

Desperate Times, Desperate Measures

Alexander B. Downes

The Causes of Civilian Victimization in War

War has always been hard on civilians. In the past three centuries, civilians (a term I use interchangeably with noncombatants) have constituted half of all war-related deaths. In the twentieth century alone, an estimated 50 million noncombatants perished from war-related causes, accounting for 60 percent of all deaths from warfare in the last 100 years. The vast civilian death toll in modern wars indicates that governments frequently ignore normative and legal injunctions against targeting noncombatants, and it “suggests that the average war over the past three centuries has not been very ‘just’ as far as the killing of unarmed civilians was concerned.”¹

The startling number of civilian casualties in wartime is puzzling for two reasons. First, belligerents often target noncombatants despite the widespread belief that killing innocent civilians is morally wrong. According to a recent International Red Cross survey of populations in war-torn societies, for example, “a striking 64 per cent say that combatants, when attacking to weaken the enemy, must attack only combatants and *leave civilians alone*.”² The past and present attitudes of Americans are similar: before World War II, the U.S. public resolutely opposed urban area bombing as “counter to American humanitarian ideals,” whereas hypothetical scenarios regarding an invasion of Iraq in 2003 showed that a majority of Americans consistently opposed war if it would result in “thousands” of Iraqi civilian casualties.³

Second, killing civilians in war is widely believed to be bad strategy: it

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For helpful comments on previous drafts of this article, the author wishes to thank Jasen Castillo, Michael Desch, Charles Glaser, Kelly Greenhill, Stathis Kalyvas, John Mearsheimer, Robert Pape, Dan Reiter, Sebastian Rosato, Benjamin Valentino, Elisabeth Wood, seminar participants at the Program on International Security Policy at the University of Chicago, the Social Science Seminar at Stanford University’s Center for International Security and Cooperation (CISAC), and three anonymous reviewers. He would also like to acknowledge financial support from the John M. Olin Institute for Strategic Studies at Harvard University, the Eisenhower Institute, the Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation, and CISAC. Special thanks go to Barton Bernstein for pointing out Stanford’s collection of British cabinet documents.

1. William Eckhardt, “Civilian Deaths in Wartime,” *Bulletin of Peace Proposals*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (March 1989), p. 91. Figures are from *ibid.*, pp. 90, 92. Interstate wars are particularly deadly, killing about twice as many noncombatants as civil, colonial, and imperial wars combined.

2. By contrast, a mere 3 percent say that belligerents should be permitted to attack combatants and noncombatants alike. Greenberg Research, *The People on War Report: ICRC Worldwide Consultation on the Rules of War* (Geneva: International Committee of the Red Cross, 1999), p. 13 (emphasis in original), <http://www.icrc.org/Web/eng/siteeng0.nsf/html/p0758?OpenDocument>.

3. George E. Hopkins, “Bombing and the American Conscience during World War II,” *Historian*, Vol. 28, No. 3 (May 1966), p. 453; and “Bush Performance Rating Climbs Back to Low 60s; Ameri-

rarely helps perpetrators achieve their goals, and it can even be counterproductive by strengthening an adversary's will to resist. One recent study, for example, argues that terrorizing civilians in war is self-defeating: "The nation or faction that resorts to warfare against civilians most quickly, most often, and most viciously is the nation or faction most likely to see its interests frustrated and, in many cases, its existence terminated."⁴ Robert Pape, a leading scholar of interstate coercion, agrees, arguing that punishment strategies aimed at an adversary's civilian population—implemented with airpower, sea power, or economic sanctions—rarely extract meaningful concessions.⁵

Given the moral stigma attached to civilian victimization and its supposedly dubious effectiveness, why do governments nevertheless use military strategies in international wars that target enemy noncombatants?⁶ One school of thought identifies regime type as the key factor, but is of two minds regarding its effect. According to some scholars, democracies—which adhere to liberal norms that proscribe killing innocent civilians, whether at home or abroad—are less likely to target civilians than nondemocracies, which are not so constrained.⁷ Studies of democratic institutions and war, however, imply just the opposite: democracies could be more likely to target noncombatants because the vulnerability of leaders to public opinion makes them wary of incurring heavy costs on the battlefield for fear of losing support at home. This fear

cans More Hawkish over Iraq but Still Considerably Reluctant, Newest Zogby America Poll Reveals," February 9, 2003, <http://www.zogby.com/news/ReadNews.dbm?ID=675>.

4. Caleb Carr, *The Lessons of Terror: A History of Warfare against Civilians* (New York: Random House, 2002), p. 12.

5. Robert A. Pape, *Bombing to Win: Air Power and Coercion in War* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1996); and Robert A. Pape, "Why Economic Sanctions Do Not Work," *International Security*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (Fall 1997), pp. 90–136. See also Michael Horowitz and Dan Reiter, "When Does Aerial Bombing Work? Quantitative Empirical Tests, 1917–1999," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 45, No. 2 (April 2001), pp. 147–173. On the destructive potential of sanctions, see John Mueller and Karl Mueller, "Sanctions of Mass Destruction," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 78, No. 3 (May/June 1999), pp. 43–53.

6. In this article I examine states' victimization of foreign civilians in interstate wars, that is, armed conflicts between recognized states that generate at least 1,000 battle deaths.

7. Benjamin Valentino, Paul Huth, and Dylan Balch-Lindsay, "'Draining the Sea': Mass Killing and Guerrilla Warfare," *International Organization*, Vol. 58, No. 2 (April 2004), pp. 375–407; Robert A. Pape, "The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 97, No. 3 (August 2003), pp. 343–361; Gil Merom, *How Democracies Lose Small Wars: State, Society, and the Failures of France in Algeria, Israel in Lebanon, and the United States in Vietnam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); R.J. Rummel, "Democracy, Power, Genocide, and Mass Murder," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 39, No. 1 (March 1995), pp. 3–26; and Michael J. Engelhardt, "Democracies, Dictatorships, and Counterinsurgency: Does Regime Type Really Matter?" *Conflict Quarterly*, Vol. 12, No. 3 (Summer 1992), pp. 52–63. President George W. Bush lent support to this view when he declared in 2002 that "targeting innocent civilians for murder is always and everywhere wrong" and asserted that fighting fair is what distinguishes democracies from rogue states, terrorists, and barbarians. Bush, "Remarks by the President at 2002 Graduation Exercise of the United States Military Academy," <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/06>; and Bush, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, D.C.: White House, 2002).

could compel democratic elites to target noncombatants to avoid costs or to win the war quickly.⁸ A different explanation emphasizes the “barbaric” identity of the enemy: civilian victimization results from the belief that one is fighting an uncivilized enemy.⁹ The choice of strategy, in other words, depends on one’s view of the adversary: the laws of war apply only in wars against “civilized” opponents, not “barbarians.”¹⁰

This article, by contrast, identifies two factors that cause states to target civilians regardless of regime type or how they perceive the enemy’s identity. First, civilian victimization results from desperation to win and to save lives on one’s own side induced by costly, protracted wars of attrition. According to the desperation logic, being embroiled in costly conflicts causes states to become increasingly desperate to prevail and to reduce their losses. Strategies of civilian victimization allow states to continue fighting, reduce casualties, and possibly win the war by coercing the adversary to quit. Democracies—although they are no more or less likely to target civilians in general—appear to be more susceptible to desperation, as the evidence shows that democracies are more likely than nondemocracies to target noncombatants in wars of attrition.

Second, belligerents’ appetite for territorial conquest leads to civilian victimization when the territory they seek to annex is inhabited by enemy noncombatants, which typically occurs in wars of territorial expansion or when hostilities break out between intermingled ethnic groups that claim the same territory as their homeland. Attacking enemy civilians often makes good strategic sense because it eliminates “fifth columns” that could rebel in an army’s rear area, as well as potential revolts that might occur later on. It also reduces the likelihood that the adversary will attempt to reconquer the disputed territory in the future by removing a major reason for war: rescuing their national brethren trapped behind enemy borders. One’s claim to territory, moreover, is strengthened by facts on the ground, principal among them being the national character of the population.¹¹ Each of these factors increases the likelihood that

8. Dan Reiter and Allan C. Stam, *Democracies at War* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002); and Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, James D. Morrow, Randolph M. Siverson, and Alastair Smith, “An Institutional Explanation of the Democratic Peace,” *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 93, No. 4 (December 1999), pp. 791–807.

9. Mark B. Salter, *Barbarians and Civilization in International Relations* (London: Pluto, 2002), pp. 36–39.

10. A historian of Spanish colonialism, for example, writes that European powers made “a distinction . . . between the treatment of fellow Europeans and that of colonials who resisted European advance. The standards of warfare that could be applied to the colonial enemy were different because these opponents were not ‘fully civilized.’” Sebastian Balfour, *Deadly Embrace: Morocco and the Road to the Spanish Civil War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 123.

11. For example, more than 90 percent of the population in Kosovo is Albanian, which enormously strengthens and legitimizes their claim to self-rule.

when states seize territory, they will seek to change the demographic situation by targeting civilians.

This study has relevance for several debates that are of central concern to security studies.¹² As already mentioned, understanding the roots of civilian victimization may help to explain the historical prevalence of punishment strategies despite their purported inefficacy. The treatment of noncombatants by democracies, furthermore—as well as the supposed vulnerability of democracies to coercion by punishment, such as terrorism—provides a new venue for testing arguments regarding the effect of liberal norms and democratic institutions originally created to explain peace between democracies. This study also supplements the literature on norms and force—which has focused on explaining the rise of (and adherence to) normative restrictions on the use of force against noncombatants—by discussing the circumstances under which states violate such norms. More generally, the resort to civilian victimization may provide insights into the poorly understood question of escalation in war.¹³

The remainder of the article proceeds as follows. After briefly defining civilian victimization, I sketch the competing explanations for this phenomenon and lay out my arguments. Next, I present two types of evidence to test these theories. First, I discuss the results of a statistical analysis of all interstate war participants between 1816 and 2003. This analysis shows that the adversary's identity has little effect on a state's decision to target civilians; it also shows that democracies and autocracies are about equally likely to victimize noncombatants in interstate wars. Neither of these findings changes after 1945, arguably the period in which democracies have been truly liberal and democratic. By contrast, the statistical evidence strongly supports the argument that involvement in protracted wars of attrition and the intention to annex conquered territory significantly increase the likelihood of civilian victimization. Finally,

12. Civilian victimization—although masquerading under other names, such as nuclear deterrence, punishment, barbarism, and terrorism—is already a key independent variable in security studies. See, for example, Thomas C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1966); Pape, *Bombing to Win*; Ivan Arreguín-Toft, "How the Weak Win Wars: A Theory of Asymmetric Conflict," *International Security*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (Summer 2001), pp. 93–128; and Robert A. Pape, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism* (New York: Random House, 2005).

