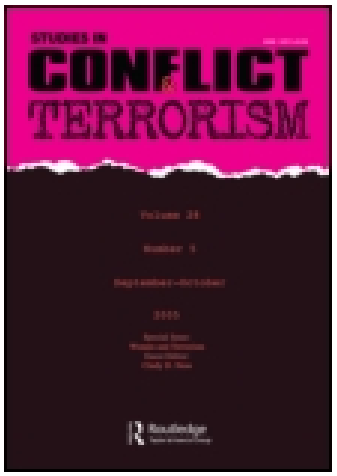

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How Armed Groups Fight: Territorial Control and Violent Tactics

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How Armed Groups Fight: Territorial Control and Violent Tactics

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This article analyzes the choice of tactics by armed groups. We claim this choice is largely determined by the capacity of the rebel groups to control territory. Groups that are not able to liberate territory remain underground and have to rely mainly on bombings. Groups with territorial control engage in guerrilla-like attacks in which there is a physical encounter with the enemy. This conjecture is tested and largely confirmed at three levels: a cross-sectional analysis of the distribution of tactics in 122 armed groups, using compositional data analysis; a geographical analysis of the distribution of tactics in the largest cities as opposed to the rest of the country; and a case study of Hezbollah.

When armed rebels decide to fight, they must decide how. The repertoire of tactics is wide: assassinations, bombings, raids, ambushes, massacres, and kidnappings, to name but a few. They also have to make choices about the targets of violence: civilians, security forces, politicians, entrepreneurs. Tactics and targets define the behavior of armed groups. This behavior is key for the implementation of the group's strategy and for the achievement of its goals.

The microfoundations of conflict lie at the level of tactics and targets. There is, however, a curious imbalance in the literature, since we know much more about targeting than about tactics.[1] Some recent works show that civilian targeting in urban settings reduces the armed capacity of the rebels[2] and ultimately leads them to defeat.[3] In general, in irregular war, armed groups resort to civilian targeting when their capabilities are decreasing and their control of territory is more contested.[4]

In the case of tactics, we still know little, mainly due to a lack of data. While there is formal work on this issue,[5] empirical studies have been scarce. One very particular tactic

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that has been extensively analyzed is the suicide mission. A rich body of literature about the conditions under which suicide missions are carried out has emerged in the last ten years.[6]

We focus on choice of tactic from a broader perspective, trying to account for variation in the distribution of violent tactics among armed groups. To the best of our knowledge, we offer, for the first time, quantitative evidence about the profile of tactics for a large number of armed groups (122). Our main claim is that the choice of tactics is, to a large extent, determined by territorial control. Once the rebels gain control over a particular part of the state's territory, they can establish camps, train recruits, rule over the local population, and use heavier weaponry. Even though choice of tactics may also be related to recruitment capacity and the international connections of the armed group, we contend that territorial control is a key factor. We expect a sharp contrast in choice of tactics between territorial groups and non-territorial or underground ones.

To test our conjecture, we exploit a dataset, the Global Terrorism Database 1970-97 (GTD1), which suits our empirical needs in quite a unique way: first, because GTD1, despite its name, is so overarching in scope that it goes far beyond terrorism, covering many civil war conflicts; and second, because its codification of attacks fits our analytical categories surprisingly well, distinguishing between actions aimed at seizing territory and those aimed at coercing the enemy.

Based on the raw data of GTD1, we calculate the proportion of different tactics used by 122 armed groups that have killed at least ten people and that have committed at least ten violent attacks (a fairly minimalist selection rule).[7] We assess whether groups with territorial control show different tactical choices to underground groups, controlling for other potential covariates such as group size and foreign support.

We complement this cross-sectional analysis with two additional tests. We first introduce some space variation by investigating whether groups with territorial control show a different tactical profile in the largest cities (where, typically, they are forced to act underground) than in the rest of the country. And secondly, we examine both temporal and space variation in the distribution of tactics employed by Hezbollah until 1997, as registered in GTD1. The evidence at the three levels of analysis points in the same direction: territorial control is crucial in accounting for variation in the choice of tactics.

The article is organized as follows. The second section advances our main theoretical claim. The third introduces the dataset and the codification of tactics. The fourth presents the cross-sectional analysis. The fifth tests the hypothesis about geographical variation. The sixth corresponds to the case study of Hezbollah. The article ends with some conclusions and a discussion of the implications of our findings for the debate about the adoption of terrorist tactics by armed groups.

Territorial Control and the Repertoire of Violence

Violent tactics vary considerably across and within armed groups. They depend on the military capabilities of the rebels, and these, according to our hypothesis, depend on territorial control. In order to have military power, the rebels need some space of their own to store weapons, to establish camps and to train recruits. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) held full control of large swathes of North-East Sri Lanka. The LTTE was able to set up in these areas a parallel state, with courts, postal system, security forces, and so on.[8] This infrastructure granted the group great military power, to the point that it engaged the army of Sri Lanka in conventional warfare. In contrast, other armed groups never hold territorial control. They have to act underground and their military power is

minimal. An example is the Tupamaros in Uruguay in the late sixties and early seventies of the twentieth century. Despite its large number of sympathizers, the group was forced to act in urban areas, within the enemy's territory, hiding all the time.

Territory is crucial because of its influence on military power. Generally speaking, the lower the military power of the rebels, the more asymmetric the combat between the armed group and the state. Maximum asymmetry occurs when the rebels lack territorial control and act fully underground. Asymmetry is usually defined as a situation in which one party has the capacity to destroy its rival and not vice versa.[9] The theory of asymmetric conflict relies, ultimately, on Thomas Schelling's distinction between military power (the power to destroy) and coercive power (the power to hurt): in highly asymmetric conflicts, the weaker part relies to a greater extent on coercive power than on military power.[10] This simple but powerful idea is echoed in Kalyvas[11] distinction between the two overarching aims of violence, extermination (military power) and compliance (coercive power), or, more recently, in Bueno de Mesquita's distinction[12] between conventional violent tactics (military ones) and irregular tactics (terrorist ones).[13]

The development of military power only becomes possible when the armed group has some degree of territorial control. Once the rebels have territorial control, it becomes logistically possible to engage in some kinds of military tactics, such as skirmishes, ambushes, the seizing of villages, raids, and small-scale battles. When a group is underground, these tactics cannot be sustained due to organizational and logistical limitations. Underground groups will tend to focus on assassinations, selective shootings, bank robberies, as well as bombings.

