interstate conflicts. Almost all of the scholarly literature on the effectiveness of this type of violence examines it in the context of insurgency. Kalyvas (1999, 2004, 2006), for example, argues that indiscriminate violence, which

is closely related—but not identical—to eliminationist victimization, is an ineffective tool in insurgency. As he puts it, indiscriminate violence “defeats deterrence because it destroys the possibility of anticipation of a forthcoming evil and, hence, the ability to avoid it...Its sheer unpredictability makes everyone fear lethal sanctions regardless of their behavior: innocence is irrelevant and compliance is utterly impossible” (Kalyvas 2006, 143). This logic is powerfully demonstrated in a number of cases, including German anti-partisan operations in the Soviet Union, and Soviet and U.S. counterinsurgency campaigns in Afghanistan and South Vietnam, respectively.⁵ Lyall (2009), by contrast, suggests that indiscriminate violence decreases insurgent activity: he finds that Chechen villages exposed to random Russian artillery fire subsequently experienced fewer insurgent attacks, suggesting that indiscriminate violence might actually discourage rebel recruitment and hinder guerrillas’ ability to mount further strikes. Downes (2008) contends that eliminationist victimization is particularly effective as an interdiction strategy, that is, when it physically prevents a population from providing support to rebels. He maintains that indiscriminate violence has paid military dividends when it has allowed government forces to interdict all contact between the insurgents and civilians, as internment of noncombatants did in South Africa during the Second Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902) and in northern Libya during the Italo-Sanusi War (1923-32).

There are two reasons why we expect eliminationist victimization to contribute to victory in interstate wars. First, eliminationist targeting of civilians undermines an opponent’s ability to resist rather than its will to fight, and denial strategies are thought to be more effective than punishment strategies. Unlike coercive victimization, which typically follows the logic of punishment, eliminationist victimization is not intended to coerce an adversary to surrender by pummeling its civilian population. Nor does eliminationist victimization follow the deterrence

logic outlined by Kalyvas (2006), which by targeting some people hopes to frighten others to change their behavior. Rather, killing the population (or otherwise eliminating it) in a contested area prevents either the other side (in conventional wars) or rebels (in civil wars) from recruiting new participants or obtaining logistical support, supplies, or information from the residents of that territory. Even if eliminationist victimization is not meant to influence the cost-benefit calculus of the adversary, it performs something of a denial function. According to Pape (1996), denial strategies are the most effective military strategies.

Second, eliminationist victimization is both easier to inflict and more persuasive than coercive victimization. On the one hand, when belligerents use an eliminationist strategy, it means they have direct and probably uncontested access to the adversary's civilian population, a situation which makes their threats highly credible. Civilians simply have no protection and no alternative but to run for their lives—if the attacker lets them. Moreover, in eliminationist scenarios, territory is the objective, targeting enemy civilians is a means to that objective, and civilians can be targeted directly to kill them or terrorize them into flight. In coercive situations, the adversary's surrender is the objective, targeting civilians is a means to that objective, but those civilians are not under the belligerent's control and can only be harmed indirectly by bombing or blockade-induced hunger. What's more, the targeted population itself cannot end the war; that decision is in the hands of the government, which is influenced only indirectly by civilian suffering. Because eliminationist victimization is aimed at killing or otherwise removing individuals from territory rather than persuading a government to surrender, and also because it directly reduces the adversary's ability to fight, we hypothesize that civilian victimization contributes to victory when employed in this manner.

- *Eliminationist Hypothesis 1 (EH1)*: Eliminationist civilian victimization increases a state's likelihood of victory.

One objection to this argument is that eliminationist victimization makes little contribution to victory in the war in which it is actually implemented; rather, it is a forward-looking strategy designed to minimize future resistance by potentially hostile populations to the new ruler of the conquered territory. We agree that eliminationist victimization is in good measure a future-oriented strategy; indeed, further research should investigate the question of whether this type of civilian targeting succeeds in its aim of pacifying conquered territory or triggers another round of violence. Eliminationist victimization's prospective utility, however, does necessarily preclude it from contributing to victory in the current war. The reason is that eliminationist victimization is directed against groups either engaged in resistance or which might help the enemy if left alone. We cannot observe the counterfactual of what would have happened had a belligerent not targeted a particular group. Invaders suspect that certain groups will aid the adversary if given the opportunity, and thus act preventively to eliminate a threat that could manifest itself and which could potentially be disastrous. As Talat Pasha put it in a slightly different context in explaining why the Ottoman government targeted its own Armenian population in 1915 during the war against Russia, "It was deemed necessary, in order to avoid the possibility of our army being caught between two fires, to remove the Armenians [from] all scenes of the war and the neighborhood of the railways" (quoted in Naimark 2001, 29).

Target Regime Type and the Effectiveness of Civilian Victimization

Intervening factors may condition how both types of civilian victimization affect war outcomes. However, because the logic underpinning coercive and eliminationist targeting is different, the

former following the logic of punishment and the latter the logic of denial, the circumstances in which each strategy is most effective probably varies. Below we develop hypotheses on how enemy regime type might mediate the effect of both types of civilian victimization.

Target Regime Type and Coercive Victimization

One well-known institutional theory of democratic peace observes that democracies are characterized by regular elections and very large selectorates and winning coalitions. This means that democratic leaders are easily removed from office relative to nondemocratic leaders, and such leaders must rely on public policy success to remain in power because their supporters are too numerous to reward with private benefits. The incentives for leader behavior generated by these institutions discourage wars between democracies because leaders in both states know that their own (and their rival's) political survival depends on victory, so both states will fight hard, denying the opponent a quick and decisive victory (Buono de Mesquita et al., 2003). Some analysts have adopted this logic to argue that civilian targeting is more effective when it is employed against democratic governments, which in turn increases the likelihood that they will be targets of victimization strategies.⁶ Because leaders are accountable to publics in democracies, enemy attacks on civilians are likely to produce pressures on leaders to halt such strikes as quickly as possible, perhaps by making concessions to the perpetrator of the attacks.⁷ In democracies, in short, leaders neglect the welfare and preferences of the electorate at their peril because voters can remove them at the polls. This high ability to affect policy by putting leaders' political tenure in jeopardy would seem to render democracies more susceptible to coercive civilian targeting. Nondemocratic regimes are characterized by comparatively small winning coalitions, and leaders in such governments pay off key supporters with private benefits to

maintain themselves in office. Members of society at large have no say in who governs or how they do it. Because of this, nondemocratic leaders need pay little attention to civilian suffering in wartime. If leaders are insensitive to civilian suffering, then harming the population obviously cannot exert any coercive leverage.

- *CH2*: Coercive civilian victimization is more effective against democracies than against nondemocracies.

Leading studies of punishment directed at civilians with airpower (Pape 1996; Horowitz and Reiter 2001), however, have found that democracies are not more susceptible to punishment than nondemocracies. Indeed, one can also use selectorate theory to argue that democracies could be less vulnerable to coercive forms of victimization. If democratic leaders depend on victory to assure themselves of retaining office, having the adversary attack their population may put even more pressure on leaders to win and thereby justify the costs suffered by civilians. Experiencing civilian victimization, in other words, could spur democratic leaders to fight harder. Other factors—such as the tendency for democratic citizens to “rally around the flag” in wartime, and direct their ire against the opponent who is inflicting pain rather than against their own leaders—could reinforce this resistance to coercion (Mueller 1970; Brody and Shapiro 1989; O’Neal and Brian 1995; Baum 2002).

- *CH3*: Coercive civilian victimization is less effective against democracies than against nondemocracies.