13. On democracies' supposed vulnerability to suicide terrorism, see Pape, *Dying to Win*. On norm creation, see Richard M. Price, *The Chemical Weapons Taboo* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1997); and Nina Tannenwald, "Stigmatizing the Bomb: Origins of the Nuclear Taboo," *International Security*, Vol. 29, No. 4 (Spring 2005), pp. 5–49. On escalation, see Richard Smoke, *War: Controlling Escalation* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1977); and Eric J. Labs, "Beyond Victory: Offensive Realism and the Expansion of War Aims," *Security Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 4 (Summer 1997), pp. 1–49.

in those conflicts that become wars of attrition, democracies are more likely than nondemocracies to target noncombatants.

Second, to demonstrate the causal logic of the desperation model, I trace the British decision to impose a starvation blockade on the Central Powers in World War I. This embargo aimed to break the morale of the enemy civilian population through their stomachs: the Allied blockade cut off imports of food to the Central Powers starting in March 1915. British leaders decided to target enemy civilians, I argue, as they came to perceive that the costs and duration of the war would be far greater than they had originally believed, and because they thought that denying food to noncombatants might help win the war. With so much at stake, British decisionmakers felt that they had no choice but to “use every weapon in our hands to bring to an end this horrible war.”¹⁴ I conclude by summarizing the argument, sketching some of its implications and making recommendations for further research.

Civilian Victimization Defined

Civilian victimization is a wartime strategy that targets and kills (or attempts to kill) noncombatants. It violates the principles of noncombatant immunity and discrimination as enshrined in the Geneva Conventions and just war theory, which require that belligerents must (1) distinguish between combatants and noncombatants, and (2) refrain from targeting the latter.¹⁵ Common forms of civilian victimization include aerial, naval, and artillery bombardment of civilians; sieges, naval blockades, and economic sanctions that deprive noncombatants of food; massacres; and forced movements or concentrations of populations. As with Benjamin Valentino’s definition of mass killing, civilian victimization “is not limited to ‘direct’ methods of killing, such as execution, gassing, and bombing. It includes deaths caused by starvation, exposure, or disease resulting from the intentional confiscation, destruction, or blockade of the necessities of life. It also includes deaths caused by starvation, exhaustion, exposure, or disease during forced relocation or forced labor.”¹⁶

14. Conservative Party leader Andrew Bonar Law speaking in the House of Commons on March 1, 1915. See *The Parliamentary Debates*, 5th Ser., Vol. 70: *House of Commons, Third Volume of Session 1914–15* (London: His Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1994), p. 607.

15. See, for example, *Geneva Convention (IV) Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War* (1949) and *Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of August 12, 1949, and Relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts* (Protocol I, 1977), <http://www.icrc.org/Web/Eng/siteeng0.nsf/html/genevaconventions>. On *jus in bello*—the part of just war theory that regulates who may be targeted in war—see James Turner Johnson, “Maintaining the Protection of Non-combatants,” *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 37, No. 4 (July 2000), pp. 421–448.

16. Benjamin A. Valentino, *Final Solutions: Mass Killing and Genocide in the Twentieth Century* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2004), p. 10. Unlike Valentino’s definition, however, it is not

Several aspects of civilian victimization bear elaboration. First, civilian victimization is a policy or strategy implemented or approved by states, rather than random or uncoordinated attacks by a few military units. Intentional attacks on civilians, as Christopher Browning has pointed out, can take the form of arbitrary explosions of violence or revenge inspired by “battlefield frenzy,” on the one hand, or they can “represent official government policy” or “standing operating procedure,” on the other.¹⁷ Only the latter comprises civilian victimization as I define it.¹⁸

Second, combatants “consist of all organized armed forces, groups and units which are under a command responsible for the conduct of its subordinates”; everyone else is a noncombatant.¹⁹ In other words, noncombatants do not participate in armed conflict by fighting, carrying weapons, or serving in the uniformed military or security services. Some just war theorists, however, exclude munitions workers from the noncombatant category on the grounds that they contribute to a nation’s war-making capacity.²⁰ I reject this argument and instead adopt the broad definition of “civilian” found in international law by reasoning that only those individuals who present a direct threat of harm to the enemy by using weapons surrender their immunity from harm.²¹ Other skeptics contend that nationalism and industrialization have eliminated the noncombatant category altogether because all citizens in modern states contribute to the war effort if only by going to work or consenting to the use of force.²² This view clashes with the commonsense intuition that, even in modern societies, there are many people who contribute little if anything to the war effort, and further, that this relative disengagement makes a difference as to whether they may be killed.²³ Many classes of individuals work in sectors of

necessary that a particular number of people die—or that a belligerent intends to annihilate a group—for a case to qualify as civilian victimization.

17. Christopher R. Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1993), pp. 160, 161.

18. For a similar definition, see Arreguín-Toft, “How the Weak Win Wars,” pp. 101–102. In practice, civilian victimization may be initiated by the military on the ground, but once political leaders become aware of the strategy and approve it—or decline to stop it—it becomes de facto government policy.

19. *Protocol Additional (I) to the Geneva Conventions*, art. 43. See also Valentino, *Final Solutions*, pp. 13–14; and Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars*, 2d ed. (New York: Basic Books, 1992), pp. 42–43.

I exclude prisoners of war from this category mainly for lack of data and to focus sharply on those who are clearly civilians rather than former fighters.

20. Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars*, pp. 145–146.

21. I acknowledge the difficulty of drawing a clean line between combatants and noncombatants. A third category of “quasi combatants” may be needed for those—such as munitions workers—who build weapons but do not wield them. Such individuals would be accorded greater protections than soldiers but fewer than civilians employed outside the defense industry.

22. Carr, *The Lessons of Terror*, p. 47; and Barry Buzan, “Who May We Bomb?” *Prospect*, No. 69 (December 2001), pp. 38–39.

23. Johnson, “Maintaining the Protection of Noncombatants,” p. 423.

the economy unrelated to the war effort; some, particularly children and the elderly, do not work at all. One study estimates that 75 percent of the population of an industrial country does not labor in war-related industries, and that even in industrial cities, 66 percent of the inhabitants are civilians.²⁴

Third, civilian victimization is intentional in that civilians themselves are the targets of the policy.²⁵ This intention is revealed in one of two ways: declarations by participants or statements of policy that designate noncombatants as the target of the strategy, or a pattern of repeated attacks over an extended period that kills tens of thousands of civilians. This aspect of the definition eliminates instances of “collateral damage”—noncombatants killed as the unintended side effect of strikes on clearly military targets—from the concept of civilian victimization.

Finally, the scope of this article is limited to the targeting of enemy noncombatants in interstate wars. Victimization that occurs within the perpetrator’s recognized borders is included only insofar as it occurs during an interstate war and the targeted population shares the nationality of the enemy state (e.g., Greeks in Turkey during the Greco-Turkish war, 1919–22).²⁶ Cases of killing perpetrated by nonstate actors—such as insurgent groups and terrorists—are excluded, as are instances of anticivilian violence that occur during civil wars or outside of wartime altogether.²⁷

Regime Type and Identity Explanations for Civilian Victimization

Two alternative explanations for civilian victimization focus on regime type. One argues that autocracies account for the lion’s share of noncombatant targeting because democracies are uniquely restrained by their domestic norms. The other contends that democracies are more likely to target civilians because institutions of accountability make democratic states more cost sensitive and needful of victory. A third alternative explanation hypothesizes that civilian victimization is produced by barbaric images of the enemy.

24. John C. Ford, “The Morality of Obliteration Bombing,” in Richard A. Wasserstrom, ed., *War and Morality* (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth, 1970), pp. 22–26.

25. Valentino, *Final Solutions*, p. 11; and Rummel, “Democracy, Power, Genocide, and Mass Murder,” p. 4.

26. Instances of domestic violence that were directed at other groups—such as Turkey’s mass killing of Armenians inside Turkey during World War I or Nazi depredations against German Jews—are excluded.

27. This is not to imply that desperation or appetite for conquest does not apply to these types of cases, but merely that for the purposes of this article, I test these arguments on interstate wars.

DEMOCRACY: RESTRAINT OR PROPELLANT?

Scholars who invoke democracy to explain civilian victimization disagree over the effect that it has, and this dispute reflects the norms versus institutions divide in the broader democratic peace literature. Most of the empirical studies to date find that democracies are less likely than nondemocracies to inflict civilian victimization and base their explanations in norms. R.J. Rummel, for example, notes that democracies are less likely to commit mass murder in foreign wars. In an examination of all wars since 1945, Benjamin Valentino, Paul Huth, and Dylan Balch-Lindsay find that democracies are less likely than authoritarian states to engage in mass killing. After examining twenty-five cases of counterinsurgent warfare by democracies and autocracies between 1945 and 1990, Michael Engelhardt concludes that the "literature confirms the assumption that non-democratic regimes are free to use much harsher tactics in dealing with insurgency than are democratic regimes." Finally, Gil Merom argues that "democracies fail in small wars because they cannot find a winning balance between the costs of the war in human lives [to their own military forces] and the political cost incurred by controlling these costs with force, between acceptable levels of casualties and acceptable levels of brutality."²⁸

The most common argument advanced to explain the powerful aversion to civilian victimization in democracies is that the norms inherent in democratic societies proscribe killing the innocent.²⁹ Valentino, Huth, and Balch-Lindsay, for example, argue that democratic norms are the key restraint against killing civilians: "If democratic values promote tolerance, nonviolence, and respect for legal constraints, then democracies should wage their wars more humanely than other forms of government."³⁰ Other scholars, however, argue that norms of nonviolence and respect for innocent life have their origins in liberal rather than democratic theory. Liberal norms forbid violating the rights of others or treating people as means to an end, and apply even to the citizens of enemy

28. Rummel, "Democracy, Power, Genocide, and Mass Murder," pp. 5–6; Valentino, Huth, and Balch-Lindsay, "Draining the Sea"; Engelhardt, "Democracies, Dictatorships, and Counterinsurgency," p. 56; and Merom, *How Democracies Lose Small Wars*, p. 24. On the restraining effect of democracy on human rights violations and genocide domestically, see Christian Davenport and David A. Armstrong II, "Democracy and the Violation of Human Rights: A Statistical Analysis from 1976 to 1996," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 48, No. 3 (July 2004), pp. 538–554; and Barbara Harff, "No Lessons Learned from the Holocaust? Assessing Risks of Genocide and Political Mass Murder since 1955," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 97, No. 1 (February 2003), pp. 57–73.