Territorial control has, therefore, important implications for rebel tactics. Armed groups that gain territorial control choose tactics that are significantly different from those of underground groups. We expect, more specifically, that clandestine groups will resort mainly to bombings—a tactic that allows small groups to counterbalance their operational weakness with cheap, high-impact actions. In contrast, groups with territorial control will rely more on guerrilla-like actions—such as ambushes, town raids, and assaul—which are necessary to maintain and increase their territorial presence.

One specific implication that follows from our general argument is that territorial groups acting in areas under safe state control—such as the capital city—will have to operate under the same constraints of secrecy as any other underground group. Therefore, the tactical profile of territorial groups in the capital should be more similar to that of underground groups. Far from resembling *guerrilleros*, rebels operating in the capital cities will look like terrorists, even if they hold other areas of the country under their control.

Against our hypothesis, some might contend that the impact of territorial control on tactical choice is driven by alternative factors, such as the size of the armed group or the link of armed groups with sponsor states. According to the size argument, territorial control becomes possible when the armed group is large. Small groups are doomed to remain underground. It is, thus, size and not territory that really matters for choice of tactics. However, it is far from clear whether group size determines territorial control[14] or the other way around.[15] As for the sponsorship argument, some clandestine groups may still carry out guerrilla tactics because they count on some sort of collaboration afforded by a neighboring state.[16] As the relative importance of these factors cannot be adjudicated on theoretical grounds alone, we try to disentangle the effect of each factor through multivariate analysis.

A more serious objection is that territorial control is ultimately the consequence of employing certain tactics. There would then be some endogeneity, or even circularity, in the thesis that tactic choice is determined by territorial control. As this is an important

issue, we address it in some detail. This will help us to be more precise about our main hypothesis. Essentially, the objection is that territory cannot be liberated from the state's control unless certain tactics are used. Therefore it is the tactics that explain how some armed groups end up controlling territory and not the other way around. Here, the line of causation is inverted, so that territorial control cannot be used as an explanation for the choice of tactics.

Briefly put, we think this objection mixes up the process in virtue of which territorial control is achieved and the consequences of having territorial control for armed struggle. All armed groups begin underground. For reasons discussed later, some of them remain underground, whereas others gain territorial control.

To see the difference, let us take a very simple illustration. Suppose an underground group is interested in attacking the police station of a village but does not aim at gaining territorial control. Given the constraints imposed by clandestinity, the rebels, most likely, will plant a bomb, avoiding any physical encounter with the police. The goal of such an attack is not to end with the presence of police in the village (the personnel killed will soon be replaced by new police forces dispatched to the area), but rather to make it costly for the state to maintain the conflict. Suppose now that the underground group is interested in gaining territorial control of the village: they will then assault the station, killing some police members and making others abandon the place, so that the rebels become the new authority. Thus these different tactics explain the outcome—remaining clandestine or grabbing territorial control.

This, however, does not affect our argument. Actually, we agree that some tactics are more efficient than others if the aim of the rebels is to gain territorial control. In order to seize territory, the rebels have to use tactics that are consistent with this goal. But the use of these tactics does not guarantee success. There are groups that try to behave as guerrillas and fail to gain territorial control. During the early stages of the Troubles, the Provisional Irish Republican Army (IRA) was able to liberate some urban neighborhoods in Belfast and Derry—the so-called no-go areas. However, the areas were recaptured in 1972 by the British army when the government realized the perils of conceding IRA activists a safe haven in the heart of the conflict zone.[17] Similarly, in Argentina, the Montoneros, which were largely an urban movement with no territorial control, tried to replicate rural guerrilla tactics in 1975–76, to no avail.[18] Once these groups failed to liberate territory, they reverted to covert action consistent with their underground nature.

In the vast majority of cases, either the group decides to act underground from the beginning, without aspiring to gain any territorial control, or the group very quickly gains territorial control and becomes a guerrilla. Ideal examples of each situation are these: the Red Army Faction in Germany understood from the beginning that territorial control was out of the question and remained a clandestine group all the time;[19] in Peru, the Shining Path, given its previous organizational campaign in the area of Ayacucho, gained control over large areas of this region in its first year of armed activity.[20]

The reason why armed groups fall clearly in either of the two conditions (clandestinity or territorial control) is that these groups learn quickly about the strength of the state.[21] When an armed group faces a state with high capacity, it does not even try to gain territorial control. Given the impossibility of liberating territory, it decides to remain underground. On the other hand, when an armed group faces a weak state, the rebels anticipate that territorial control is feasible and try to conquer it.[22] It is only when the state's capacity is uncertain that we may observe cases of failure such as those already mentioned. In these cases, rebels employ tactics that are, so to say, off-the-equilibrium-path. But these are bound to be quite exceptional and, more importantly, they cannot last for long: they

are not sustainable over time. Underground groups cannot systematically carry out tactics such as raids and small-scale battles that correspond to groups with territorial control. Simply put, they do not have the logistical capacities to implement these tactics.

This is why the objection of circularity or endogeneity is misplaced. We are not trying to explain the transition phase from clandestinity to liberated territory, which is facilitated by the use of certain tactics. The transition, in most cases, is a short-lived, discrete event. Rather, what we are trying to explain is the tactical profile of armed groups throughout their entire history, under the assumption that, in the vast majority of cases, these groups either remain clandestine or hold territory. Our focus, therefore, is not on how rebels gain territory, but rather on the impact of territorial control on the choice of rebel tactics.

To recap, we test in this article whether variation in tactics is driven by the absence or presence of territorial control. Our conjecture is that lack of control forces armed groups to carry out terrorist attacks, being guerrilla tactics the monopoly of groups with territory. We run three analyses. First, we compare the distribution of tactics in 122 armed groups. Drawing on this dataset, the second analysis looks at the spatial variation of those groups with territorial control, testing whether there are differences in their tactical behavior when they act in the largest cities and in the countryside. Finally, the third analysis aims to explain variation in the use of tactics over time and space by one specific rebel group, Hezbollah. Hezbollah is a particularly interesting case for two reasons: the transition from an underground group to a territorial one took place relatively late, so that we can compare tactics before and after the transition; and there is high spatial variation in terms of tactics and territorial control.