Another possibility is that the relationship between target regime type and the effectiveness of civilian victimization is curvilinear. Anocracies (also known as mixed regimes or oligarchies), according to some scholars, inhabit particularly treacherous political terrain: they disenfranchise a substantial proportion of their populations, but they are unable to use unlimited

violence to repress public opposition to the regime. Compared to full autocracies—which can repress any dissent—and democracies—which have alternative means of expression and thus are unlikely to generate violence in the first place—anocratic systems both generate grievances by denying political participation to much of the populace and are unable to crush discontent when it arises (Hegre et al., 2001; Goemans 2000). Civilian victimization is intended to foment public displeasure with the war among the target population; anocratic regimes, according to this argument, have difficulty quelling such resistance, and thus may be more willing to make concessions in the face of attacks aimed at civilians rather than deal with the prospect of domestic revolt. One study of economic sanctions has found that mixed regimes are more likely to make concessions when faced with this form of coercive pressure (Allen 2008b).

- *CH4*: Coercive civilian targeting is more effective against anocracies than against consolidated autocracies or democracies.

Target Regime Type and Eliminationist Victimization

Finally, because eliminationist victimization is not intended to coerce governments, we do not have a prior expectation about how this strategy will vary with target regime type. As discussed above, eliminationist victimization performs a denial-like function, undermining the target's ability to hold the disputed territory militarily. It is not obvious why such a strategy would be more effective against one regime type rather than another.

- *EH2*: The effectiveness of eliminationist victimization does not vary with target regime type.

General Research Design

To evaluate our hypotheses about the effectiveness of civilian victimization, we use the Correlates of War (COW) dataset of participants in interstate wars, modified in three ways. First, we updated the list to include wars through 2007. This resulted in the addition of six interstate conflicts: Armenia-Azerbaijan (1992-94); Ethiopia-Eritrea (1998-2000); India-Pakistan (Kargil, 1999); U.S.-Yugoslavia (Kosovo, 1999); U.S.-Afghanistan (2001); and U.S.-Iraq (2003). Second, following recent analyses we divided several long multi-phase, multi-participant wars into their constituent parts (Reiter and Stam 2002).⁸ This is particularly important because COW codes many states that were defeated at some point during such conflicts as winners.⁹ We obtain more accurate codings by separating wars like this into multiple conflicts. Third, we omit many minor participants in wars like the Austro-Prussian, Franco-Prussian, World War II in Europe, Korea, Vietnam, and the Persian Gulf War. The rule we followed was that if a belligerent was not one of the two principal parties to the war, it had to suffer at least 10 percent of the battle deaths to be included in the dataset.

We assess effectiveness by estimating the impact of coercive and eliminationist victimization on a trichotomous indicator of war outcomes—wins are coded as two, draws as one, and losses as zero—using an ordinal logit estimator.¹⁰ Most of the codings for bilateral wars are drawn from the COW dataset; we code outcomes for divided multilateral wars and recent conflicts ourselves. Because there are multiple observations from each conflict and these observations are not independent we use robust standard errors clustered on each war.¹¹

Our key explanatory variables are dummy variables for coercive victimization and eliminationist victimization. As discussed above, civilian victimization is defined as a military strategy that targets noncombatants intentionally or which fails to discriminate between

combatants and noncombatants (Downes 2008). When it is unclear whether the attacking government intended to target civilians, we code cases as civilian victimization if the number of civilians killed exceeded ten thousand. Coercive victimization consists of those instances in which a state targets its adversary's civilian population in an effort to compel the government to quit the war. Civilian deaths are intended to put pressure on the regime by raising the costs of fighting or induce the population to force its leaders to come to terms. This form of civilian victimization is almost always inflicted from the outside-in by an attacker located outside the target's borders (or, in the case of siege, outside of the target city's borders). We therefore code cases of civilian victimization as coercive if they employed deprivation of food during a siege or blockade, or if they consisted of aerial or artillery bombardment of cities in the adversary's homeland.¹²

Eliminationist victimization, on the other hand, is not intended to coerce an enemy government to take an action or end a war. Rather, civilians are targeted to remove them from territory claimed by the attacker. This is accomplished by massacre, devastation, scorched-earth, and destruction of homes, villages, or towns, all designed to eradicate a group from a particular area through flight or mass killing. As opposed to coercive victimization, the eliminationist variety is nearly always inflicted face-to-face by attackers who have direct access to the target population. We code cases of civilian victimization as eliminationist if they are inflicted directly by invading forces on civilian populations in the process of taking control over territory.

Although we treat them separately, both forms of victimization can (and do) occur in the same conflict. In the early stages of the Korean War, for example, North and South Korean forces massacred civilians whom they believed were dedicated supporters of the opposing regime (Sang-Hun 2009). Later in the conflict, the United States conducted massive incendiary

bombing of North Korean cities and towns to destroy all supply and transit centers for communist forces, hoping to halt the disastrous UN retreat (Crane 2000). Similarly, in the First Balkan War (1912-1913), the Greek, Bulgarian, and Serbian armies committed widespread ethnic cleansing against Muslim Turks to drive them out of territory claimed by these states. At the same time, Bulgarian and Serb forces besieged the city of Adrianople, inflicting widespread starvation on the town's residents in an attempt to win the Turkish garrison's surrender (International Commission 1993, 110-111). As shown in Table 1, there were 31 instances of coercive victimization and 30 instances of eliminationist victimization inflicted by 54 belligerents in a total of 30 different wars. Five belligerents engaged in both coercive and eliminationist targeting.

[Table 1 about here]

To assess whether the effect of civilian victimization is contingent on the enemy's regime type we construct two dummy variables to denote whether a belligerent was fighting a democracy or an anocracy. We then multiply our measures of victimization by these dummy variables. Enemy democracy is coded one if the enemy received a score on the Polity IV index of democratic institutions of greater than six. Enemy anocracy is coded one if the enemy had a Polity score greater than -7 and less than 7. The excluded category is countries that have a Polity score lower than -6.

We also control for a number of variables that the literature on military effectiveness suggests influence the likelihood of victory in war. The first is material capabilities, which we operationalize as the share of total capabilities of all the belligerents in the war controlled by each state (Desch 2008; Reiter and Stam 2002). Data are calculated from the COW National Material Capabilities dataset. Democracies are also thought to be more likely to win wars, and

particularly wars that they start (Reiter and Stam 2002; Bueno de Mesquita et al., 2003). We use the Polity index to measure each belligerent's regime type, designating countries that score higher than six as a democracy.¹³ Data on war initiation is taken from Reiter and Stam (2002) supplemented with our own coding for wars that ended in draws. An interaction term (democracy \times initiation) gauges the joint effect of democracy and initiation.¹⁴ We also include a dummy variable which designates whether the combatant had expansive war aims, defined as either regime change or conquest. We coded this variable ourselves using a variety of historical sources and the Militarized Interstate Dispute Dataset's coding of dispute. It is unclear whether war aims should be positively or negatively correlated with war outcomes. On the one hand, expansive war aims are probably more difficult to achieve. However, only those countries that possess superior military capabilities should adopt these aims, making them more likely to succeed. Lastly, we include a dummy variable that codes whether a war was fought in the post-1945 period, as some analysts have found a decrease in decisive war outcomes and an increase in draws after World War II (Fortna 2004).

We begin our analysis by investigating whether civilian victimization contributes to victory in general. We then disaggregate civilian victimization into coercive and eliminationist victimization and evaluate their effectiveness separately to ensure that the results of our aggregate analysis do not mask variation in effectiveness across different victimization strategies. Neither type of victimization is applied randomly, and the factors that influence whether states choose to target civilians also influence the likelihood of victory. However, because the data generating process and the associated obstacles to inference are different for coercive and eliminationist targeting, we adopt different techniques to control for potential bias. We use non-parametric matching to minimize selection effects in evaluating the effectiveness of

coercive targeting and instrumental variables to control for endogeneity in evaluating the effectiveness of eliminationist targeting. Finally, we employ interaction terms to analyze whether enemy regime type conditions the effectiveness of either strategy.

Assessing the Effectiveness of Civilian Victimization

Our initial analysis of the overall effectiveness of civilian targeting suggests that belligerents that engage in victimization strategies are more likely to emerge victorious. Model 1 of Table 2 reports the results of our ordinal logit analysis.