29. Rummel is the only scholar to emphasize the limits that democratic institutions impose on policymakers, arguing that "the more constrained the power of governments, the more power is diffused, checked, and balanced, the less it will aggress on others and commit democide." R.J. Rummel, *Death by Government* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction, 1994), pp. 1–2.

30. Valentino, Huth, and Balch-Lindsay, "Draining the Sea," p. 382.

states in wartime.³¹ Michael Doyle, for example, contends that restraints on violence against civilians have their origin within liberal thought, and endorses Immanuel Kant's view that liberal democracies must "maintain . . . a scrupulous respect for the laws of war."³²

A contrasting perspective on democracy rooted in institutions, however, implies that democracies should be more likely to inflict civilian victimization on their foes. The logic is simple: as wars become protracted and the costs of fighting increase, public support tends to decline.³³ Knowing this, democratic elites labor to keep casualties down and maintain public backing for the war effort, which may produce civilian victimization as a means to manage costs. Moreover, because losing a war—or even fighting to a protracted draw—threatens leaders' tenure in office, democratic executives have incentives to fight hard and make sure they win. "Fighting hard" could be interpreted to include civilian victimization.³⁴ The threat of removal for losing a war also gives democrats incentives to pick easier fights in the first place. This implies that democratic war initiators should be less likely to victimize noncombatants because these conflicts are unlikely to become wars of attrition.³⁵ Autocracies, by contrast, are less vulnerable to either of these forces because leaders in such regimes are not subject to public recall.

CIVILIZED VERSUS BARBARIC IDENTITY

Other scholars argue that mistreatment of civilians is more likely to occur in conflicts in which belligerents view each other as "barbaric" or subhuman.

31. Markus Fischer, "The Liberal Peace: Ethical, Historical, and Philosophical Aspects," Discussion Paper 2000-07 (Cambridge, Mass.: Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, April 2000), p. 15. See also Michael W. Doyle, *Ways of War and Peace: Realism, Liberalism, and Socialism* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997), p. 287 n. 81; John Rawls, *The Law of Peoples* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 97; and John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 377–378.

32. Doyle also concedes that liberal norms are not always effective in preventing counter-civilian violence: "The terror bombing of civilians—as in Dresden, Tokyo, Hiroshima, and Nagasaki—constitutes, in this view, violations of these [individual] rights and of Liberal principles and demonstrate the weaknesses of Liberal models in these cases." Doyle, *Ways of War and Peace*, p. 287 n. 81. The role of democratic institutions, according to the norms argument, is to enforce normative restrictions on targeting civilians by threatening leaders who violate the rules with removal from office via regular elections. As Merom puts it, democracies "are restricted by their domestic structures, and in particular by the creed of some of their most articulate citizens and the opportunities their institutional makeup presents such citizens." Merom, *How Democracies Lose Small Wars*, p. 15.

33. John E. Mueller, *War, Presidents, and Public Opinion* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1973).

34. Bueno de Mesquita et al., "An Institutional Explanation of the Democratic Peace," p. 798. The authors do not make this claim, but it is consistent with the logic of their argument.

35. Reiter and Stam, *Democracies at War*, pp. 19–20. Reiter and Stam also suggest that democratic institutions present no obstacle to "wars of empire or genocide," but they do not argue that democracy causes brutal treatment of civilians. *Ibid.*, p. 163.

John Dower, for example, has documented how racial hatred between Japan and the United States in World War II contributed to battlefield atrocities and eased the way toward incendiary bombing of Japanese cities.³⁶ Other historians have advanced this thesis to explain brutality in wars between Christian Europe and the Islamic Middle East, the mass extermination of native civilizations in the New World, and violence in wars of empire, arguing that the “rules, objectives and conduct of war were altogether different once civilization had been left behind.” Against barbarians, notes another scholar, “Methods of warfare that in Europe were morally and legally barred were considered legitimate in the face of an enemy who did not seem to subscribe to the same cultural code.” As a Greek officer put it after the Balkan wars of 1912–13, “When you have to deal with barbarians, you must behave like a barbarian yourself. It is the only thing they understand.”³⁷

Desperation, Appetite for Conquest, and Civilian Victimization

I argue that all states, regardless of regime type, target civilians for one of two reasons: first, desperation to achieve victory and lower costs in protracted wars of attrition—in which case civilian victimization is a coercive strategy meant to sap the morale of an adversary’s population or undermine the enemy’s ability to fight—and second, an appetite for territorial conquest that causes states to use force to subdue or eliminate an adversary’s population to gain control over the conquered area. States that are less tolerant of costs and in greater need of victory—such as democracies—are likely to be more susceptible to desperation.

DESPERATION AND CIVILIAN VICTIMIZATION

Imagine that two belligerents go to war over issue X. Each country wants to win a quick and decisive victory, achieving its aims at relatively low cost to itself. Imagine further that events do not unfold as planned, and the belligerents’ strategies for prevailing quickly and cheaply are foiled. The war bogs down into siege-like operations, trench warfare, and costly battles of attrition. Battlefield stalemates give rise to two mechanisms that can trigger civilian victimization. First, such deadlocks induce desperation to win: belliger-

36. John W. Dower, *War without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon, 1986).

37. Quotations are from John Childs, *Armies and Warfare in Europe, 1648–1789* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1982), p. 102; Jurgen Osterhammel, quoted in Salter, *Barbarians and Civilization in International Relations*, p. 38; and International Commission to Inquire into the Causes and Conduct of

ents will use any means that has the potential to pull victory from the jaws of defeat. Second, the costs of fighting generated by wars of attrition cause desperation to save lives and lead to targeting of noncombatants as a cost-reduction strategy that allows a state to continue prosecuting the war at an acceptable price in casualties.³⁸

In protracted wars of attrition, civilian victimization is a form of coercion, that is, the attempt to influence an adversary's behavior by manipulating costs and benefits. Specifically, civilian victimization inflicts costs on noncombatants to coerce a government or rebel organization to cease fighting. Traditionally, scholars have equated inflicting pain on noncombatants with punishment. Punishment is a coercive strategy that erodes the adversary's will to fight, either by convincing the government that the civilian costs outweigh the benefits of resistance, or by turning the civilians themselves against the war and hoping that they will pressure the government to end it. The logic of punishment is clearly reflected in Lord Cherwell's "dehousing" memo, which became the basis for British urban area bombing during World War II. Cherwell, Prime Minister Winston Churchill's scientific adviser, argued that relentless bombing of cities would destroy German morale by rendering the population homeless.³⁹ Of course, the British proposed to do much more than simply destroy German homes: the real targets were the occupants of those homes. But the objective of the strategy is nonetheless clear: kill noncombatants to break the will of survivors, thereby inducing the enemy to give up.

Victimizing civilians, however, can also follow the logic of denial, intended more to undermine the adversary's ability to prosecute its military strategy than to break its will to resist. According to internal military documents from 1943 and 1944, for example, U.S. interest in using incendiary bombs against Japanese cities was not a punishment strategy. Rather, the objective was to destroy Japan's dispersed system of industrial production and to generate a labor shortage by killing workers.⁴⁰ Similarly, in response to China's intervention in the Korean War in early November 1950, the commander of United Nations forces, Gen. Douglas MacArthur, unleashed U.S. bombers to create a cordon sanitaire between the Chinese border and UN lines. According to one histo-

the Balkan Wars, *The Other Balkan Wars* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1993), p. 95.

38. These two mechanisms are obviously related: protracted wars are often costly; rising costs can contribute to desperation to win; and civilian victimization implemented to conserve costs is also intended to help win the war. They do not always go together, however, and thus I present them separately.

39. See Max Hastings, *Bomber Command* (New York: Dial, 1979), p. 128.

40. Thomas R. Searle, "'It Made a Lot of Sense to Kill Skilled Workers': The Firebombing of Tokyo in March 1945," *Journal of Military History*, Vol. 66, No. 1 (January 2002), pp. 117–118.

rian, "MacArthur told the American ambassador to South Korea that he intended to turn the narrow stretch of territory between U.N. lines and the border into a 'desert' incapable of supporting Communist troops."⁴¹

DESPERATION TO WIN. When wars become protracted with little chance of victory on the immediate horizon, belligerents are more likely to employ civilian victimization out of desperation to win the war. In an anarchic world, states are concerned with survival. While the consequences of defeat in war are not always catastrophic, at the very least, defeat can endanger the state's power position or reputation, leaving it vulnerable to future predation or challenges by its neighbors. In wars of attrition, moreover, the consequences of losing may be severe, including the loss of significant amounts of territory, national independence, or even enslavement or genocide. The perils of defeat, therefore, make decisionmakers desperate to win and cause leaders to target civilians.