Data

The Global Terrorism Database is the most comprehensive dataset on terrorism and political violence available to date, totaling 61,637 incidents in its first wave (GTD1).[23] GTD1 provides detailed information about the nature and characteristics of the attack in terms of authorship, location, date, target, lethality, and type of action.

GTD1 relies on a loose definition of terrorism ("the threatened or actual use of illegal force and violence to attain a political, economic, religious or social goal through fear, coercion or intimidation"), which covers all types of political violence. In fact, eight of the ten most violent groups included in the dataset were involved in civil wars, with Shining Path and the Frente Farabundo Martí de Liberación Nacional (FMLN) heading the list.

For our purposes, the crucial feature of GTD1 is its categorization of tactics, which captures the theoretical distinctions we drew in the previous section. GTD1 distinguishes seven tactics: facility attack, bombing, assassination, kidnapping, hijacking, assault, and maiming. As the last two are marginal, regarding both number of cases and relevance, we focus on the remaining five.[24]

Facility attacks and bombings are the two most important and frequent categories. Facility attacks are identified with large teams and with occupation of space, which are inherent characteristics of guerrilla activity. Given the requirements of this type of action, we expect to observe more facility attacks when the rebels have some territorial control. The only exception is bank robbery, which the coders categorize as facility attacks. Bank robberies can be carried out, as has often been the case, by underground and open groups alike. In fact, bank robbery is one of the main sources of financing for clandestine groups.[25] Apart from this, however, the general description of facility attacks seems

consistent with large, powerful groups that have some degree of territorial control and are interested in occupying and gaining new physical space.

Bombings, in contrast, are not aimed at taking over a place, but rather at destroying it. And, as the coders emphasize, the action of placing a bomb and causing it to explode is a clandestine one. Therefore, it is a tactic that can easily be adopted by underground groups. Although territorial groups can also use bombings, we expect clandestine groups to more frequently employ this kind of attack.

Finally, assassinations and kidnappings[26] are compatible with any kind of armed group. Assassinations are carried out by all violent groups. And the same can be said for kidnappings, which have largely been used either to blackmail governments in exchange for imprisoned comrades or to raise funds from well-off fellow citizens.

These four categories (facility attack, bombing, assassination, and kidnapping) depict well the variation in tactics that armed groups display. We think this classification is particularly convenient because of the association between facility attacks and territorial groups on the one hand, and bombings and underground ones on the other.

The time span of our analysis is 1970–1997. Unfortunately, we cannot extend it until 2007, because GTD2, which covers the period 1998–2007, has changed the coding rules of the attack type variable. The new database has more categories and it is not strictly comparable to that of GTD1. Furthermore, facility attacks are no longer defined in terms of open actions aimed at occupation by multimember teams.[27] Therefore, we have chosen to stick to GTD1, because it covers more armed groups and draws neater distinctions between tactics.

GTD1 contains many short-lived groups, as well as generic identifiers that do not correspond to specific groups (e.g., "Palestinians"). There are in total 2,248 groups, 53 percent of which did not kill at all. In order to avoid the noise that these hundreds of groups may create, we establish a minimal threshold of activity for a group to be included in our analysis: we only consider armed groups that have a name, that have killed at least ten people in more than ten attacks and that have acted for more than one year. There are 122 armed groups that meet these criteria.

In order to explain variation in tactics, we calculate, for each group, the proportion of facility attacks, bombings, assassinations, and kidnappings throughout its whole period of activity. The modal category corresponds to facility attacks (41 percent), followed by bombings (27 percent), assassinations (23 percent), and kidnappings (8 percent).

The main independent variable is territorial control.[28] We contemplate two different types of territorial control. The first type consists of the rebels dominating unpopulated areas in the jungle or in the mountains. Here, territory is clearly important from a logistical viewpoint. For instance, when the rebels control border areas where groups can smuggle goods or areas with significant natural resources, revenue-raising becomes easier. However, this kind of territorial control does not help recruiting, because the local population is outwith the rebels' shelter. The second type is that in which the liberated territory encompasses villages and towns, the rebels act as the local rulers and they behave like a rudimentary state, trying to impose order, to extract rents, and to draft recruits. In this situation, it is often the case that dwellers have to take sides, either with the government or with the rebels.[29] Think of the two civil wars Nicaragua endured during the last quarter of the twentieth century. The Contras fighting against the Sandinista government in Nicaragua were able to set up mobile camps in mountainous areas such as the Quilalí County, but they could not hold towns under their sway.[30] Some years before, the Sandinista National

Liberation Front (FSLN), in its fight against the Somoza regime, established camps in the country's mountainous interior, where the guerrilla could train supporters and recruit local dwellers, which facilitated its ultimate success.[31]

GTD does not include information about territorial control. Hence, we have searched for detailed information about the 122 armed groups, using a wide variety of sources.[32] An armed group is coded as having territorial control when any of these conditions is met: (1) the armed group sets up camps or bases within the country's border, storing weapons and/or training recruits; (2) the armed group imposes stable roadblocks, disrupting the flow of goods and people; and (3) the armed group rules over the local population (extracting rents and imposing justice) in certain areas within the country's border. Groups controlling populated territory meet condition (3); groups with uninhabited territory meet at least one of the other two conditions.

Finally, we follow an absorption rule for those armed groups that transition from nonterritorial control to territorial control (or the other way around): if there is evidence of continuous territorial control during the duration of the conflict, the group is classified as a territorial one. Thus, short spans of rebel control—such as the IRA's grip on West Belfast in the early years of the Troubles—do not qualify as territorial control, since the group remained largely clandestine during most years of the conflict.

Our expectation is that, in general, the pattern of violent tactics will vary crucially depending on territorial control. Figure 1 includes a biplot of the four tactics by degree of territorial control. This graph allows us to explore the distribution of the 122 groups on a space defined by the four tactics, represented as vectors. The scattering patterns are remarkably different. Whereas rebels with territorial control of any type are largely concentrated around the "facility" vector, clandestine groups spread over the "bombing" and "assassination" vectors. In the next section we more systematically analyze these patterns.