[Table 2 about here]

The coefficient for civilian targeting is positive and statistically significant. When marginal effects are generated using CLARIFY (Tomz, Wittenburg, and King 2001), the substantive effect is large.¹⁵ Belligerents that target civilians are 17 percent more likely to win than belligerents that forgo these inhumane strategies. When compared to other factors contributing to victory in Figure 1, we see that this is a sizeable increase. A change in belligerent capabilities from one standard deviation below the mean to one above it increases the likelihood of victory by 23 percent. Thus, targeting civilians appears to improve a belligerent's prospects for victory by nearly as much as a two standard deviation increase in capabilities.

[Figure 1 about here]

Figure 1 also provides substantive effects for the other control variables. As expected, countries with a higher proportion of military capabilities and expansive war aims are more likely to win. Countries whose primary objective is regime change or conquest are 20 percent more likely to secure victory compared to those with less ambitious war aims. Belligerents

fighting after 1945 are less likely to win. Surprisingly, initiators are not more likely to achieve victory and neither are democracies.¹⁶

Disaggregating the Effectiveness of Eliminationist and Coercive Strategies

Although this analysis provides some evidence of a positive correlation between civilian targeting and victory, it does not account for potential differences in the effectiveness of coercive and eliminationist victimization. It also does not control for bias that could result from the nonrandom circumstances in which each of these strategies are employed. We solve the first problem by rerunning the model with civilian victimization disaggregated into its component parts. We then address the selection effects that could be biasing our estimates.

Model 2 in Table 2 shows the results of our initial disaggregated analysis. As expected, there are significant differences in the military utility of the two types of victimization strategy. Although both of the coefficients are positive, the coefficient for the eliminationist variable is larger and statistically significant ($p = 0.075$) whereas coercive victimization is not. Figure 2 compares the substantive effects of the two strategies. Engaging in coercive targeting does not change a belligerent's prospects for victory by a statistically meaningful amount. Combatants that engage in eliminationist targeting, by contrast, are 18 percent more likely to win than those which do not.

[Figure 2 about here]

The different circumstances in which coercive and eliminationist victimization are employed may account for the apparent discrepancy in their relative effectiveness. States use coercive targeting when they confront desperate situations and face resolved enemies in drawn-out wars of attrition. These states are also more likely to lose. On the other hand, states employ eliminationist targeting when they are actively seizing territory in wars of annexation. These

states are more likely to win. Thus, the situations in which each strategy is employed decreases the likelihood that we will observe a positive correlation between coercive targeting and victory but increases the likelihood that we will observe a positive correlation between eliminationist targeting and victory. Because the selection processes are different and the potential bias points in opposite directions we control for each separately.

Coercive Victimization: A Matched Analysis

States tend to employ coercive victimization when they experience high losses, become bogged down in wars of attrition, and when they are desperate to win. This makes statistical inference problematic because it is difficult to assess whether civilian targeting influences the war outcome or whether the desperate conditions that make civilian targeting likely are driving the outcome. One way of dealing with this problem is to use matching to preprocess the data.

Matching is a non-parametric statistical technique that attempts to correct for bias that results from non-random treatment assignment (Ho et al., 2007). Matching compensates for this problem by selecting only those control cases that are most similar to the treatment cases. This enables us to compare treated cases to those cases that had a high probability of receiving the treatment but did not. For our purposes, matching permits us to compare war outcomes where states coercively targeted civilians with those where states had the opportunity (they possessed the requisite material capabilities) and the willingness (they were desperate) to do so but refrained.

To implement matching we use pretreatment variables identified by the literature (Valentino, Huth, and Croco 2006; Downes 2008) as causes of civilian victimization and civilian casualties to predict whether belligerents will engage in coercive targeting. Although the leading

studies do not disaggregate civilian victimization into coercive and eliminationist types, these works strongly suggest that coercive targeting in particular is most prevalent in wars of attrition. These studies also find that powerful states are more likely to target civilians because they have the material resources to do so. Some find that an increased sensitivity to the costs of fighting makes democracies more likely to target civilians in these wars, and that civilian victimization has become less prevalent after 1945. Thus we employ a logistic analysis to predict coercive victimization using an attrition dummy variable that signifies “wars generally lacking in maneuver or movement, which are instead dominated by static, linear, or trench operations” (Downes 2008, 60); a variable which measures the relative military capability of the combatants as described in the previous section; the Polity score of the belligerent to measure its regime type; and a dummy variable for the post-1945 period.¹⁷ Each belligerent is then assigned a propensity score equal to the probability that it would target civilians in a coercive campaign. Cases of coercive victimization are then matched with control cases that have the closest propensity score.

Matching was performed using *MatchIt* (Ho et al., 2007). One-to-one nearest neighbor matching without replacement after discarding control cases outside of the common support yielded the best results. Table 3 shows that the matching process significantly improved the balance of the data. Comparing the difference in the means of the overall propensity score and each variable for the entire dataset and the matched dataset shows that matching narrowed the differences between them. The difference in the mean propensity scores for the treatment and control group improved by 92 percent. The relevant control variables improved by between 51 percent for regime type and 100 percent for attrition.¹⁸

[Table 3 about here]

Because matching was not exact, we conducted parametric analysis with the relevant control variables to evaluate the effectiveness of coercive targeting on the matched dataset. The results are reported in Model 3 of Table 2. As can be seen, coercive targeting is not associated with an increased likelihood of victory, even after controlling for the dampening effect of selection bias. The coefficient remains small and statistically insignificant.

Eliminationist Victimization: Instrumental Variables Analysis

Belligerents engage in eliminationist targeting to remove civilians from enemy territory in an attempt to prevent those civilians from providing support to their adversary. To conduct these types of campaigns, combatants must have conquered part of their enemy's territory. Thus, belligerents are often already "winning" the war (or at least advancing and taking territory) when they decide to target civilians. This makes isolating the causal effect of civilian targeting on war outcomes problematic because it is difficult to parse out whether targeting civilians makes victory likely or whether victory makes targeting civilians likely.

We use instrumental variable estimation to correct for the bias that arises from this endogeneity problem. Rather than using eliminationist targeting as our key explanatory variable, we use an instrumental variable that is closely correlated with eliminationist victimization but is unrelated to war outcome. We construct this instrument by estimating the underlying probability that a state will target civilians using only variables that are exogenous to war outcome. We then use this instrument to estimate the effect of eliminationist targeting on war outcome. This procedure corrects for the bias arising from endogeneity because the instrument is uncorrelated with the error term in the ordinal logit equation. In this case, the instrument—unlike the

dichotomous indicator—is not influenced by the state’s ability to conquer territory. As a result, the estimates are unbiased.¹⁹

To implement this technique we need to identify variables that are good predictors of eliminationist targeting but are unrelated to war outcome (Bartels 1991; Bound, Jaeger, and Baker 1995). Again we draw on the literature on civilian victimization to select our predictors, focusing this time on the variables most likely to be associated with eliminationist targeting. One prominent finding is that belligerents are more likely to target civilians if they are involved in wars where the primary dispute is territorial. Belligerents whose goal is to annex or conquer their enemy’s territory are more likely to engage in eliminationist campaigns (Valentino, Huth, and Croco 2006; Downes 2008). In addition, states that are defending their territory from the incursions of others have also been known to target potential supporters in their own country (for example, Turkish massacres of Greeks in Anatolia during the Greco-Turkish War). Thus, we include a dummy variable—TERRWAR—that is coded one if a war involved a dispute over territory. We also include a dummy variable for ethnic intermingling coded one if a belligerent had co-ethnics living inside its enemy’s borders or if its enemy had co-ethnics living inside its borders. In these cases civilian targeting should be more likely because there is an obvious group that might aid the enemy, and thus the incentive to use eliminationist targeting is higher. It may be easier to dehumanize the enemy and justify targeting civilians when significant cultural differences divide the belligerents. To account for this possibility, we include a cultural difference dummy variable that measures whether the two belligerents are from different regions of the world as measured by the Correlates of War data. Finally, we include a past use dummy variable that indicates whether a belligerent targeted civilians in the most recent war it fought. Because states that have targeted civilians in previous wars have demonstrated insensitivity to

the norms prohibiting the targeting of noncombatants, they should be more willing than other states to target civilians again.