A classic case of desperation to win occurred in the latter days of World War I. Despite increasing pressures from the admirals of the High Seas Fleet, both Chancellor Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg and Kaiser Wilhelm II had steadfastly rejected launching a campaign of unlimited submarine warfare against British commerce with German U-boats. Such a strategy, they believed, ran too great a risk of provoking the United States to enter the conflict, a risk they did not feel was warranted given Germany's relatively favorable military position. In the summer of 1916, however, blow after blow struck the Central Powers—failure at Verdun, the British offensive on the Somme, the Brusilov offensive against Austria-Hungary, and the entry of Romania into the war on the side of the Entente powers—radically changing the German leadership's perception of the likelihood of victory. A sense of desperation that something had to be done to stem the tide of defeats eventually caused Bethmann-Hollweg to acquiesce in the military's desire for U-boat warfare against ships importing food to Britain. As naval historian V.E. Tarrant concludes, "The demands of the military and naval leaders, the Kaiser's acquiescence and the Chancellor's abdication of authority had a common denominator—

41. Conrad C. Crane, *American Airpower Strategy in Korea, 1950–1953* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2000), p. 47. Although not examined in this article, the denial logic of civilian victimization is even more apparent in counterinsurgency warfare. Insurgent forces rely on the assistance they receive from the civilian population. Counterinsurgency strategies use civilian victimization to sever the link between the guerrillas and the populace by one of two means: to deter people from helping the insurgents or to physically prevent such support by removing the population from areas where guerrillas operate. The deterrence tactic employs murders and massacres of known or suspected insurgent supporters to frighten those left alive. The interdiction method, by contrast, concentrates people under government control or simply kills them, rendering them unable to support the guerrillas.

realistically there was no alternative but to make the ultimate decision with regard to the strategic use of the U-boats, because Germany's situation was desperate."⁴²

DESPERATION TO SAVE LIVES. As the costs of fighting mount, states need to conserve their military forces while still putting pressure on the enemy. Given that the manpower resources of most countries are not inexhaustible, suffering large numbers of casualties threatens to exhaust the state's most important military asset, which could eventually result in an inability to continue the war. Taking huge casualties is also bad for the military's morale, as demonstrated by the French army mutinies after the disastrous Nivelle offensive of 1917. Terrific combat losses, moreover, sap morale on the home front, causing civilians to lose faith in victory and pressure the government to stop the war. And, in the words of George Kennan, "Government is an agent, not a principal. Its primary obligation is to the interests of the national society it represents." The interests of mankind as a whole rate—if anything—a distant second.⁴³ This obligation, or "statesman's duty," disposes leaders both to value and to protect the lives of their people over those of foreigners.⁴⁴ Targeting enemy civilians (or using force less discriminately)—because it provides a way to continue attacking the enemy yet decrease one's own losses at the same time—is a rational solution.⁴⁵ Over time, therefore, even if leaders did not previously believe in the efficacy of civilian victimization or think that they would use such a strategy, the costs of the fighting convince them that something must be done to win the war but also limit losses. Civilian victimization is a promising option on both counts.

The costs of fighting come in two forms: costs of actual military operations, and costs expected to result from future operations. In the former, increasing

42. V.E. Tarrant, *The U-Boat Offensive, 1914–1945* (London: Arms and Armor, 1989), p. 45. See also Germany's note to the U.S. government, delivered the day before the campaign began, quoted in R.H. Gibson and Maurice Prendergast, *The German Submarine War, 1914–1918* (London: Constable, 1931), p. 137. Desperation to win is also behind many instances of civilian victimization in wars against guerrilla insurgencies: incumbents become increasingly desperate over time as conventional tactics fail to defeat the insurgents, who hope to prolong the war indefinitely and wear out their opponent. Incumbents, therefore, eventually strike at the guerrillas' Achilles' heel—the civilian population from which they draw recruits, supplies, shelter, and information. For a similar logic, which maintains that governments target civilians when the guerrilla force is large and has widespread support among the population, both of which make the rebellion more threatening, see Valentino, Huth, and Balch-Lindsay, "'Draining the Sea.'" Incumbents also have incentives to hold down their costs so as to be able to prosecute a long war. Directing force at civilians helps to achieve this goal.

43. George Kennan, "Morality and Foreign Policy," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 64, No. 2 (Winter 1985/86), p. 206.

44. Ward Thomas, *The Ethics of Destruction: Norms and Force in International Relations* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2001), p. 185.

45. Merom, *How Democracies Lose Small Wars*, pp. 42–46.

losses from combat threatens to destroy a belligerent's forces. This can occur in the context of a particular military campaign or in the war as a whole. When U.S. daylight precision bombing of Germany in World War II became unsustainably costly in the fall of 1943, for example, American airmen—rather than abandon bombing altogether—adopted radar techniques that radically reduced accuracy and increased noncombatant casualties, but drastically lowered U.S. bomber losses.⁴⁶ In World War I, as the expectations of each of the belligerents regarding the costs of fighting and the duration of the war changed as 1914 turned to 1915, leaders in many of these countries decided to add civilian victimization—in the form of primitive strategic bombing and naval blockade—to their inventory of strategies to coerce their enemies to end the war and limit their own combat losses.

Civilian victimization also may result when belligerents expect that the costs of future fighting will inflict serious military costs. The anticipation of high costs of fighting can occur before the war actually starts or during the war itself. The prospect or expectation that a war will be costly induces states to develop strategies that will achieve the state's aims but avoid paying a high price.⁴⁷ The mere prospect of future costs before a war begins is thus generally not powerful enough to cause states to target civilians because states desire quick and decisive victories, and civilian victimization—to the extent that it works—works slowly.⁴⁸

When the costs of an impending military operation promise to be very high during an ongoing war, however, fewer alternatives are available, and hence civilian victimization is more likely to be chosen. The classic example of this situation is siege warfare: assaulting walled cities was difficult because of the advantages held by the defender, and thus besieging forces would try to reduce the town with indiscriminate bombardment and starvation. A more recent example on a grander scale was the endgame of the Pacific War. Military planners had forecast that the projected invasions of the Japanese home islands would exact a heavy toll in U.S. casualties. Confronted with this predic-

46. Gary Shandroff, "The Evolution of Area Bombing in American Doctrine and Practice," Ph.D. dissertation, New York University, 1972, pp. 97–98.

47. John J. Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1983).

48. Exceptions—such as the German bombing of Belgrade in April 1941—may occur when a state finds itself under tremendous pressure to win quickly and cannot spare the forces to execute an alternative conventional strategy (such as a blitzkrieg). In spring 1941, for example, the Wehrmacht was feverishly preparing for Operation Barbarossa when it was required to assist Italy against Greece and conquer Yugoslavia at the same time. German bombers struck Belgrade on the first day of the invasion to frighten the Yugoslav government into an early capitulation. For an explanation along these lines, see Matthew Cooper, *The German Air Force, 1933–1945: An Anatomy of Failure* (London: Jane's, 1981), pp. 197–198.

tion, U.S. leaders tightened the naval blockade, firebombed Japanese cities, and ultimately used atomic weapons to avoid a costly invasion.

A TACTIC OF LATER RESORT. Because states prefer to win quick and decisive victories, they typically seek to defeat an adversary's military forces at the outset of wars. Unless states specifically intend to seize and annex territory populated by the enemy, therefore, civilian victimization tends to be a "tactic of later resort."⁴⁹ When states face the prospect of a protracted war of attrition, they more often than not are deterred from initiating a conflict, or they postpone an attack until they devise a plan that promises to deliver a victory on the cheap. The problem with initiating a war with a strategy of civilian victimization is that such strategies—when they work—take time to have an effect. States tend not to elect civilian victimization as a war-initiating strategy, therefore, because it possesses little utility for achieving quick and decisive victories.

Other factors reinforce this tendency, such as deterrence (i.e., the ability of the enemy to strike at one's own noncombatants) and international norms that proscribe targeting civilians. In cases where both belligerents have the ability to kill their adversary's civilians, each may be deterred from doing so by the prospect of retaliation, much like mutual assured destruction discouraged the United States and the Soviet Union from using nuclear weapons during the Cold War.⁵⁰ International norms may also delay the onset of civilian victimization. Although the norm against killing civilians has never been internalized so as to make attacking noncombatants unthinkable, violating it imposes a cost by sullyng a state's reputation.⁵¹ Belligerents often attempt to curry favor with influential neutral states or the international community more generally by proclaiming their intention to wage war in conformity with international humanitarian norms, or by denouncing supposed violations of those norms by their opponent.⁵²

APPETITE FOR CONQUEST AND CIVILIAN VICTIMIZATION

The desperation model assumes nothing about the nature of the war aims of the belligerents, only that they go to war over an unspecified issue. In some

49. I thank Tanya Schreiber for suggesting this phrase.

50. Mutual deterrence of this kind, for example, restrained the onset of urban aerial bombing by Britain and Germany in the early years of World War II. George H. Quester, *Deterrence before Hiroshima: The Airpower Background to Modern Strategy* (New York: John Wiley, 1966), pp. 82–122. Belligerents may also be deterred from victimizing noncombatants by the fear of alienating a powerful third party or even provoking it to enter hostilities.

51. On the difference between constitutive versus instrumental effects of norms, see Nina Tannenwald, "The Nuclear Taboo: The United States and the Normative Basis of Nuclear Non-use," *International Organization*, Vol. 53, No. 3 (July 1999), p. 440.

52. For U.S. and British examples with regard to Italian, German, and Japanese bombing in the 1930s, see Dower, *War without Mercy*, pp. 38–39.

conflicts, however, the objective of one or both combatants is to conquer and annex a piece of the adversary's territory. Land, of course, is rarely uninhabited, and the people living there can be more or less hostile to the change in ownership. When the chancellor of Prussia, Otto von Bismarck, sought to annex Alsace and Lorraine—historically German provinces acquired by France under Louis XIV—in the Franco-Prussian war of 1870–71, for example, much of the population did not oppose the transfer of sovereignty. The Prussians, moreover, viewed the inhabitants as “German” and capable of being assimilated without much trouble.⁵³ Mass violence against civilians was therefore absent in this case. Other cases, however, turn out differently. What distinguishes these from the outcome in 1870?

I argue that the presence of civilian populations sharing the nationality of the enemy in areas a belligerent wishes to annex generates civilian victimization to cow such people into submission or, more commonly, to evict them from the territory altogether. On the one hand, these civilians sometimes pose a real threat of subversion or rebellion, a potential fifth column that can create serious immediate or future problems for the occupier. Demographically intermingled ethnoreligious groups, for example—such as Arabs and Jews in Palestine (1947–49) and Serbs and Muslims in Bosnia (1992–95)—occasionally go to war. At least one side in such conflicts—and often both—seeks to establish a national state on all or part of the territory inhabited by another group. A national state with a substantial minority of “nonnationals,” however, is unlikely to be secure or stable over time because this group poses a permanent threat of rebellion. As one Zionist leader commented in 1938, “We cannot start the Jewish state with . . . half the population being Arab. . . . Such a state cannot survive even half an hour.”⁵⁴ Moreover, leaving concentrations of enemy nationals intact behind the front lines risks leaving a fifth column that could take up arms and create a two-front war problem. After the Haganah (the main Jewish defense force) captured the town of Beisan in May 1948, for instance, Jewish officers—who viewed this concentration of Arab civilians so close to the front lines as a security threat—sought and received approval to expel them.⁵⁵ Believing that there is little or no possibility of gaining the support of members of the opposing group, belligerents in these situations attack the other group's civilians to avoid the risk—if not always the actuality—of being attacked themselves.