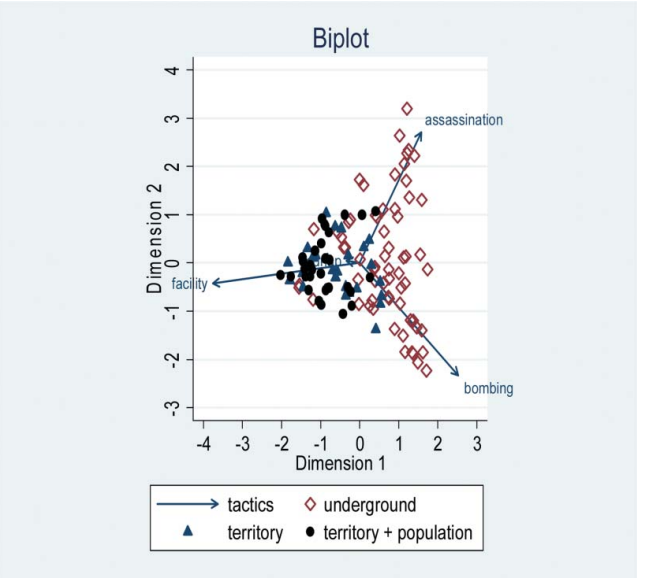

Figure 1. Warfare and territorial control.

A Cross-Sectional Analysis of Violent Tactics

Our key independent variables are territorial control and size of group. We break down territorial control into three dummy variables, depending on whether the armed group remains clandestine (base category), controls territory without population (*Territory_1*) or controls territory with some inhabitants (*Territory_2*).We have estimated, using different sources,[33] the average number of recruits the group had during the conflict (*Group Size*). We coded our estimations in a 5-value variable, "0" being less than 100 members, "1" from 100 to 500, "2" from 500 to 1,000, "3" from 1,000 to 5,000, "4" from 5,000 to 10,000, and "5" above 10,000 recruits.

We include a dummy variable called *Sanctuary* (see notes 7–8 for sources) to test whether armed groups with safe havens in neighboring countries mimic the behavior of guerrillas. Additionally, we identify armed groups siding with the state in their fight against rebels (*Vigilante*). As vigilantes usually coordinate with the security forces, their repertoire of violence could differ from other armed groups. For instance, they could carry out more targeted assassinations to terrorize political enemies of the regime. We also control for the percentage of attacks that the group perpetrated abroad (*Foreign*). Groups operating mainly beyond the borders of their target state usually rely on bombings and kidnappings.

Finally, two relevant control variables are incorporated into the right-hand side of the equation. *GDP per capita onset* measures the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) value (in logarithm) when the armed group started its campaign, and is taken from the Penn World Tables.[34] It works as the classic proxy for state capacity.[35] *Post1989* is a dummy variable that distinguishes Cold War conflicts from post-Soviet ones. Kalyvas and Balcells found that the technology of rebellion is largely connected to the international system.[36] If this is so, we might observe a different pattern of tactics before and after the collapse of the Soviet Union.[37]

We want to estimate four equations with tactics (facility, bombing, assassination, and kidnap) on the left-hand side. The explanatory variables are the same in each case. We have to correct for the correlation between the residuals that is often observed in these equation systems. Hence, we run seemingly unrelated regressions (SUR).

A further complication in the data lies in its compositional nature. The dependent variables are proportions which add up to 1 for each armed group. Thus, an increase in the proportion of one tactic has to be compensated for with reductions in the others. This constraint forces correlations between the tactics to be negative. Besides, values are bound between 0 and 1 and standard regression techniques often produce expected values out of that range.

We follow the techniques developed to deal with compositional electoral data in political science[38] where the sum of parties' vote shares must be 1. The basic idea is to run *J*-1 seemingly unrelated regressions (where *J* is the number of dependent variables; the four tactics in the present case) transforming the dependent variables into additive log-ratios. This was the original solution envisaged by Aitchison.[39] Thus, if for armed group *i* there are *J* tactics and *J* is the reference category, the additive log-ratio transforms the original proportions of tactics p_{ij} into a (*J*-1) × 1 vector $[ln\frac{p_{i1}}{p_{iJ}}; \cdots \ln \frac{p_{ij-1}}{p_{ij}}]$.

Log-ratios are not defined when there are zeros in the dependent variables. The zeros in GTD mean that certain types of attacks were not observed. In our sample, there are 52 zeros (10.6 percent) out of a potential 488 (4 tactics × 122 groups). There is no obvious solution to this problem. We have simply added 0.01 to the zeros and recalculated proportions to add up to 1. Other procedures that are applied in the analysis of compositional

data, such as replacing the zeros with half of the minimum positive value, produce greater distortions (in favor of our hypotheses). Taking into account the fact that the pattern of zeros is not random, most of them being concentrated in the category of kidnappings and in armed groups with a low number of attacks, we have selected different subsamples with different amounts of zeros. Results change very little in these various subsamples, implying that the zeros and the solution we have adopted do not much affect our results.

Table 1 displays four models. Model 1 includes all four tactics, adding 0.01 to groups with values of zero in any tactic to not lose observations. Model 2 avoids this trick by deleting observations with zeros. Most zeros are concentrated in kidnapping. Models 3 and 4 exclude the kidnapping category and rerun the analysis with the three remaining tactics –this is why they only have two columns. Model 3 again adds 0.01 to observations that still have zeros in their tactics (apart from kidnapping), whereas Model 4 deletes them. All models are SUR with standard errors clustered by country. This clustering takes into account the fact that groups are not evenly distributed among countries—India, for instance, hosts ten armed groups alone.

In what follows, we focus on Model 1, which includes all tactics and observations, and leave Models 2–4 as robustness checks. The first column compares the share of bombings to the share of facility attacks. This is the crucial comparison, since our argument implies a maximum contrast between facility attacks (associated with territorial groups) and bombings (associated with underground groups). As expected, territorial control has a strong influence on bombings, with clandestine groups being more dependent on this tactic. Although group size is also negatively correlated to bombings, the effect of territory is statistically larger. Third, armed groups with sanctuaries in neighboring countries seem to have more facility attacks, but the effect is small and not statistically significant. Finally, an interesting finding comes from the *post1989* coefficient. Our results indicate that armed groups became more guerrilla-like after the fall of the Soviet Union. This finding makes sense if we consider that the retreat of the two superpowers from conflict-driven countries could have contributed to enforcing the capabilities of the rebels, helping them to run guerrilla wars.