Each of these variables should be exogenous to the outcome of the current war. The ethnic composition and regional location of the belligerents as well as the strategies they adopted in previous wars should be unrelated to the outcome of the current war. The issue at stake should also be unrelated to war outcome. We specifically constructed this variable so that it would be distinct from belligerents' war aims, which are correlated with war outcomes as discussed above. The dummy variable is coded one for states that are trying to preserve the status quo by protecting their own territory, pursuing limited territorial gains, or attempting conquest of the enemy. In addition, both sides to the conflict receive the same coding since the issue in dispute is the same for both even if their political goals are different.

We use these variables to estimate a logit equation to predict civilian targeting in Table 4. The model fit is very good, suggesting that our instrument is highly correlated with the independent variable: McKelvey and Zavoina's R^2 for the logit model is 0.3772 and the area under the ROC curve is 0.89.

[Table 4 about here]

We generate the predicted probability of eliminationist victimization from this model and use it as an instrument for eliminationist targeting in our ordinal logit analysis of war outcomes. The results are reported in Model 4 of Table 2.

Once we control for endogeneity using the instrumental variable the positive relationship between eliminationist targeting and war outcomes disappears. The coefficient for eliminationist victimization is small and statistically insignificant, which suggests that the correlation we found in Model 2 was spurious. Taking territory enables states to engage in eliminationist strategies

and also increases the likelihood that they will win. The analysis thus supports the conclusion that eliminationist victimization does not actually contribute to victory; instead, victory is a function of the battlefield conditions that made eliminationist targeting possible.

The Conditioning Effect of Enemy Regime Type

We test whether the utility of victimization strategies depends on the enemy's regime type by interacting coercive and eliminationist victimization with dummy variables for enemy democracy and enemy anocracy, first without controlling for potential selection and endogeneity bias and then using the matched dataset and the instrumental variable approach. The results of this analysis are reported in Table 5.

[Table 5 about here]

Analyzing the unmatched data in Model 5, we find that coercive targeting is effective when used against anocracies and is actually counterproductive when used against democracies. When employed against anocratic governments, coercive victimization increases belligerents' probability of victory by 36 percent (see Figure 3). When this strategy is employed against democracies, it reduces belligerents' likelihood of winning by 15 percent.²⁰ The positive effect of coercive targeting against anocracies grows stronger and remains statistically significant after matching, as seen in Model 6. Targeting civilians in these cases increases the probability of winning by 42 percent. This provides strong support for the hypothesis that anocratic governments are more vulnerable to coercive victimization. However, the negative effect of coercive targeting against democratic regimes becomes negligible after matching. Although statistically significant, the substantive effect is very small (less than 0.00001 percent).²¹ This lack of correlation may simply indicate that democracies are neither more nor less vulnerable to

coercive victimization. However, it could also be a function of multiple mechanisms operating in different directions. Democratic leaders might be more concerned about civilian suffering, but they may also face electoral incentives to secure victory against opponents who adopt strategies of civilian victimization. Thus, the positive and negative effects of democracy described in the theory section might cancel each other out, leading to a null finding. Controlling for the differential effect of coercive victimization across regime types also provides evidence that the selection effects discussed above biased the aggregate estimates downwards, dampening the positive effect of coercive targeting against anocracies and augmenting its negative effect against democracies.

[Figure 3 about here]

As expected, we find that regime type does not condition the effectiveness of eliminationist victimization. As shown in Model 7 of Table 5, the coefficient for eliminationist targeting is statistically insignificant for democracies, anocracies, and autocracies. Controlling for endogeneity bias in Model 8 does not change these results. The signs on some of the coefficients change but they remain statistically insignificant.

Summary of Statistical Results

In sum, we find that in most cases targeting civilians is not an effective strategy. Although civilian victimization is correlated with victory in the aggregate, this finding is driven largely by states that employ eliminationist targeting during wars of annexation and then go on to win these wars. In these cases the causal arrow probably flows from victory (winning enables states to conquer territory which enables them to employ eliminationist strategies) to victimization. Once we account for this endogenous relationship with instrumental variables, the positive correlation

between war outcomes and eliminationist targeting disappears. For the most part, we find that coercive targeting is not an effective strategy even when we control for selection effects. The one exception is when it employed against anocracies. In these cases it can increase belligerents prospects for victory.

Discussion

One of the most surprising findings in the statistical analysis is that coercive victimization appears to contribute significantly to victory against anocratic regimes. Table 6 lists the cases of victory when a state employed coercive targeting. The table shows clearly that the targets in the vast majority of these cases were anocracies, which supports the statistical results. However, two other trends are also evident in the table, both of which raise questions about the reliability of this finding. First, in only one case—the Franco-Prussian War—did events unfold in the manner predicted by the theory. During the Siege of Paris by the Prussian Army, for example, the possibility of revolution and civil war in Paris made surrender both dangerous but also imperative for the French. The communists wanted to hold out and sortie the entire population, an eventuality the government regarded with horror. The government in Paris was in fact facing two enemies, “one which, night and day, tightened his ring of fire and steel, the other which at every instant was awaiting the moment to hurl itself upon the Hotel de Ville” (quoted in Horne 1965, 223). If the government asked for terms it risked sparking a communist insurrection, yet peace with the Prussians was necessary to crush the government’s domestic enemies on the Left. When the expected uprising came on January 22, writes Horne (1965, 229), “Rather than attempt to fight a war on two fronts, the Government considered it imperative to obtain an armistice with the least delay.”

[Table 6 about here]

Other cases, by contrast, provide less support for the fragile anocracies hypothesis. Germany, for example, fought on for years during World War I—defeating Russia and nearly overwhelming France and Britain, all while propping up Austria-Hungary—despite worsening health conditions among its population owing to the Allied blockade. In fact, Goemans (2000) argues that it was the very fear of domestic punishment if they admitted defeat that drove German leaders to fight so hard for so long. Similarly, Japan endured massive punishment from U.S. bombers in 1945 without any hint of a domestic uprising: American incendiary bombing between March and August 1945 killed hundreds of thousands of Japanese and prompted millions of others to flee to the countryside (Pape 1996; Werrell 1996; Searle 2002). It was only when Japan's military strategy for defending the home islands and inflicting high costs on the American invaders collapsed in the face of the Soviet offensive in Manchuria and the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki that Japanese leaders sought terms.²²

A second trend evident in the cases in Table 6 is that when coercive victimization plays any role in contributing to victory, it does so only very late in wars when targets are already beaten militarily. Again, the Franco-Prussian case is instructive. By the time that hunger and disease began to stalk Parisians and Prussian shells started to fall in the city, French military prospects were already bleak. Two sorties by the garrison out of Paris (one in November, and one in mid-January) failed to break the iron ring encircling the capital. Moreover, there was little prospect of a rescue, as the new armies raised by the provisional government elsewhere in France were defeated by the Prussians. The military situation faced by French commanders in January 1871 was thus just as dire as that facing the civilian population.²³ The same could be said about the World War I blockade of Germany and the bombing of Warsaw in late September 1939. In

both cases, the armies of the target countries were in retreat or collapsing. In the German case, the most that can be said is that civilian misery added to the scales weighing in favor of peace (Offer 1989, 72-78). In the Polish case, the aerial and artillery bombardments of the Polish capital may have determined the timing of surrender, but the Poles were already crushed and would likely have capitulated soon in any case. Evidence from the cases thus casts doubt on whether the statistical finding that coercive victimization is more effective against anocratic governments.