53. Geoffrey Wawro, *The Franco-Prussian War: The German Conquest of France in 1870–1871* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 304.

54. Avraham Ussishkin, quoted in Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 50.

55. *Ibid.*, p. 227.

Expelling or killing civilians of the enemy group not only reduces the costs of the present fighting—by depriving their fighters of manpower and matériel—but it also reduces the threat of future costs from an uprising or a rescue operation by the group’s co-ethnics from outside the state. The presence of these civilians creates a standing invitation for their co-nationals in neighboring states to intervene to rescue them and gives the territory’s former owner a claim to the land. In the first Balkan war (1912–13), for example, Serbia, Montenegro, Bulgaria, and Greece invaded Ottoman territory with the explicit intention of seizing land and annexing it to their national states. To ensure the viability—and permanence—of these conquests, and to reduce the possibility that the Turks would seek to reconquer lost territories, the Balkan states quickly set about persecuting and expelling Turkish civilians. When the former allies turned on each other in the second Balkan war (1913), they likewise killed and banished civilians who shared the nationality of their new enemy, the losing Bulgarians being the primary victims.⁵⁶

In interstate wars, the group most likely to be viewed as hostile or threatening is the noncombatant population that shares the enemy’s nationality. Occasionally, however, a regime identifies one particular group in the enemy society as the most serious threat, such as Nazi Germany’s classification of Jews as a racial and ideological menace. This group may then be singled out for especially harsh treatment or even total annihilation. Nor is ethnonational identity the sole line of difference: some states are governed by particular political ideologies and may persecute their ideological foes upon invading another country.⁵⁷ These special motivations for identifying the “hostile” population aside, however, the basic logic of territorial annexation still holds, and no special murderous ideology is needed to generate civilian victimization in these conflicts.

Civilian victimization in wars in which the annexation of enemy-inhabited territory is the goal tends to be a tactic of early resort because civilians are readily accessible, and attacking them pays immediate military and political dividends by removing threats of rebellion and subversion in the army’s rear area. Furthermore, deterrence is unlikely to act as a restraint because one side may have exclusive access to the adversary’s civilians as a consequence of invading enemy territory. Eliminating fifth columns in one’s midst may also seem necessary for survival and hence override fears that the enemy might launch reprisals elsewhere. Moreover, states involved in aggressive wars to

56. International Commission, *The Other Balkan Wars*; and Justin McCarthy, *Death and Exile: The Ethnic Cleansing of Ottoman Muslims, 1821–1922* (Princeton, N.J.: Darwin, 1995), pp. 135–177.

57. Massacres by North and South Korea in the early stages of the Korean War are examples.

seize and colonize territory, or locked in struggles for survival to eliminate fifth columns, are probably less likely to respect norms against harming noncombatants.

THE RATIONALITY OF CIVILIAN VICTIMIZATION

As noted in the introduction, civilian victimization is commonly thought to be irrational because attacking noncombatants is generally ineffective and sometimes even steels the enemy's resolve to resist.⁵⁸ This raises a puzzling question: If governments know that victimizing civilians will not help achieve their objectives, then why would they do it?

Those who uncritically condemn policies of civilian victimization wrongly assume that such policies are always ineffective.⁵⁹ There is significant variation in the success rate of civilian victimization over time and across different types of warfare. In the past, sieges regularly succeeded in capturing enemy towns by starving the besieged civilian population. Besieging entire countries and attempting to coerce them into ending a war via civilian victimization is more difficult owing to the resiliency of the modern nation-state, but it does not always fail.⁶⁰ Judicious use of terror against civilians can pay high dividends in guerrilla wars: insurgents employ it to coerce civilians into supporting their movement, while incumbents rely on it as a means of counterpersuasion. But even indiscriminate violence—such as forced concentration or mass killing intended to reduce guerrillas' ability to fight by cutting them off from the civilian population—has succeeded in several wars.⁶¹ Many states have successfully expanded their territory (or that of an ally) by targeting enemy civilians in wars of conquest.⁶²

58. See Pape, *Bombing to Win*; Horowitz and Reiter, "When Does Aerial Bombing Work?"; and Pape, "Why Economic Sanctions Do Not Work." On the self-defeating effect of indiscriminate violence in guerrilla warfare and counterinsurgency, see Stathis N. Kalyvas, "Wanton and Senseless? The Logic of Massacres in Algeria," *Rationality and Society*, Vol. 11, No. 3 (August 1999), p. 251; and Matthew Cooper, *The Nazi War against Soviet Partisans, 1941–1944* (New York: Stein and Day, 1979), pp. 11–29.

59. Michael Ignatieff, "Barbarians at the Gates: Warfare against Civilians, Caleb Carr Argues, Should Always Be Viewed as Terrorism," *New York Times Book Review*, February 17, 2002, p. 8.

60. The Anglo-American naval blockade of Germany in World War I, for example, is credited by some with contributing to Germany's collapse in the fall of 1918. Avner Offer, *The First World War: An Agrarian Interpretation* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989), p. 72.

61. An example of targeted violence is the Phoenix program in the Vietnam War. See Mark Moyar, *Phoenix and the Birds of Prey: The CIA's Secret Campaign to Destroy the Viet Cong* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1997), pp. 258–259, 262–264. Examples of indiscriminate violence include the Second Anglo-Boer war (1899–1902), the U.S.-Filipino war (1899–1902), the Second Italo-Sanusi war (1923–32), and the Franco-Algerian war (1954–62).

62. Russia assisted in the creation of a Bulgarian state by killing and expelling Muslim Turks in the Russo-Turkish war (1877–78); the Balkan states each expanded at the expense of Ottoman Turkey in 1912–13; Israel consolidated and expanded its territory in the 1948 war; and Turkey established a Turkish-Cypriot enclave in northern Cyprus in 1974 by driving out Greek Cypriots.

The key point, however, is that civilian victimization is driven by perceived strategic necessity: leaders may see themselves as having little choice but to target noncombatants if they wish to prevail at a price they can afford, avoid defeat, or annex desired territory. Leaders, therefore, need not be certain that civilian victimization will succeed; they merely need to believe that it might lower their costs of fighting, contribute to victory (or stave off defeat), or consolidate their hold over territory. If civilian victimization offers even a small chance of reversing a grim situation, or delivering a state's goals at a cost it can afford to pay, leaders may rationally grasp at that straw rather than abandon their goals. Civilian victimization is thus a calculated risk, not an irrational gamble.

Quantitative Evidence from Interstate Wars

To evaluate the theories laid out above, I compiled a data set of all states that participated in interstate wars between 1816 and 2003, which produced a list of 100 wars, 323 belligerent countries, and 52 cases of civilian victimization. Using procedures described in the appendix, I determined that 175 of these belligerents had the opportunity or capability to target the civilians of their enemy and thus should be included in the analysis.

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

I include variables representing the major concepts developed above—regime type, identity, desperation, and appetite for conquest—as well as a variety of controls.

REGIME TYPE: DEMOCRACY. I employ Michael Doyle's list of liberal democracies as my primary indicator of regime type. Doyle judges the liberal nature of states according to four criteria: (1) respect for civil and political rights and freedoms, (2) elected representative government, (3) respect for private property, and (4) a free-market economy. Forty-eight of the belligerents in the data set of capable countries—27 percent—are coded as liberal.⁶³

THE ADVERSARY'S IDENTITY. Quantitatively testing the identity hypothesis is challenging because accurate coding would require knowledge of how leaders in various countries perceived other countries at different points in history.

63. Doyle, *Ways of War and Peace*, pp. 261–264. As a secondary measure of democracy, I rely on the Polity 4 data set, which uses a 21-point scale to measure a country's political institutions. Monty G. Marshall and Keith Jagers, *Polity IV Project: Political Regime Characteristics and Transitions, 1800–2000* (College Park: Center for International Development and Conflict Management, University of Maryland, 2001). All results reported below use Doyle's coding; substituting Polity does not substantially change the results unless otherwise noted.

Moreover, identity must be coded *ex ante*, but perceptions of the enemy's civilized or barbaric nature may change during the course of the conflict. These difficulties permit the testing only of a less ambitious hypothesis: greater *ex ante* cultural differences facilitate demonization or demeaning views of the enemy and thus contribute to the emergence of civilian victimization. In this analysis, I use the presence of religious differences to capture cultural differences.⁶⁴

DESPERATION. I use three variables to test the hypothesis that desperation to win and to save lives on their own side causes belligerents to target civilians: battle fatalities, war duration, and whether the conflict was a war of attrition. Data on battle deaths and duration are taken mostly from the Correlates of War (COW) data set; I have added figures for wars that do not appear in that collection. The spread of these variables is extremely wide: battle deaths range from zero (NATO vs. Yugoslavia, 1999) to 7.5 million (Soviet Union in World War II), whereas war duration varies from just a few days (several examples) to about eight years (China-Japan, 1937–45, and Iran-Iraq, 1980–88). For the statistical analysis, therefore, I use the base-10 log to narrow the range of these variables. A war of attrition (dummy variable) is defined as a conflict characterized by one or more of the following battlefield situations: static, positional, or trench warfare (e.g., World War I, the Iran-Iraq war, and the 1998–2000 Ethiopian-Eritrean war); sieges (the siege of Paris in the Franco-Prussian war); or guerrilla warfare (as in Vietnam). Each of these types of warfare tends to result in protracted, costly conflicts.⁶⁵

APPETITE FOR CONQUEST: ANNEXATIONIST AIMS. Wars in which a belligerent wishes to annex territory from an adversary, and perhaps colonize that area with its own people, are likely to lead to civilian victimization owing to the presence of enemy nationals. To approximate this idea, I code whether or not each belligerent had among its war aims at the start of the war the intention to conquer and annex part of its adversary's territory.

CONTROL VARIABLES. I include in the analysis several other variables that might influence the targeting of civilians in war. First, states with greater material capabilities should be more able to engage in civilian victimization. I

64. Differences within a major religion (such as Catholic/Protestant or Sunni/Shia) are not coded as religious differences, but this decision does not affect the results, nor does using membership in different civilizations as defined in Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996).