The second column compares the share of assassinations to the share of facility attacks. Although we did not have any expectation for this comparison, it turns out that clandestine groups carry out more assassinations than groups with territory. Finally, the third column reports the share of kidnappings compared to facility attacks. Our two key factors do not discriminate between these two tactics. The general fit of this third equation is lower, indicating that the choice between kidnapping and facility attacks may not be driven by the capacity of the rebels to control territory.[40]

As the coefficients in Model 1 are not directly interpretable, we have calculated the predicted values for each tactic as territorial control, group size and the Cold War dummy vary, keeping the other factors fixed (*GDP onset* and *Foreign* on their means; *Vigilante* and *Sanctuaries* on their modal values). To make Table 2 more easy to read, we conflate the six categories of group size into two: groups with less than 1,000 recruits, and groups with more than 1,000 recruits. This is a helpful strategy to avoid predicting results for artificial categories, such as territorial groups with less than 100 recruits.

In order to further investigate the relationship between bombings and facility attacks, Figure 2 plots the predicted values of bombings and facility attacks for groups with different types of territorial control and size. For clandestine groups, the shares of bombings and facility attacks are only statistically significant when group size is low (<500 recruits). As 64 percent of clandestine groups in our sample fall into this category, it is safe to say that clandestine groups spend more resources on bombings than on facility

Table 1
Determinants of the repertoire of violence

	Model 1 ($N = 122$)			Model 2 ($N = 70$)			Model 3 ($N = 122$)		Model 4 ($N = 94$)	
	ln (bomb/fac)	ln (assa/fac)	ln (kid/fac)	ln (bomb/fac)	ln (assa/fac)	ln (kid/fac)	ln (bomb/fac)	ln (assa/fac)	ln (bomb/fac)	ln (assa/fac)
GDP onset	0.205	0.361†	−0.126	0.393†	0.132	−0.419*	0.205	0.361†	0.297	0.137
	(0.21)	(0.21)	(0.20)	(0.22)	(0.20)	(0.21)	(0.21)	(0.21)	(0.21)	(0.19)
Territory_1	−1.231***	−1.109*	0.181	−0.695†	−1.023*	0.286	−1.231***	−1.109*	−0.864*	−1.024**
	(0.35)	(0.47)	(0.30)	(0.39)	(0.42)	(0.37)	(0.35)	(0.47)	(0.32)	(0.38)
Territory_2	−1.333***	−1.343**	−0.371	−1.280**	−1.048**	−0.641†	−1.333***	−1.343**	−1.475***	−1.117**
	(0.40)	(0.50)	(0.34)	(0.39)	(0.36)	(0.34)	(0.40)	(0.50)	(0.37)	(0.37)
Group Size	−0.234**	−0.123	−0.007	−0.193*	−0.099	−0.149†	−0.234*	−0.123†	−0.122	−0.092
	(0.08)	(0.10)	(0.08)	(0.09)	(0.10)	(0.09)	(0.08)	(0.10)	(0.07)	(0.08)
Post1989	−1.078**	−0.467	−0.298	−0.745	0.350	0.098	−1.078**	−0.467	−0.700	0.238
	(0.37)	(0.48)	(0.30)	(0.49)	(0.49)	(0.37)	(0.37)	(0.48)	(0.43)	(0.40)
Vigilante	0.083	1.740***	1.194**	0.014	1.763***	1.204	0.083	1.740***	−0.101	1.596***
	(0.43)	(0.43)	(0.45)	(0.35)	(0.32)	(0.75)	(0.43)	(0.43)	(0.30)	(0.30)
Foreign	−0.070	0.088	1.171**	−0.262	0.266	0.875†	−0.070	0.088	0.368	0.473
	(0.55)	(0.56)	(0.36)	(0.58)	(0.49)	(0.50)	(0.55)	(0.56)	(0.61)	(0.48)
Sanctuaries	−0.395	−0.185	−0.624*	−0.201	−0.200	−0.084	−0.395	−0.185	−0.208	−0.328
	(0.29)	(0.32)	(0.29)	(0.25)	(0.38)	(0.42)	(0.29)	(0.32)	(0.27)	(0.25)
Constant	−0.918	−3.018†	−0.914	−2.532	−1.161	1.924	−0.918	−3.018†	−1.898	−1.149
	(1.88)	(1.81)	(1.83)	(1.87)	(1.72)	(1.84)	(1.88)	(1.81)	(1.85)	(1.68)
R^2	0.46	0.46	0.20	0.53	0.52	0.22	0.46	0.46	0.50	0.53

†p < .1, *p < .1, *p < .05, **p < .01, ***yp < .001; country–clustered standard errors in parentheses. The base category is facility attacks.

Model 1: full sample. Model 2: groups with zero values are eliminated. Model 3: the kidnapping tactic is eliminated. Model 4: zeros and kidnapping are eliminated.

Table 2
Predicted tactics by territorial control, group size, and Cold War period

Territorial control	Tactics	Pre-1989		Post-1989	
		Less than 1,000 recruits	More than 1,000 recruits	Less than 1,000 recruits	More than 1,000 recruits
Clandestine	*Facility*	0.27	0.40	0.48	0.54
	Bombing	0.45	0.31	0.22	0.18
	Assassination	0.23	0.22	0.23	0.21
	Kidnap	0.05	0.07	0.06	0.07
Territorial control	*Facility*	0.45	0.55	0.63	0.71
	Bombing	0.31	0.22	0.15	0.09
	Assassination	0.17	0.15	0.15	0.12
	Kidnap	0.07	0.08	0.07	0.08
Territory + Population	*Facility*	0.60	0.69	0.76	0.80
	Bombing	0.21	0.13	0.09	0.06
	Assassination	0.11	0.09	0.090	0.07
	Kidnap	0.07	0.09	0.07	0.07

attacks. Once the rebels seize territory, facility attacks become the most frequent tactic. The effect is much larger than the one produced by changes in the size of the group.