An analysis of the cases also confirms the finding that emerged from the matched analysis that coercive targeting has a negligible effect when employed against democracies. There are only four cases of democracies that were targets of coercive victimization: Britain in the two World Wars, Israel in the Persian Gulf War (Iraqi Scud missiles), and Armenia in its war against Azerbaijan (the bombardment of Stepanakert, the capital of the breakaway region of Nagorno-Karabakh, in 1992). The British cases constitute good evidence against the hypothesis that democracies are more vulnerable to coercive victimization as German aerial bombing and attempts to starve Britain via submarine blockades in these instances had little effect on popular attitudes and Germany (the perpetrator in both instances) went on to lose the war.²⁴ The Armenian case says little about the resilience of democracies to coercive victimization because the shelling was conducted against a city in a secessionist region of Azerbaijan rather than in Armenia itself.²⁵ The Persian Gulf case consists of Saddam Hussein firing Scud missiles at Israel in a failed attempt to goad the Israelis into retaliating and thereby shattering the coalition arrayed against him, which contained many Arab states. In short, the evidence for democratic resistance to coercive victimization rests on a narrow empirical foundation: a single country (Britain) in two wars. None of these cases provides evidence that employing victimization strategies against

civilians contributes to the perpetrator's defeat.²⁶ However, they do suggest that, at the very least, democracies are not more susceptible to coercion via punishment as some of the literature suggests.

Finally, the case evidence tends to bear out the contention discussed above that the correlation between eliminationist victimization and victory is largely spurious. The cases reveal that the circumstances under which eliminationist victimization contributes to victory in conventional interstate wars—a high degree of intermingling of populations vying to control the same territory—are relatively rare. When war breaks out in this situation, the front lines between the warring parties leave pockets of each group trapped on the “wrong” side, and territory controlled by each group is often not contiguous. In cases like these, areas populated by the other group represent real military threats. In the Israeli War of Independence, for example, the nascent Zionist state faced a critical military dilemma because the major areas of Jewish settlement—which were themselves not wholly Jewish—were also not territorially contiguous, being separated by Arab-inhabited areas. In the conflict's first few months, Arab militias from nearby villages blocked the roads that connected Jewish population centers and attacked supply convoys (Morris 2004, 66). To attain a viable state, Jewish forces needed to conquer the intervening Arab territories, consolidate their control over these areas by subduing or eliminating Arab civilians who sympathized with (and sometimes fought for) the enemy, and then expand outward, pushing the majority of the Arabs (particularly Muslim Arabs) beyond the new state's borders (Morris 1999, 206). Plan D and other operations helped eliminate the bulk of the population viewed by Jewish leaders as a fifth column.²⁷

This set of circumstances, however, is not common. The more typical scenario is a war of territorial aggression in which the invader targets members of the opposing nationality (or

holders of the enemy's ideology). In these cases the aggressor state must take enemy territory in order to engage in eliminationist victimization, a fact that is clearly demonstrated by most of the cases of eliminationist targeting in Table 1. Although cleansing may stabilize a belligerent's control over conquered territory, this does not by itself win the war. Territorial conquest makes eliminationist victimization possible, which then further facilitates territorial control, but it does not defeat the adversary's army. In many cases, such as Turkey in Cyprus (1974) and Armenia in Nagorno-Karabakh and Azerbaijan (1992-94), territorial advances make cleansing possible and aggressors go on to win the conflict. In other cases, however, invaders who have inflicted ethnic or ideological cleansing—Greece in the Greco-Turkish War, Germany on the Eastern Front in World War II, and Uganda in its war against Tanzania—have gone on to see their territorial gains erased and suffered defeat in the war. Expulsions, cleansing, and massacres can allow aggressors to pacify territory but unless they are able to solidify their military gains, eliminationist targeting will not prevent eventual defeat.

An analysis of the cases also reveals that in most of these wars belligerents' decisions to engage in eliminationist victimization are primarily geared not to winning the current war, but rather toward minimizing the possibility of future conflict. We have already mentioned the Balkan and Korean Wars as examples. Other cases include the Nazi invasion of Poland, during which the Germans targeted "all Polish elements that a) were formerly leaders in Polish society or b) which could lead Polish resistance in the future", thereby aiming to reduce the likelihood of organized rebellion in the future.²⁸ Similarly, Turkey engaged in massive violence against ethnic Armenians and Greeks as it drove the French and Greek armies out of Cilicia and western Anatolia, respectively, in the early 1920s. Each of these communities was associated with foreign powers that intervened frequently in Ottoman affairs to protect their Christian brethren.

As Naimark (2001, 43) puts it, “A new Turkified Ottoman state...had no room for a large, alien, potentially traitorous Christian population, whether Armenian or Greek.” Turkish officials were determined to put an end to these communities and thus remove once and for all the pretext for great power intervention in Turkish affairs.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that targeting civilians in war is a crime, but is it also a strategic blunder? Our statistical results suggest that a “naïve” analysis that does not differentiate between types of civilian targeting or correct for possible threats to inference (selection bias in the case of coercive victimization and endogeneity in the case of eliminationist victimization) produces a false positive association between civilian victimization and victory in interstate war. When we separated strategies of civilian targeting into two types, we found that only the eliminationist category positively predicted victory. However, when we further corrected for possible endogeneity in the relationship between eliminationist victimization and victory, the significance of this association disappeared. The only circumstance in which coercive victimization contributed to victory was against targets with anocratic governments.

Examination of the cases provided further insight into the relationship between the two types of civilian victimization and war outcomes. First, although the statistical analysis suggested that coercive victimization was more effective against anocracies, the cases revealed that this strategy exerted little effect on the populations or leaders in such regimes until the state had essentially lost the war militarily. Second, the finding that democracies are less vulnerable to coercive victimization rests on a thin empirical foundation because it is based on a handful of cases. Finally, the cases confirmed that the circumstances in which eliminationist victimization

contributes to victory are rare; most of the time this strategy is future-oriented, designed to minimize the likelihood of renewed conflict after the war is over.

Although we can be fairly confident that selection bias and endogeneity do not affect our statistical results, there are clearly several limitations to our investigation. War outcome, for example, is a relatively blunt indicator of effectiveness. Particularly in cases of eliminationist victimization, other dependent variables—such as post-war rebellion by the targeted group, or militarized disputes with the state from which territory was taken—will provide more analytical leverage on the long term efficacy of civilian victimization. Future work should also address post-war political effects of targeting civilians: does the use of this strategy during war engender long-lasting bitterness? Can civilian victimization win the war but lose the peace? What is the effect of targeting civilians on the duration of post-war peace? Wars are also a blunt unit of analysis: future work might break wars down into war-years, particular campaigns, or exploit variation across time and space within a single conflict using statistics or case studies. Another useful addition would be a measure of military strategies other than civilian victimization or an indicator of each belligerent's military vulnerability.

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Table 1. Cases of Civilian Victimization in Interstate Wars, 1816-2007