65. There are only two guerrilla wars in the data set, however: Vietnam and NATO-Yugoslavia 1999. Interstate wars are overwhelmingly conventional wars. I also employed the extent of belligerents' war aims and expansions in these aims as a fourth indicator of desperation, following the logic that higher political demands induce greater resistance by the adversary, which leads to longer, costlier wars.

operationalize material capability using the log of each belligerent's score on the COW index of capabilities.⁶⁶ Second, wars in which the balance of capabilities strongly favors one side should end more quickly (with little need for non-combatant targeting) than wars between evenly matched belligerents. I construct an indicator from the COW index that scores higher for each belligerent in lopsided matchups and approaches zero when the balance is even; higher values should correlate with lower probabilities of civilian victimization. Third, if both sides have the ability to attack the other's civilian populations, the possibility of retaliation may deter them from doing so. Fourth, if deterrence breaks down and one side strikes its opponent's noncombatants, the victim may strike back to exact revenge or to persuade the enemy to refrain from further attacks.⁶⁷ Fifth, insular states—protected from invasion by large bodies of water—may be more likely both to develop liberal regimes with small standing armies that are more sensitive to costs and to acquire military forces (e.g., navies and air forces) suited to coercion.⁶⁸ Such states would be better equipped to launch sustained blockades or bombing campaigns and thus perhaps more likely to victimize noncombatants. Sixth, conflicts that occurred after the horrors of World War II should be less likely to experience civilian victimization owing to the increasing acceptance of norms proscribing attacks on noncombatants, improved targeting technology, or the impact of global media exposure.

STATISTICAL RESULTS

Bivariate correlations reveal little support for the alternative explanations, but strong support for my arguments. As shown in Table 1, for example, there is no discernible difference in the rates at which democracies and nondemocracies target civilians across the entire period of study or the post-World War II era, a finding that contradicts both versions of the regime type argument.⁶⁹ Similarly, identity differences are not strongly associated with civilian victim-

66. This index includes population, urban population, iron and steel production, energy consumption, military expenditure, and military personnel.

67. The variable, however, only codes whether a belligerent was the target of civilian victimization by its opponent, and thus a positive and significant coefficient does not necessarily mean that civilian victimization by one belligerent causes civilian victimization by another.

68. I thank Barry Posen for suggesting this argument, which is also raised in Otto Hintze, *The Historical Essays of Otto Hintze*, ed. Felix Gilbert (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), pp. 174, 199.

69. Nor did I find support for the view that democracies choose easy fights and thus avoid wars of attrition and civilian victimization: democratic war initiators are not significantly less likely than democratic targets to victimize noncombatants. Democracies are also somewhat less likely than autocracies to have their own civilians targeted (10 percent vs. 15 percent, $Pr = 0.32$), contrary to the idea that democracies are more vulnerable to coercion by punishment.

Table 1. Cross-Tabulation of Liberal Democracy and Civilian Victimization in Interstate Wars

		Liberal Democracy, 1816–2003			Liberal Democracy, 1946–2003		
		Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total
Civilian victimization	Yes	15 31.9%	37 30.1%	52 30.6%	5 22.7%	10 23.3%	15 23.1%
	No	32 68.1%	86 69.9%	118 69.4%	17 77.3%	33 76.7%	50 76.9%
Total		47 100.0%	123 100.0%	170 100.0%	22 100.0%	43 100.0%	65 100.0%

Pearson $\chi^2(1) = 0.0538$ Pr = 0.82; Pearson $\chi^2(1) = 0.0023$ Pr = 0.96

Table 2. Cross-Tabulation of Wars of Attrition, Wars of Annexation, and Civilian Victimization in Interstate Wars, 1816–2003

		War of Attrition			War of Annexation		
		Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total
Civilian victimization	Yes	34 61.8%	18 15.8%	52 30.8%	26 81.0%	26 21.2%	52 30.6%
	No	21 38.2%	96 84.2%	117 69.2%	7 19.0%	111 78.8%	118 69.4%
Total		55 100.0%	114 100.0%	169 100.0%	33 100.0%	137 100.0%	170 100.0%

Pearson $\chi^2(1) = 36.8997$ Pr = 0.00; Pearson $\chi^2(1) = 44.8806$ Pr = 0.00

ization.⁷⁰ In stark contrast, Table 2 reveals powerful correlations between indicators of desperation and appetite for territory and targeting of civilians: states involved in wars of attrition victimize noncombatants 62 percent of the time versus 16 percent for states in quick and decisive wars. Belligerents that intend to annex enemy territory target civilians 81 percent of the time, whereas states that do not have this as a war aim engage in civilian victimization 21 percent of the time.

Multivariate logit regression analysis confirms these bivariate correlations.⁷¹ The first three models in Table 3 show that each indicator of desperation—war of attrition, battle deaths, and war duration—is positive and significant at conventional thresholds; attrition attains significance at better than the 1 percent level. The intention to annex territory also strongly predicts civilian victimization. The argument that desperation and appetite for territorial conquest cause states to target civilians thus receives strong support.⁷² Liberal democracy, by contrast, takes a positive sign but does not approach statistical significance in any of the first three models, suggesting that regime type by itself has little effect on the probability of civilian victimization. Similarly, cultural differences between belligerents do not significantly increase the likelihood of noncombatant targeting. Given the crude nature of the test, however, one should be careful not to overinterpret this result.⁷³

Among the control variables in models 1–3, powerful states appear to be more able to use civilian victimization as a war strategy, but the military bal-

70. Civilian victimization occurred in 35 percent of wars between belligerents with different religions, compared with 25 percent of the time when they shared the same religion ($Pr = 0.14$).

71. Bivariate correlations are only suggestive because they measure the impact of each variable separately. Multivariate regression analysis allows one to estimate the effect of each variable controlling simultaneously for the effects of all the others. Because the dependent variable in this case is either present or absent, I employ a logit model. The signs and coefficients of the variables signify how much they increase or decrease the probability that civilian victimization occurs.

72. Total or expanding war aims also takes a positive sign, but it does not achieve statistical significance. The indicators of desperation and appetite for territory are also substantively important. Holding other variables constant at their mean values, changing war of attrition from 0 to 1 more than doubles the likelihood that a belligerent will target civilians, while the intention to annex territory more than triples it. Moving from the 25th to the 75th percentile of battle deaths and war duration increases the probability of civilian victimization 66 percent and 87 percent, respectively. All calculations were performed using *CLARIFY: Software for Interpreting and Presenting Statistical Results*, ver. 2.1, by Gary King, Michael Tomz, and Jason Wittenberg, <http://gking.harvard.edu/stats.shtml>.

73. If the identity argument were true, however, civilian victimization should have been more frequent in colonial wars (nearly all between white Europeans and native peoples of Africa and Asia) than in interstate wars. Data collected by Ivan Arreguín-Toft, though, reveals that states used barbarism—"the systematic violation of the laws of war"—in asymmetric conflicts (mostly colonial wars) about 20 percent of the time, whereas the frequency of civilian victimization in my interstate war data set (capable belligerents) is 30 percent. The quotation is from Arreguín-Toft, "How the Weak Win Wars," p. 101; I thank Arreguín-Toft for kindly providing these data.

Table 3. Determinants of Civilian Victimization by Capable Participants in Interstate Wars, 1816–2003 (logit estimates)

	1	2	3	4	5 Post-1945	6 Post-1945
Liberal democracy	0.47 (0.59)	0.52 (0.59)	0.36 (0.63)	-1.66 (1.30)	0.84 (0.88)	-1.77 (1.32)
Cultural difference	0.24 (0.59)	0.66 (0.62)	0.60 (0.63)	0.39 (0.57)	-0.48 (0.97)	-1.25 (0.89)
War of attrition	2.23*** (0.55)	—	—	1.19* (0.63)	1.84** (0.76)	0.22 (0.74)
Battle deaths	—	0.43* (0.23)	—	—	—	—
War duration	—	—	0.88** (0.38)	—	—	—
Liberal democracy*	—	—	—	3.76*** (1.32)	—	5.53*** (1.71)
War of attrition	—	—	—	—	—	—
Territorial annexation	3.54*** (0.78)	3.06*** (0.65)	3.27*** (0.67)	3.70*** (0.82)	3.18*** (1.04)	3.44*** (1.22)
Military balance	0.74 (1.29)	0.17 (1.35)	0.20 (1.48)	0.91 (1.43)	-0.68 (1.71)	0.73 (2.31)
Material capabilities	0.80** (0.33)	0.69** (0.28)	0.75*** (0.26)	0.87** (0.34)	-0.06 (0.58)	0.06 (0.64)
Deterrence	0.36 (0.86)	0.45 (0.73)	0.63 (0.80)	0.28 (0.83)	—	—
Target of civilian victimization	1.95** (0.82)	2.27*** (0.87)	1.99** (0.88)	2.10** (0.82)	1.99* (1.19)	2.41* (1.27)
Insular state	0.12 (0.64)	0.56 (0.63)	0.29 (0.65)	0.41 (0.83)	1.21 (1.48)	1.30 (1.33)
Post-1945	-0.99 (0.78)	-0.91 (0.73)	-1.15 (0.75)	-0.85 (0.74)	—	—
Constant	-8.02*** (2.24)	-8.31*** (1.85)	-8.84*** (1.82)	-8.19*** (2.31)	-2.58 (3.86)	-2.73 (3.97)
N	162	158	163	162	63	63
Log likelihood	-51.98	-58.57	-58.17	-47.30	-20.98	-17.58
Wald Chi ²	36.77***	39.81***	54.86***	48.15***	36.08***	65.33***
Pseudo-R ²	0.47	0.39	0.41	0.52	0.39	0.49

NOTE: Huber-White robust standard errors (clustered on each war) appear in parentheses.
* = 0.10; ** = 0.05; *** = 0.01

ance between belligerents is not correlated with civilian targeting. Attacks on noncombatants, furthermore, appear to cluster in particular wars, as states whose civilian populations are victimized tend to strike the civilians of their opponents, indicating that revenge or retaliation may be a motive for civilian victimization. Deterrence—as shown by this variable’s lack of significance—may delay a resort to civilian victimization but cannot prevent it entirely. Insular states do not appear to be more prone to civilian victimization than land powers. Finally, the consistently negative (if not significant) coefficient for the variable “post-1945” shows that interstate wars after 1945 are probably less likely to be characterized by civilian targeting.