In brief, holding territorial control is essential when accounting for the composition of violence: groups with liberated territory carry out many more facility attacks than clandestine groups, which rely more on bombings and assassinations. The size of the armed group also affects the balance between bombings and facility attacks, since larger groups can carry out larger guerrilla-like operations. Finally, the tactic of kidnapping follows a different logic than the other three, with vigilante and international groups resorting to it more.

A Cross-Spatial Analysis of the Repertoire of Groups with Territorial Control

An obvious pitfall of the previous results is that they are based on a cross-sectional design that may conceal temporal and spatial variation in tactics, since the dependent variable aggregates attacks through time and space for each armed group. In this section and the next we move to a more nuanced analysis, trying to reveal some of the variation within groups. Ideally we would need a panel in which we might examine temporal and geographical changes in territorial control and their effects on choice of tactics. Unfortunately, we lack information at this level of detail for a large number of armed groups. However, we can still exploit the variation offered by GTD1 in two ways. Regarding space variation, we test here whether groups with territorial control reproduce the behavior of underground groups when they attack in the capital. Regarding time variation, we address tactical change through a case study of Hezbollah in the next section.

Not every rebel group fighting to hold territory operates in the capital city. The *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia—FARC), as a prototypical case, has rarely carried actions in Colombia's capital city (less

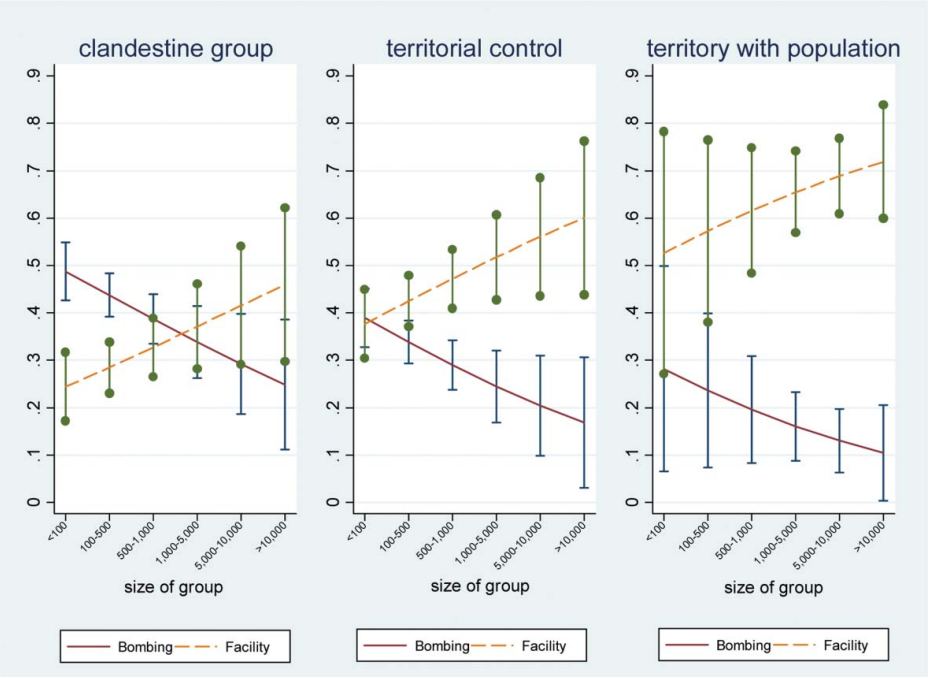

Figure 2. Territorial control and type of attack.

than 3 percent of FARC attacks registered in GTD1 took place in Bogota). Nonetheless, our claim is that if rebels want to operate in the cities, they will have to abide by the rules of clandestinity. The reason is that the capital is usually under the state's control and therefore the rebels have to act in secrecy. This means that, for groups with territorial control, the proportion of facility attacks should be lower in the capital than in the rest of the country, and the other way around for bombings. We do not have expectations about assassinations or kidnappings.

To test this hypothesis, we have created a variable that captures whether the attack took place in the two largest cities of the country in which the group acts. We can compare, therefore, whether the tactics profile is the same in these large urban centers as in the rest of the territory. In accordance with the expectation that groups fighting for territory act less regularly in safe state areas, we find that underground groups tend to operate in the two largest cities (39 percent of all attacks) much more than territorial groups without population control (20 percent) and territorial ones with population control (14 percent). These differences are statistically significant. The particular fixation of clandestine groups with the big cities is driven by their need to maximize the impact of their actions, and the optimal logistic conditions these places offer.

We focus now on the two types of armed groups with territorial control. Figure 3 displays the distribution of tactics by the location of the attacks. There is a very substantial increase in bombings, going from 20 to 35 percent in groups that control uninhabited territory, and an even larger one, from 11 to 35 percent, in groups that control populated territory (still lower than the 48 percent of bombings in underground groups acting in the two largest cities). As expected, this is compensated for by a similar reduction in facility

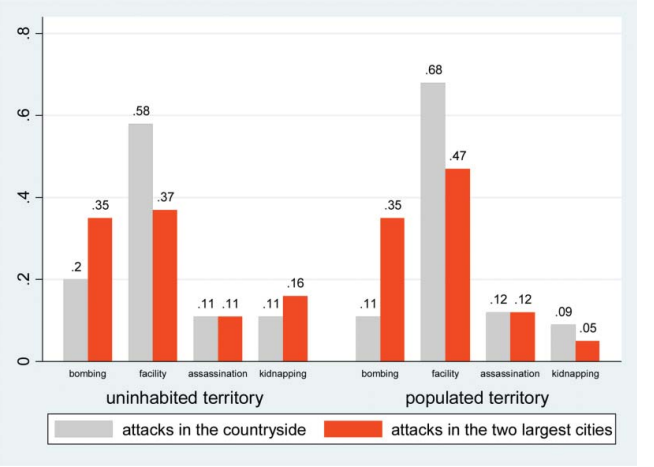

Figure 3. Tactics choice by attack location and type of territory.

attacks. Remarkably, assassinations and kidnappings show no relevant geographic variation, further attesting the tradeoff between facility attacks and bombings.