War	State	Years	Coercive CV	Eliminationist CV	Outcome
Franco-Prussian	Prussia	1870-71	X		Win
Russo-Turkish	Russia	1877-78	X	X	Win
Boxer Rebellion	China	1900	X		Lose
Boxer Rebellion	Russia	1900	X		Win
Boxer Rebellion*	UK	1900	X		Win
Boxer Rebellion*	USA	1900	X		Win
Boxer Rebellion*	France	1900	X		Win
First Balkan	Serbia	1912-13		X	Win
First Balkan	Bulgaria	1912-13	X	X	Win
First Balkan	Greece	1912-13	X	X	Win
Second Balkan	Serbia	1913		X	Win
Second Balkan	Greece	1913		X	Win
Second Balkan	Bulgaria	1913		X	Lose
Second Balkan	Turkey	1913		X	Win
WWI West	Germany	1914-18	X		Lose
WWI West	France	1914-18	X		Win
WWI West	UK	1914-18	X		Win
WWI West	USA	1917-18	X		Win
WWI East	Turkey	1914-18		X	Win
Hungarian*	Romania	1919		X	Win
Greco-Turkish	Greece	1919-22		X	Lose
Greco-Turkish	Turkey	1919-22		X	Win
Franco-Turkish*	France	1919-21		X	Lose
Franco-Turkish*	Turkey	1919-21		X	Win
Sino-Soviet*	USSR	1929		X	Win
Sino-Japanese	Japan	1931-33	X		Win
Italo-Ethiopian	Italy	1935-36	X		Win
Sino-Japanese	Japan	1937-45	X	X	Draw
Poland	Germany	1939	X	X	Win
Russo-Finnish*	USSR	1939-40	X		Win
World War II West	Germany	1940-45	X		Lose
World War II West	UK	1940-45	X		Win
World War II West	USA	1941-45	X		Win
German-Yugoslav	Germany	1941	X		Win
World War II East	Germany	1941-45	X	X	Lose
World War II East	USSR	1941-45		X	Win
World War II East	Romania	1941-44		X	Lose
Pacific War	USA	1941-45	X		Win
Palestine	Israel	1948-49		X	Win
Korea	N. Korea	1950-53		X	Draw
Korea	S. Korea	1950-53		X	Draw
Korea	USA	1950-53	X		Draw
First Vietnamese	USA	1965-73	X		Draw
First Vietnamese	N. Vietnam	1965-73		X	Draw
Cyprus	Turkey	1974		X	Win
Cyprus	Cyprus	1974		X	Lose
Cambodia-Vietnam	Cambodia	1975-79		X	Lose
Uganda-Tanzania	Uganda	1978-79		X	Lose
Iran-Iraq	Iran	1980-88	X		Draw
Iran-Iraq	Iraq	1980-88	X		Draw
Lebanon	Israel	1982	X		Win
Persian Gulf*	Iraq	1991	X		Lose
Armenia-Azerbaijan	Armenia	1992-94		X	Win
Armenia-Azerbaijan	Azerbaijan	1992-94	X	X	Lose

Source: Downes 2008, 45-47; * = Borderline Cases

Table 2. Ordinal Logit Estimates of the Effect of Civilian Victimization on Interstate War Outcomes, 1816-2007

	1	2	3	4
	Aggregated	Disaggregated	Matched Data	IV Analysis
Civilian Victimization	0.711** <i>0.337</i>	-	-	-
Coercive Victimization	-	0.189 <i>0.410</i>	0.097 <i>0.849</i>	0.241 <i>0.417</i>
Eliminationist Victimization	-	0.779* <i>0.438</i>	0.560 <i>0.722</i>	0.262 <i>0.688</i>
Expansive War Aims	0.843** <i>0.386</i>	0.910** <i>0.380</i>	1.016 <i>0.855</i>	0.934** <i>0.388</i>
Capabilities	1.744*** <i>0.581</i>	1.750*** <i>0.595</i>	-1.172 <i>1.251</i>	1.638*** <i>0.577</i>
Initiation	0.581 <i>0.446</i>	0.609 <i>0.446</i>	0.661 <i>0.980</i>	0.604 <i>0.445</i>
Democracy	1.104 <i>0.712</i>	1.181 <i>0.722</i>	1.915** <i>0.868</i>	1.177 <i>0.742</i>
Democracy × Initiation	-0.055 <i>0.813</i>	-0.091 <i>0.833</i>	-0.026 <i>1.287</i>	-0.121 <i>0.826</i>
Post 45	-0.942*** <i>0.211</i>	-0.973*** <i>0.224</i>	-1.395** <i>0.687</i>	-0.905*** <i>0.210</i>
Cut 1	0.761 <i>0.303</i>	0.758 <i>0.307</i>	-0.626 <i>0.748</i>	0.689 <i>0.310</i>
Cut 2	1.379 <i>0.299</i>	1.375 <i>0.307</i>	0.014 <i>0.733</i>	1.296 <i>0.302</i>
N	247.000	247.000	62.000	247.000
Pseudo R2	0.129	0.128	0.161	0.121

Robust Standard Errors in Italics, * p <0.10, ** p <0.05, *** p <0.01

Table 3. Difference in Means for Treatment and Control Groups Before and After Matching

	All Data			Matched Data			Percent Improvement in Balance
	Treated	Control	Difference	Treated	Control	Difference	
Propensity Score	0.357	0.093	0.264	0.357	0.337	0.02	92.25
Attrition	0.903	0.304	0.599	0.903	0.903	0.00	100.00
Military Capability	0.458	0.356	0.102	0.458	0.442	0.016	83.75
Regime Type	0.226	-1.963	2.189	0.226	-0.839	1.065	51.36
Post-1945	0.226	0.313	-0.087	0.226	0.194	0.032	63.04
N	31	214	-	31	31	-	-

Table 4. Logit Estimates of Probability of Eliminationist Victimization in Interstate Wars, 1816-2007

	Coefficient	Standard Error	P-Value
Territorial War	2.705	0.712	0.000
Civilizational Difference	1.723	0.531	0.001
Ethnic Intermingling	2.047	0.539	0.000
Previous Targeting	1.887	0.541	0.000
Constant	-6.032	0.875	0.000

N = 250, Psuedo-R² = 0.3722, ROCTab = 0.89

Table 5. Ordinal Logit Estimates of the Effect of Civilian Victimization on Interstate War Outcomes by Target Regime Type

	5	6	7	8
	Coercive Victimization	Coercive Victimization, Matched Data	Eliminationist Victimization	Instrumented Eliminationist Victimization
Coercive Victimization	-0.883 <i>0.764</i>	-1.037 <i>1.434</i>	0.098 <i>0.378</i>	0.195 <i>0.410</i>
Coercive Victimization × Enemy Anocracy	2.602** <i>1.179</i>	3.268* <i>1.797</i>	-	-
Coercive Victimization × Enemy Democracy	-36.120*** <i>1.120</i>	-37.945*** <i>1.638</i>	-	-
Eliminationist Victimization	0.882** <i>0.405</i>	0.999 <i>0.711</i>	0.692 <i>0.976</i>	0.149 <i>1.943</i>
Eliminationist Victimization × Enemy Anocracy	-	-	0.363 <i>1.518</i>	-0.150 <i>2.532</i>
Eliminationist Victimization × Enemy Democracy	-	-	-0.046 <i>1.629</i>	3.446 <i>3.539</i>
Enemy Anocracy	0.100 <i>0.456</i>	-0.701 <i>1.108</i>	0.320 <i>0.436</i>	0.351 <i>0.478</i>
Enemy Democracy	-0.988** <i>0.501</i>	-36.068*** <i>1.896</i>	-1.141** <i>0.577</i>	-1.628** <i>0.718</i>
Expansive War Aims	1.125*** <i>0.415</i>	1.114 <i>1.050</i>	1.109*** <i>0.405</i>	1.111*** <i>0.410</i>
Capabilities	1.711*** <i>0.646</i>	-1.820 <i>1.543</i>	1.440** <i>0.640</i>	1.307** <i>0.617</i>
Initiation	0.609 <i>0.474</i>	0.176 <i>1.183</i>	0.661 <i>0.467</i>	0.700 <i>0.468</i>
Democracy	1.003 <i>0.660</i>	1.554 <i>1.001</i>	0.946 <i>0.648</i>	0.990 <i>0.665</i>
Democracy × Initiation	-0.248 <i>0.831</i>	0.563 <i>1.899</i>	-0.103 <i>0.854</i>	-0.191 <i>0.853</i>
Post-1945	-0.557** <i>0.241</i>	-0.837 <i>0.986</i>	-0.509** <i>0.215</i>	-0.430** <i>0.202</i>
Cut 1	0.762 <i>0.444</i>	-1.541 <i>1.416</i>	0.769 <i>0.436</i>	0.698 <i>0.451</i>
Cut 2	1.421 <i>0.451</i>	-0.667 <i>1.326</i>	1.402 <i>0.442</i>	1.323 <i>0.446</i>
N	244	62	244	244
Pseudo R ²	0.182	0.331	0.154	0.151