Model 4 in Table 3 tests the hypothesis that democracies are more prone than autocracies to target civilians, but only in costly wars of attrition when democracies’ heightened cost-sensitivity and aversion to defeat are most likely to be present. I created an interaction term that takes the value of 1 if a state was a democracy involved in a war of attrition. The coefficient for this interaction term in model 4 is substantively large, positive, and significant, indicating that all states tend to target noncombatants in wars of attrition, but democracies are differentially more likely to do so than nondemocracies. Indeed, liberal democracies targeted civilians 81 percent of the time they were involved in wars of attrition, compared with 54 percent for autocratic states.⁷⁴ This finding supports the argument that the heightened cost-sensitivity and defeat-phobia of democracies increase the likelihood that these states will target civilians should they become involved in protracted wars of attrition.

Finally, models 5 and 6 restrict the sample to conflicts that occurred after World War II, the period when one would expect democracies to be most observant of the laws of war.⁷⁵ The results, however, are nearly identical to those reported in the first four models. In model 5, which replicates model 1, wars of attrition, wars of territorial expansion, and target of civilian victimization are positive and significant, whereas regime type and cultural differences have little impact. Model 6, which replicates model 4, again demonstrates that democracies are more likely than autocracies to target civilians in protracted wars of attrition.

The statistical evidence, therefore, provides strong evidence that democracies are not restrained from targeting civilians in interstate wars. Large cultural

74. Among democracies, only France (Roman Republic, 1849), Italy (World War I), and Israel (War of Attrition, 1969–70) did not target civilians in wars of attrition. Given that only the last of these three is coded as a democracy by Polity, the relationship is even stronger using that coding: 93 percent versus 50 percent.

75. In this sample, the deterrence variable must be dropped because it perfectly predicts civilian victimization. The variable for post-1945 is also dropped.

differences between belligerents also appear to be unrelated to the danger of civilian victimization. The increased sensitivity to costs engendered by democratic institutions, on the other hand, does seem to have increased the propensity of democracies to use civilian victimization as a means to win wars and conserve on their own losses, but only in long, costly conflicts. Wars of attrition, and wars to conquer and annex enemy territory, however, are the key drivers of civilian victimization for all states.

CAUSE AND EFFECT: DOES DESPERATION PRECEDE CIVILIAN VICTIMIZATION?

One limitation of my data is that it is not a time-series: it codes whether a conflict was a war of attrition or territorial annexation and whether a belligerent targeted civilians, but it does not specify the order in which these two events occurred. The desperation model, however, implies that attrition precedes civilian victimization (in the appetite-for-conquest model, civilian victimization may occur at any point in the conflict, but it often occurs early). To ensure that the relationship between wars of attrition and civilian victimization is not spurious, it is necessary to ascertain whether cause came before effect.

I compiled a list of all cases of civilian victimization in wars of attrition and compared the approximate date that the conflict became a war of attrition with the date that civilian victimization began.⁷⁶ I found that in 30 out of 36 instances—83 percent—the war became static or a siege occurred before or around the time belligerents targeted civilians. Regarding the six apparent outliers—Russia (Russo-Turkish war, 1877–78), Greece (Greco-Turkish war, 1919–22), Germany (Poland, 1939), Germany and Romania (vs. the Soviet Union, 1941–45), and North Korea (1950–53)—three points are noteworthy.

First, each of these cases was also a war of territorial annexation. The reason that civilian victimization preceded the transformation of the conflict into a war of attrition, therefore, was that it was triggered by a different cause: the perceived need to repress or eliminate unwanted or threatening groups in conquered territory. Russia, for example, killed and expelled Turks from Bulgaria to ensure “the existence of an overwhelmingly Slavic Bulgaria after the war.”⁷⁷ Greece, too, targeted ethnic Turks upon landing in western Anatolia in 1919; Germany killed Poles and Polish Jews in 1939; Germany and Romania attacked Jews in the Soviet Union in the summer of 1941; and the North Koreans killed anticommunist Koreans upon taking Seoul in late June 1950.

Second, in 4 of the 6 cases, belligerents implemented additional strategies of

76. This table may be viewed at <http://www.duke.edu/~downes>.

77. McCarthy, *Death and Exile*, p. 68.

civilian victimization after the conflict bogged down into a war of attrition: Russia at the siege of Plevna in autumn 1877; Greece after its defeat on the Sakkaria River in September 1921; Germany at the siege of Warsaw in September 1939; and Germany again at the sieges of Leningrad and Stalingrad. Finally, recoding these 6 cases as nonwars of attrition does not affect the results reported in Table 3: the coefficient for war of attrition remains positive and significant at better than the 1 percent level.

A closer look, therefore, reveals that in most wars of attrition, desperation was the sole cause of civilian victimization, and in most of the others, attrition was one cause of civilian victimization. In only 2 of the 36 cases (Romania in 1941 and North Korea in 1950) did attrition not influence a choice to target noncombatants. The relationship between wars of attrition and civilian victimization, therefore, is not spurious.

The British Blockade of Germany in World War I

The remainder of this article examines the British-led starvation blockade of the Central Powers in World War I—which contributed to about 1 million excess civilian deaths in Germany and Austria-Hungary, and may have speeded the collapse of these countries in 1918—to assess the causal logic of the desperation model.⁷⁸ The statistics showed a correlation between desperation in wars of attrition and civilian victimization, but correlation does not equal causation. Although a single case study cannot prove a causal link beyond a reasonable doubt, process tracing can show that the mechanisms posited by the theory operate as advertised and warrant further exploration. Moreover, the blockade case is characterized by within-case variation in both costs and expectations of victory, on the one hand, and civilian victimization, on the other. This permits what Alexander George and Andrew Bennett label a “before-after research design” in which I can observe whether change in the independent variables resulted in corresponding change in the dependent variable.⁷⁹

78. Germany's Health Office estimated that 763,000 civilians died from the effects of the blockade, not counting 150,000 influenza deaths in 1918; a second estimate performed ten years later put these figures at 424,000 and 209,000, respectively. C. Paul Vincent, *The Politics of Hunger: The Allied Blockade of Germany, 1915–1919* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1985), p. 141; and Offer, *The First World War*, p. 34. Austria-Hungary lost an estimated 467,000 civilians to the effects of the blockade. Leo Grebler and Wilhelm Winkler, *The Cost of the World War to Germany and Austria-Hungary* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1940), p. 147. For data on the effects of the blockade on the German population, see Offer, *The First World War*, pp. 21–78; and Vincent, *The Politics of Hunger*, pp. 124–156. On the possible influence of civilian deprivation on the German decision to surrender, see Offer, *The First World War*, pp. 72, 76.

79. Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2005), pp. 166–167, 221.

This study of the British decision to institute a starvation blockade in 1915 relies on both congruence and process tracing: I show that the outcome of the case is consistent with the desperation explanation (and inconsistent with the alternative explanations), and that desperation to win and to reduce the costs of fighting explains the decisionmaking process in the case. The British blockade is also an appealing case to study because the alternative explanations generate opposite predictions from my theory. Great Britain was a liberal democracy in 1914 and thus (according to one version of the argument) should have been relatively unlikely to victimize noncombatants. Britain and Germany were also members of a common European civilization and were not separated by vast cultural differences, factors that also predict a low likelihood of civilian victimization. Of the arguments under consideration, only the desperation theory predicts that Britain would target civilians in this case. Process tracing also allows me to determine whether increased levels of cost sensitivity play a causal role in making civilian victimization even more likely when a democracy is involved.

BRITISH WAR AIMS AND EXPECTATIONS

Britain went to war in August 1914 for limited objectives and expected a brief, low-cost conflict. Despite Foreign Secretary Edward Grey's tireless attempts to convince the cabinet that Britain's security rested on preventing a single power from dominating the continent, the ministers initially "accept[ed] a much narrower definition of what constituted British interests, namely the independence of Belgium and the exclusion of the Germans from the Channel ports." But British objectives quickly escalated: by September, Grey and Chancellor of the Exchequer David Lloyd George were publicly calling for the destruction of "Prussian militarism" (i.e., regime change in Germany). British leaders, however, did not envision committing the military means to match their ambitious political goals. Britain, they thought, "would fight a relatively inexpensive naval and economic war while France and Russia would crush Germany on land." The expansion of British war aims to include the overthrow of the German government and its rebirth as a democracy, incongruously, had little effect on this view. As a leading scholar of British war objectives notes, "In 1914–15 they [the cabinet] sought to carry out these aims by employing strictly limited means, by relying on economic pressure and their allies to defeat the enemy whilst Britain itself stood largely aloof from the land war."⁸⁰

80. Quotations are from David French, *British Strategy and War Aims, 1914–1916* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1986), p. 22; Labs, "Beyond Victory," p. 42; and French, *British Strategy and War Aims*, p. 23.

The British policy of limited liability was combined with a belief that the war would be short. First Lord of the Admiralty Winston Churchill, for example, “thought the weight of the evidence pointed to a short though terrible war,” a sentiment shared by Lloyd George. Lord Esher, a member of the Committee of Imperial Defense, was told by the chief of staff of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) that “the war will last three months if everything goes well, and perhaps eight months if things do not go so satisfactorily.” The only prominent Briton who dissented from this view was Lord Kitchener, but even he predicted a quick defeat for France. Most of Kitchener’s colleagues found his belief that the war would last three years to be “unlikely, if not incredible . . . [and] believed the war would be over before a million new men could be trained and equipped.”⁸¹

EARLY CONSTRAINTS ON USING STARVATION AS A WEAPON

Aside from the belief among British policymakers that the war breaking out on the continent would be over quickly, three other factors constrained immediate resort to a starvation blockade. First, by the time the effects of such a blockade began to be felt in Germany, France might already be defeated. The realization that sole reliance on a naval strategy “could not make their homeland secure” contributed to the decision to send the BEF to fight alongside the French army in the event of a war with Germany: “A limited expeditionary force was designed to sustain the allies in the field while the blockade [on military contraband] did its slow work.”⁸²

Second, British leaders feared that restricting German trade too aggressively might push the north European neutrals into the war on Germany’s side or—even worse—cause a breach with the United States. Indeed, repeated controversies flared in the fall of 1914 between the United States and Britain over restrictions on U.S. trade with Germany. U.S. leaders were not concerned about the moral rectitude of starving German civilians; rather, they worried that U.S. businesses would suffer from an all-encompassing British embargo.⁸³ Appeasing U.S. concerns was crucial to Britain’s prospects because the British

81. Quotations are from Geoffrey Blainey, *The Causes of War*, 3d ed. (New York: Free Press, 1988), p. 37; Oliver Viscount Esher, *Journals and Letters of Reginald Viscount Esher*, Vol. 3: 1910–1915 (London: Ivor, Nicholson, and Watson, 1938), p. 177; and Grey of Fallodon, *Twenty-Five Years, 1892–1916*, Vol. 2 (New York: Frederick A. Stokes, 1925), p. 71.