These results confirm that groups with territorial control change their tactics when they decide to operate in urban settings, providing more fine-grained evidence that the constraints imposed by (lack of) territorial control have a large impact on the repertoire of rebel warfare.

Hezbollah and the Switch in Tactics

In this section we move to a greater level of disaggregation, analyzing the temporal and spatial variation within a single armed group, the Lebanese Hezbollah ("Party of God"). This group can be considered an ideal case study on three grounds. First, it is a deviant case in the previous cross-sectional regression analysis. As the group was able to control territory for a long span of time, Hezbollah should register a low proportion of bombings. However, according to GTD1, more than a third of Hezbollah's attacks were bombings, compared to 14 percent for groups controlling populated territory. This calls for an explanation. Second, Hezbollah's campaigns offer relevant variation in terms of time and space. Unlike most armed groups, which are either fully underground or have territorial control almost since the beginning, Hezbollah gained territorial control quite late. This opens the possibility of comparing tactic choice before and after acquiring territorial control. And, thirdly, it is an interesting case in itself: Hezbollah has played a crucial role in the Middle East during the last three decades, being one of the most powerful armed actors in the area.

Hezbollah has evolved from a small underground group that emerged in the aftermath of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon to a much wider organization, capable of establishing a large network of charity and welfare services, and competing successfully for office.[41] Moreover, Hezbollah has been involved both in the Lebanese civil war, up to 1989, and in the war of attrition against Israel in the occupied zone of South Lebanon until 2000.

Sponsored and financed by Iran, Hezbollah was born in 1982. Its main aim was the expulsion of Western troops from Lebanon and the transformation of the regime into an

Islamic one. Hezbollah started as an underground group. As the deputy general-secretary of Hezbollah, Naaim Qassem, said in an interview, "Up until 1985, Hezbollah was not yet a single entity that could stand up and speak for itself. . . . The nature of our formation required clandestine behavior."[42] Precisely to avoid any loss of popularity during this initial phase, most of their attacks against civilians and against international troops were either unclaimed or falsely claimed (under names such as Islamic Resistance, Islamic Jihad, and others).

By 1987, the clashes between Hezbollah and Syrians in West Beirut made the growth of popular support for Hezbollah clear.[43] One year later, an internecine fight between the then dominant Shi'ite militia, Amal, and Hezbollah broke out, with the hegemony of representation of the Shi'ite community at stake. In 1990, Hezbollah emerged as the victorious party and, indeed, after the end of the civil war, it was the only militia in Lebanon that kept fighting against the Israeli presence in the security zone in the South. As of 1991, Hezbollah was a full guerrilla group engaged in hit-and-run attacks against the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF).[44] For almost ten years, Hezbollah was involved in a war of attrition against Israel that was possible because the group held de facto territorial control in the South. In 1997, for instance, Hezbollah had effective antitank technology and was able to conduct small scale battles involving around two hundred fighters.[45] One indicator of the growing military power of Hezbollah is the ratio of Hezbollah/IDF casualties, which diminished greatly in the early 1990s.[46]

Given this background information and our previous hypotheses, we have two expectations with regard to variation in time and space. On the one hand, the proportion of facility attacks should increase in time, as Hezbollah in the late 1980s gained territorial control in South Lebanon and in South Beirut, and developed a military structure. We should detect a change in trend particularly after 1991, once the civil war had ended, Amal was defeated by Hezbollah, and the war of attrition against Israel was launched.

On the other hand, we should observe a clear geographical contrast, with different patterns of attacks in Beirut and in South Lebanon. Whereas in South Lebanon facility attacks should be dominant, due to the kind of guerrilla activity that Hezbollah developed there for the expulsion of Israeli forces, in a big city such as Beirut we should see few facility attacks, urban guerrilla tactics being more common (assassinations, bombings, kidnappings). Finally, the broadest use of explosive devices should be observed in the case of international attacks, which are typically terrorist in nature.

We analyze here all the attacks carried out by Hezbollah that are included in GTD1 for the period 1982–1997. For the sake of completeness, we have included all those that were claimed under false names (Islamic Jihad and Islamic Resistance). In total, we have 300 attacks (31 percent under false names). Of these, 44 percent are lethal attacks, with a total of 1,001 people killed. Of course, this is a low estimation of all Hezbollah violent activity.

We start with time effects. We have classified attacks into two periods, those that happened before 1991, and those that happened since 1991. Figure 4 compares the share of the four tactics used by Hezbollah during the two time periods. The differences are statistically significant for the four tactics. In the case of facility attacks, there is a spectacular jump from 15 to 62 percent. From 1991 onward, the greater military capabilities of the organization were translated into a spectacular increase in facility attacks. Territorial control and better trained recruits made this leap forward possible, whereby Hezbollah acted more like a traditional guerrilla.

There is lower temporal variation in bombings: after 1990, there is a reduction of 13 percentage points, down from 45 to 32 percent. The literature on the conflict has

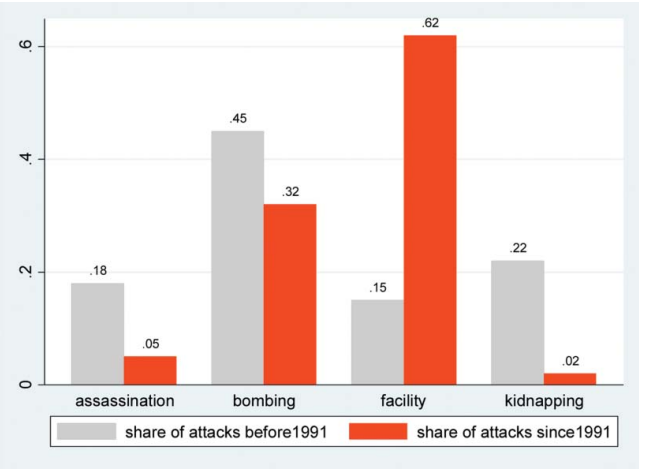

Figure 4. Temporal distribution of Hezbollah attacks.

highlighted that bombings were essential in the South Lebanon campaign: Hezbollah frequently used roadside bombs aimed at Israeli patrols.[47] The sharp increase in facility attacks was due to the fall in assassinations and kidnappings, which were widely employed in the initial period but vanished thereafter. In general, Figure 4 conveys the shift from terrorist to guerrilla tactics. As Hezbollah became stronger, its violence resembled more that of a traditional guerrilla.