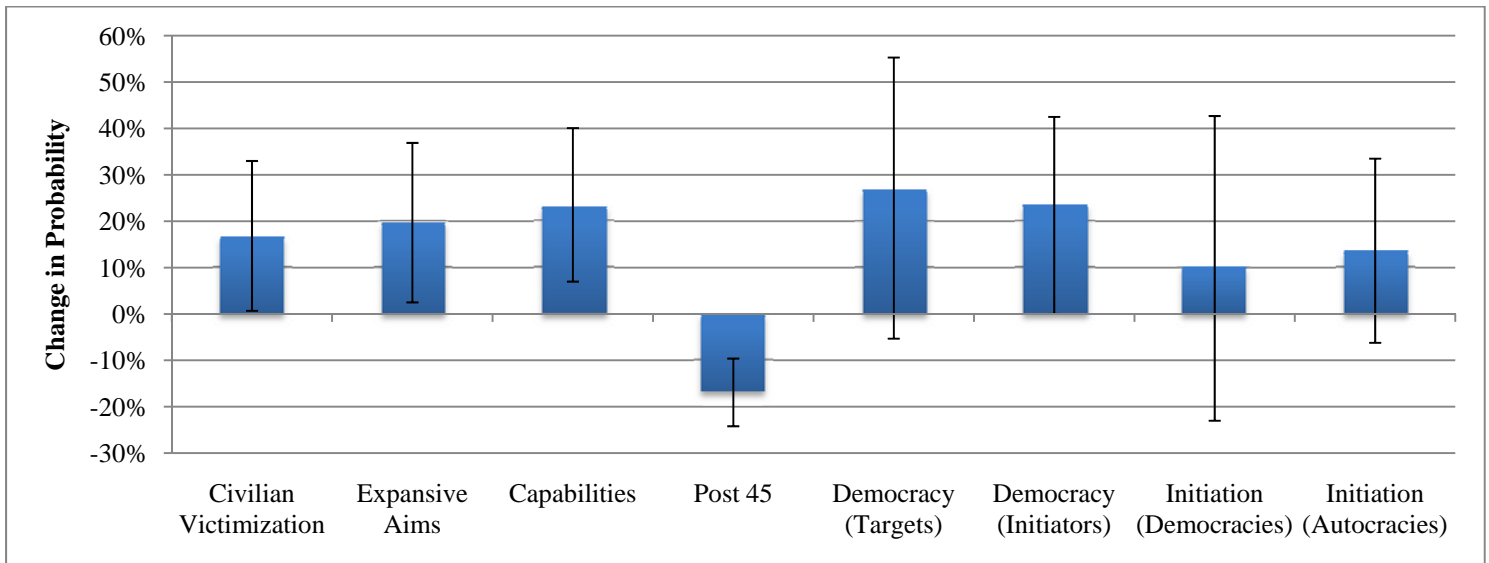
Robust Standard Errors in Italics, * p < 0.10, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01

Table 6. Cases of Coercive Civilian Victimization by Winners of Interstate Wars, 1816-2003

War	Year	Perpetrator(s)	Target	Anocracy	Event
Franco-Prussian	1870-71	France	France	X	Siege of Paris
Russo-Turkish	1877-78	Russia	Turkey		Siege of Plevna
Boxer Rebellion	1900	United States United Kingdom France Russia	China	X	Post-Siege Massacres
First Balkan	1912-13	Bulgaria Serbia	Turkey	X	Siege of Adrianople
WWI, West	1914-18	United States United Kingdom France	Germany	X	Blockade
Second Sino-Japanese	1931-33	Japan	China	X	Bombing of Shanghai
Italo-Ethiopian	1935-36	Italy	Ethiopia	X	Bombing of Ethiopian Towns
Germany-Poland	1939	Germany	Poland	X	Bombing of Warsaw
Russo-Finnish	1939-40	Russia	Finland	X	Bombing of Finnish Towns
German-Yugoslav	1941	Germany	Yugoslavia	X	Bombing of Belgrade
WWII, West	1940-45	United States United Kingdom	Germany		Bombing of German Cities
WWII, Pacific	1941-45	United States	Japan	X	Firebombing, Atomic Bombs
Lebanon	1982	Israel	Lebanon		Bombing of Beirut

Note: Italics denote that the target of coercive victimization is an anocracy, defined as a state with a polity score between -7 and 7.

Figure 1. Impact of Civilian Victimization Relative to Other Variables



Note: Solid bars indicate change in probability; lines inside the bars show the 95 percent confidence interval.

Figure 2. Impact of Coercive Versus Eliminationist Civilian Victimization

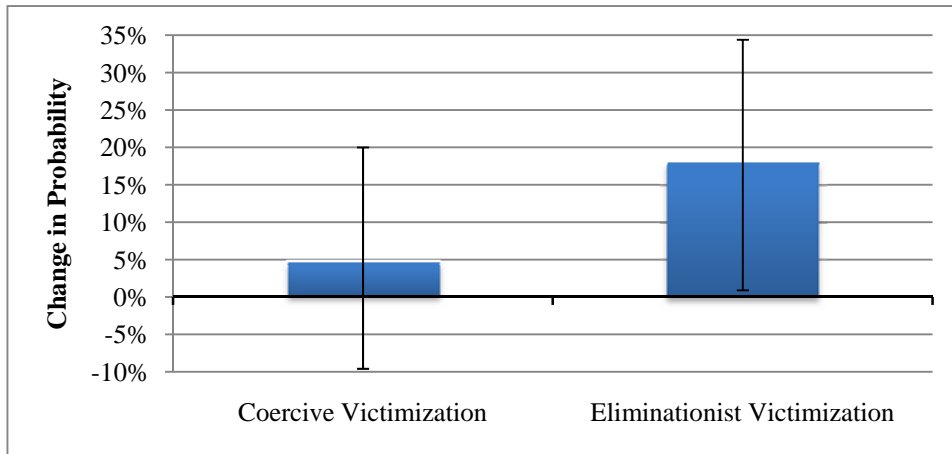
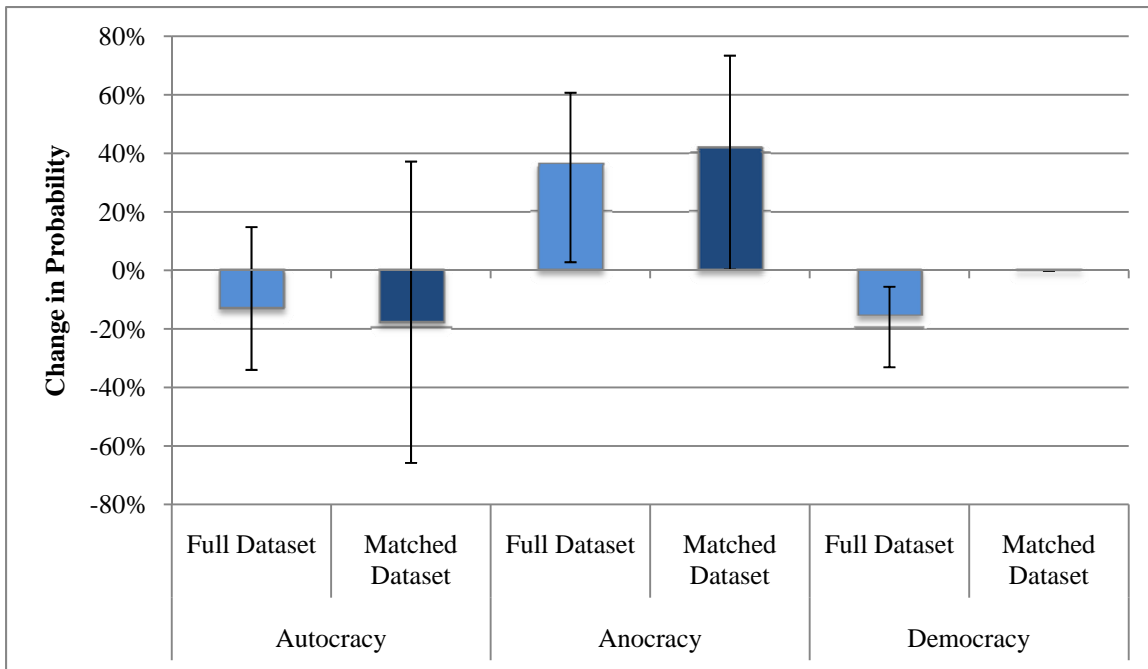


Figure 3. Impact of Coercive Victimization on War Outcomes by Enemy Regime Type



Notes

¹ Throughout this paper, we use the terms “civilian” and “noncombatant” interchangeably to mean individuals who are not members of the armed forces, do not wear military uniforms, and do not take a direct part in hostilities. See Melzer 2009.

² German V-rockets killed about 9,000 British civilians (Pape 1996, 345). Iraqi air and missile attacks killed more than 12,000 Iranians (Shemirani 1993, 37).

³ On rare occasions coercive victimization is inflicted to harm the adversary’s military potential, for example by killing workers or terrorizing them into high rates of absenteeism. One of the few cases of this is the U.S. firebombing of Japanese cities in 1945, which (at least initially) was meant to kill workers in Japan’s decentralized system of war production and thus bring it to a halt (Searle 2002). Although Pape (1996) would call this a denial strategy rather than punishment, it is still coercive, intended to persuade the target government to surrender, and thus belongs in the category of coercive victimization.

⁴ The assumptions underlying each of these mechanisms may not hold in nondemocracies. We discuss the mediating effect of regime type further below.

⁵ In the German case, indiscriminate brutality by Nazi forces turned potentially friendly populations hostile, and large-scale reprisal massacres in response to partisan attacks merely swelled the ranks of the resistance (Cooper 1979). In Afghanistan, the Soviet military succeeded in depopulating large tracts of the country (killing over one million people and driving a further five million to flee the country) but was never able to stamp out the mujahideen (Sliwinski 1989). Finally, new research on the effect of U.S. bombing in South Vietnam finds that levels of Viet Cong control in particular villages increased after those villages were bombed,

demonstrating the counterproductive consequences of indiscriminate violence for government control over territory (Kocher, Pepinsky, and Kalyvas 2010).

⁶ For example Pape's work on suicide terrorism suggests that this strategy is more likely to be used against democracies because their citizens have a low cost tolerance and can easily affect government policy (Pape 2003, 2005; see also Hultman 2007b). Pape also finds that campaigns of suicide terrorism against democracies are relatively successful, producing concessions in over half of the cases.

⁷ For a similar argument applied to the vulnerability of democracies to economic coercion, see Allen (2008a).

⁸ Wars divided into multiple conflicts include World War I (four); World War II (nine); Vietnam (two); and Persian Gulf (two). We do not use Reiter and Stam's actual dataset, however, which omitted draws.

⁹ Examples include Russia, Serbia, and Romania in World War I, and Norway, Belgium, the Netherlands, France, Yugoslavia, and Greece in World War II.

¹⁰ In robustness tests we used a logit estimator and two dichotomous variables—win/lose with draws excluded and win/lose with draws coded as losses. Results were substantively similar. All robustness tests will be made available in an online appendix upon publication.

¹¹ We recognize that war outcome is not an ideal dependent variable for evaluating the effectiveness of civilian victimization. One potential drawback is the sometimes indirect connection between the targeting of civilians and victory or defeat in war. Nor does war outcome get at short term military effects of civilian victimization (such as retaliation by the adversary) or long term political effects (such as difficulties in negotiating a peace settlement or the quality of post-war relations). While acknowledging the drawbacks of war outcome as a dependent

variable, because there are few viable alternatives we nevertheless adopt it here and attempt to control for other explanations of victory and defeat in a multivariate analysis.

¹² In principle, economic sanctions that occur during wartime are included if they embargoed food and caused hunger-related mortality. In practice, these cases are also naval blockades.

¹³ Regime type for coalitions was calculated by weighting each ally's Polity score by the percentage of military personnel it contributed to the coalition.

¹⁴ We chose not to use Reiter and Stam's terrain and strategy variables because these are available for only a limited sub-sample of our data and would reduce the number of cases in the analysis.

¹⁵ First differences were calculated with continuous variables set to their mean values and categorical variables set to their modes. Changes in probability are thus calculated for non-democratic targets prior to 1945 that had limited territorial objectives and accounted for 37 percent of military capabilities.

¹⁶ While this finding is inconsistent with Reiter and Stam's (2002) analysis it is consistent with Downes's (2009) critique of their findings. The discrepancy probably stems from our decision to include draws in the analysis, our use of a trichotomous indicator of war outcomes, and our use of robust errors clustered on conflict to account for the interdependence of war outcomes among participants.

¹⁷ Importantly, to be used in matching each of these variables must precede civilian targeting (that is, they must be pretreatment). Military capabilities, regime type, and the year the war occurred are each obviously pretreatment. The attrition variable is not as straightforward because it is possible that civilian targeting could occur prior to a war becoming a war of attrition, but

empirically this is rarely the case. Belligerents almost always become bogged down in wars of attrition first and then decide to target civilians (Downes 2008, 78-82).

¹⁸ Graphical tests generated from *MatchIt* confirm the improvement in balance post-matching. See the online appendix.

¹⁹ Mallar (1977), Maddala (1983), and Greene (2003) found this procedure to yield asymptotically consistent estimates. Maddala (1983) recommends correcting the covariance matrix in order to improve efficiency, but Guilkey, Mroz, and Taylor (1992) found that the more complex standard errors recommended by Maddala did not improve efficiency. Therefore, we do not adjust our standard errors but we do use robust standard errors clustered by conflict as discussed above.

²⁰ Substantive effects are generated using *CLARIFY* (Tomz, Wittenberg, and King 2001) with continuous control variables held constant at their mean values and categorical variables set to their modes. Changes in predicted probability are thus generated for nondemocratic targets in wars prior to 1945 for states whose military capabilities account for 37.5 percent of all war participants.

²¹ The reason the substantive effect is small despite the large coefficient is that the interactive term is measuring the joint effect of enemy democracy and coercive targeting. Because the effect of fighting an enemy democracy is large, the interactive coefficient is also large. When the coefficient for the interaction term is compared to the coefficient for the enemy democracy term, it becomes obvious that the difference is not statistically significant. A state is less likely to win if its adversary is a democracy—regardless of whether it engages in coercive targeting or not.

²² Different authors stress one or the other of these factors; for the state of the debate, see Hasegawa (2007).

²³ The available evidence indicates that Prussian bombardment had virtually no effect on the morale of the population (Horne 1965, 217; Becker 1969, 189, 194; Richardson 1982, 109-10; Kranzberg 1950, 133). Hunger and privation resulting from the siege, however, had a pronounced effect on the attitudes of the population and probably contributed to the government's decision to surrender (Horne 1965, 218; Baldick 1964, 222; Kranzberg 1950, 164).

²⁴ German bombing of Britain in World War I was necessarily small-scale given the technology of the time. A combination of air raids first with zeppelins and later with Gotha and Giant bomber aircraft inflicted a total of 1,413 fatalities during the war (Pape 1996, 59). By contrast, German aerial attacks between 1940 and 1945 (including the Blitz and V-rockets) killed 53,000 Britons (Pape 1996, 343, 345).

²⁵ Even if the violence had occurred in Armenia, the country was in only its second year of independence, and thus it is hard to see how democracy could have had much impact on how the country reacted to being the target of civilian victimization.

²⁶ It could be argued, though, that Germany's attempt to starve Britain with unrestricted submarine warfare beginning in February 1917 triggered American entry into the war and thus ultimately to Germany's defeat.

²⁷ We do not endorse this perception, but merely report that this is what Jewish leaders like David Ben-Gurion believed. Other scholars, however, such as Benny Morris, argue that Zionist leaders "were justified in seeing the future minority as a great danger to the prospective Jewish state—a fifth political, or even military column" (quoted in Masalha 1991, 92).

²⁸ Jakob Lölgen, commander of the *Sicherheitsdienst* (SD) in the Bydgoszcz region, quoted in Rossino (2003, 233). As Rossino notes, "Germany's primary enemies at the time were ethnic

Poles and not Polish Jews.” Of the 50,000 civilians the Germans murdered by December 1939, 43,000 were non-Jewish Poles (Rossino 2003, 233, 234).