GTD1 also contains information about the location of the attacks. This information exists for 286 of the 300 observations. Given the low number of observations and their concentration in a few places, it is necessary to present the information at a high level of aggregation. Lebanon is divided into six governorates (Beirut being one of them), which are, in turn, divided into 25 districts. We have examined the distribution across governorates: almost all of the attacks that took place in Lebanon were concentrated in Beirut and South Lebanon (208 out of 227 attacks).[48] To this we must add the 59 attacks that were perpetrated outside of Lebanon, in acts of international terrorism. The variable of location, therefore, has only three values: Beirut, South Lebanon, and attacks abroad.

The distribution of attacks by location can be seen in Figure 5. Again, the differences are statistically significant. The data for South Lebanon is consistent with the guerrilla conflict that Hezbollah was involved in for the expulsion of Israeli forces: in this area, the majority of attacks are on facilities (60 percent). The contrast with the international campaign outside of Lebanon is indeed stark: in this campaign, facility attacks have a minor presence (19 percent), the main feature being the use of explosive devices (61 percent). International attacks represent the purest illustration of absence of territorial control as the rebels have to act under full clandestinity when they operate abroad. Bombings are indeed the most expedient tactic in such circumstances. Beirut, in turn, reveals quite an even distribution of attacks among the four types, at least compared with the other two conflict zones. Kidnaps became extremely frequent and they represent the modal value in Beirut (36 percent). This is a peculiar aspect of the Lebanese civil war that has few parallels in other conflicts. Most targets were Westerners kidnapped in order to put pressure on foreign countries involved in Lebanon. The second category is bombing, with 26 percent. Assassinations in Beirut are considerably more frequent than in South Lebanon or in

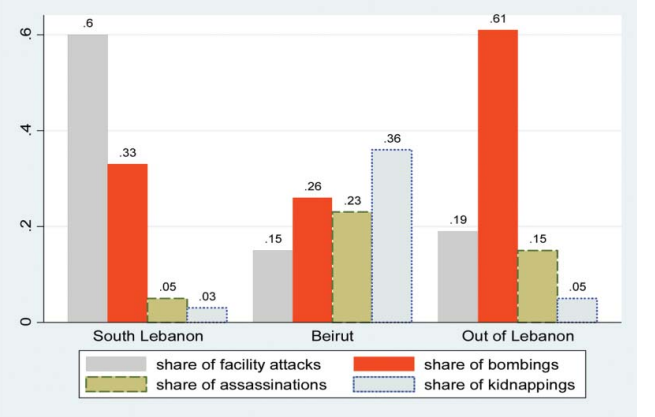

Figure 5. Spatial distribution of Hezbollah attacks.

international attacks, as might be expected given the sectarian conflict in the capital. Facility attacks, as is often the case in urban violence, represent the lowest proportion.

In sum, the case of Hezbollah is particularly interesting, since the organization was involved in quite different conflicts. It behaved like a pure terrorist group in the campaign of international attacks. After 1991, it resembled a traditional guerrilla group in the Southern campaign against the IDF. Finally, in Beirut it adopted the form of urban guerrillas, specializing in kidnappings and assassinations. The different territorial constraints to a large extent explain the variation we find in the tactics employed by the group.

Discussion and Conclusion

Armed groups usually want to convince their grassroots constituencies and society at large that their goals are just and efficacious. A convenient intermediate step in this endeavor is to capture some portion of the territory they are fighting for and rule the area to sow and spread the potential benefits of the alternative institutions.[49] In addition to using liberated areas to proselytize, territorial control allows the group to increase its armed capabilities, by attracting more recruits and holding safe areas from which to launch more deadly attacks. In this article we have argued that territorial control also has profound implications for the micro-dynamics of warfare as it influences the choice of violent tactics. Groups with territorial control will spend most of their resources in armed encounters such as hit-and-run attacks, ambushes, raids, and small-scale battles. They switch to bombings when they operate underground in areas beyond their control. By contrast, clandestine groups, lacking territorial control, will choose warfare tactics that are consistent with their underground nature: bombings and assassinations are the classic repertoire of violence associated with these groups.

Moreover, net of territorial control, larger groups have a greater capacity to adopt guerrilla warfare, although the effect of group size is smaller and more sensitive to model specification than that of territory. Kidnapping is the tactic that shows the weakest connection to territory and group size. The determinants of kidnapping can be found in whether the group is vigilante and whether it attacks beyond the borders.

Our findings may speak to several debates on political violence. For instance, it is inevitable to associate certain tactics with terrorism. Terrorist tactics are typically

identified with car bombs and more generally with improvised explosive devices, as well as with assassinations and selective killings. Terrorist tactics are mostly employed by groups with fewer resources, which normally correspond to those that are underground.

However, it is not only underground groups that engage in terrorism; some territorial groups are also involved. Why some territorial groups employ terrorist tactics while others do not is an intriguing question. Whereas armed groups such as the FMLN in El Salvador refrained from widespread use of terrorist attacks, others, such as the Shining Path in Peru, became infamously notorious for their terrorist campaigns. Contemporary cases also show this variation. Whereas Syrian rebels are increasingly relying on terrorist acts, the late FARC seems reluctant to resort to this tactic. More systematic research on this variation will be a promising avenue to further understand the determinants of armed groups' choices.

Acknowledgments

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27. The codebook of GTD2 (available at http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/ICPSR/studies/22600/documentation, accessed 15 October 2012) states that the "attack type" variable is compatible with its counterpart in GTD1 ("incident type"), but whereas facility attacks are a majority in GTD1, they are marginal in GTD2.

28. See the supporting information file for the group values on the territorial control variable.

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33. The main sources of information used for *group size* and *sanctuary* were: the START terrorist group profile database (http://www.start.umd.edu/start/data_collections/tops/) (accessed 23 January 2012); the End-of-Terror dataset on terrorist groups compiled by Jones and Libicki, see Seth Jones and Martin Libicki, *How Terrorist Groups End: Lessons for Countering al Qa'ida* (Washington, DC: RAND, 2008); UPPSALA non-state actor codebook (http://privatewww.essex.

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