82. Paul M. Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery* (London: Ashfield, 1976), pp. 230–231; and Offer, *The First World War*, p. 301.

83. Particularly contentious were restrictions on the cotton and copper trades, both of which were dominated by U.S. producers. See A.C. Bell, *A History of the Blockade of Germany and of the Countries Associated with Her in the Great War, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria, and Turkey, 1914–1918* (London: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1961), pp. 46–58, 119–142.

War Department intended to purchase large amounts of arms and munitions from Bethlehem Steel, a source of supply that the U.S. government could easily cut off.⁸⁴ Aware of this possibility, British officials repeatedly assured the United States that the aims of the blockade were limited. As Foreign Minister Grey put it in a telegram to Britain's ambassador to the United States in late September 1914, "We have only two objects in our proclamations: to restrict supplies for the German army and to restrict the supply to Germany of materials essential for making munitions of war."⁸⁵

Finally, the reigning norms and laws of naval warfare—codified in the Declaration of London, which was negotiated by the leading naval powers in 1908–09—undercut Britain's ability to starve its adversary. "The Declaration of London," argues Avner Offer, "preserved the essence of the Declaration of Paris [in 1856]. It extended neutral rights and immunities by defining contraband and defining it narrowly, and especially by the introduction of a free list." Under these rules, as Paul Vincent points out, "foodstuffs consigned to the German government but unloaded at Rotterdam would have been immune from capture by British cruisers during World War I."⁸⁶

The London Declaration established three categories of goods. The first category, absolute contraband, consisted of items useful solely for military operations, such as arms and ammunition. Conditional contraband, the second category, included articles that could be used either for civilian or military purposes, including foodstuffs, forage, fuel, and lubricants. Finally, the declaration established a free list of items that could never be declared contraband, such as cotton, rubber, fertilizers, wool, raw hides, and several metallic ores.⁸⁷ Whether a cargo was subject to seizure by a blockading force depended on the military or nonmilitary nature of the goods in question as well as their destination. Absolute contraband, for example, could be seized if it was destined for the enemy country, territory occupied by the enemy, or the adversary's armed forces. Similarly, conditional contraband was subject to capture if these items were consigned to the enemy's armed forces or government. The difference between the two categories was that while absolute contraband could be seized no matter what its immediate destination so long as its ultimate destination was the enemy, conditional contraband was not liable to capture if delivered to a neutral port, even if its final destination lay in the enemy's homeland. Put

84. *Ibid.*, pp. 50–51, 228–229.

85. Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 115.

86. Offer, *The First World War*, p. 276; and Vincent, *The Politics of Hunger*, p. 31. Although Britain was not a signatory to the declaration in 1914, its rules had been incorporated into the Admiralty's regulations on how it would wage war.

87. Vincent, *The Politics of Hunger*, pp. 30–31.

simply, the doctrine of “continuous voyage” applied to absolute contraband but not conditional contraband.

Despite ambitious pronouncements by the Allies, the blockade confiscated only a handful of cargoes in 1914. The Central Powers quickly lost their ability to reprovise themselves with their own ships (most were seized or interned in neutral ports), but—as allowed under the Declaration of London—Germany began transferring its seaborne trade to neutral ships docking in neutral ports. In response, the British moved to interdict German imports by promulgating two orders in council. The first order, issued on August 20, 1914, stated that “conditional contraband destined to enemy armed forces, or to contractors known to be dealing with the enemy state, was liable to capture regardless of the port to which the vessel was bound.”⁸⁸ This measure, however—which clearly violated the London Declaration—did little to interdict German trade: because Entente agents “had not yet collected any of that sufficient evidence upon which particular cargoes could be condemned . . . the order in council of 20th August was still no more than the assertion of a legal principle.”⁸⁹ In the face of mounting evidence that the quantity of goods reaching Germany through neutral countries was increasing rather than decreasing, London issued a second order in council on October 29. This proclamation stated that the British would presume that conditional contraband aboard any vessel headed to a neutral port was bound for the enemy and thus liable to capture if such cargoes (1) lacked a specific recipient, (2) were consigned “to order” of the shipper, meaning that they could possibly be shipped on to Germany, or (3) were consigned to an individual in enemy territory. Moreover, article 2 of the order proclaimed the right to designate a neutral country an enemy base of supply if it could be shown that Germany was drawing supplies for its army through that country. In other words, Britain threatened to treat a neutral country supplying Germany’s armed forces as if it were a part of German territory. This measure would allow Britain to seize shipments of conditional contraband headed for these ports and compel the shippers to present evidence that the cargo was not on its way to the enemy.⁹⁰

Despite the repudiation of the Declaration of London’s provisions on conditional contraband, however, the British were still waging a limited war on German commerce.⁹¹ The August and October orders in council asserted the

88. Marion C. Siney, *The Allied Blockade of Germany, 1914–1916* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1957), p. 22.

89. Bell, *A History of the Blockade*, p. 53.

90. This threat helped to induce Germany’s neutral neighbors to enter into negotiations to restrict voluntarily their export trade with Germany. This practice, known as “rationing,” became a key part of the blockade.

91. Bell, *A History of the Blockade*, p. 51; and Siney, *The Allied Blockade of Germany, 1914–1916*, p. 25.

Entente's rights to confiscate cargoes bound for the enemy, but these rights were still largely hypothetical and did not include efforts to interdict food supplies bound for civilians. "Consequently," observes Paul Vincent, "the fleet rarely interfered with neutral trade during the first three months of the war," arresting only three neutral vessels.⁹² Britain's top naval official, Winston Churchill, affirmed the limited nature of the blockade, commenting in the House of Commons as late as February 15, 1915, that although "there are good reasons for believing that the economic pressure which the Navy exerts is beginning to be felt in Germany, . . . So far . . . we have not attempted to stop imports of food."⁹³

CHANGED EXPECTATIONS ABOUT THE COSTS AND LIKELIHOOD OF VICTORY

British dreams of a short, low-cost war collided head-on with reality in the fall of 1914. By the time the Battle of the Marne began on September 5, the BEF had already lost more than 15,000 troops killed, wounded, or taken prisoner. Another 24,000 British soldiers were killed in October and November in the fighting at Ypres, bringing total British casualties by the end of the year to almost 100,000, nearly two-thirds of the BEF's original strength. At the conclusion of the First Battle of Ypres, which ended the race to the sea, both sides dug in along a front of 300 miles from the Flemish coast in Belgium to the border of Switzerland.⁹⁴

The results of the five months of combat in 1914 shattered the British cabinet's strategy of obtaining "maximum victory at minimum cost," and "most decision-makers realized that the magnitude of the issues at stake now pointed to a prolonged conflict." Already in October, Lord Esher wrote in his journal: "Anticipations of an early defeat by the Allies of Germany have been falsified by events, and all indications to-day point to a long continuance of the struggle." Esher's early recognition gradually dawned on the cabinet by the end of 1914. In late December Herbert Asquith, the prime minister, noted that he was "profoundly dissatisfied with the immediate prospect—an enormous waste of life and money day after day with no appreciable progress."⁹⁵

92. Vincent, *The Politics of Hunger*, p. 38; and Bell, *A History of the Blockade*, p. 44.

93. Churchill in *The Parliamentary Debates*, 5th Ser., Vol. 69: *House of Commons, Second Volume of Session, 1914–15* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1944), pp. 937–938.

94. Figures in this paragraph are from Martin Gilbert, *The First World War: A Complete History* (New York: Henry Holt, 1994), p. 68 (early casualties); John Keegan, *The First World War* (London: Hutchinson, 1998), p. 143 (Ypres); and Spencer C. Tucker, *The Great War, 1914–18* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), p. 38 (total 1914 casualties).

95. Quotations are from David French, "Allies, Rivals, and Enemies: British Strategy and War Aims during the First World War," in John Turner, ed., *Britain and the First World War* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988), p. 25; Esher, *Journals and Letters of Reginald Viscount Esher*, p. 192; and Earl of Oxford and Asquith, *Memories and Reflections, 1852–1927* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1928), p. 62.

In separate letters to Asquith at the end of the year, both Lloyd George and Churchill cited the expectation of costly fighting for little gain on the western front as the rationale for opening new fronts.⁹⁶ Lloyd George commented after a visit to the front in late 1914 that “any attempt to force the carefully-prepared German lines in the west would end in failure and in appalling loss of life.” The prime minister did not need much convincing, noting in a private letter on December 30, 1914, that “the losses involved in the trench-jumping operations now going on on both sides are enormous & out of all proportion to the ground gained.” Similarly, Esher attributed the deadlock to “the physical and material conditions of modern war, that appear to tend rather in the direction of siege than of free manoeuvre.”⁹⁷

Britain’s losses, although small in absolute terms, were staggering as a percentage of its total strength and represented the bulk of the country’s professional army. The losses of Britain’s allies, however, made the “business as usual” strategy impossible: French casualties numbered almost 1 million men, while those of the Russians came to 1.5 million.⁹⁸ The Entente had successfully halted the German juggernaut, but the cost of doing so had severely weakened Britain’s continental allies, upon whose shoulders the British had hoped to put most of the burden of fighting the Germans. “By December 1914,” David French argues, “it was clear that this was unrealistic. Although the French and Russians thwarted the Germans’ plan to achieve a quick victory in a two-front war, their armies suffered horribly in doing so and by the end of 1914 the enemy was in occupation of large tracts of Allied territory.”⁹⁹ Germany began to extend peace feelers in the hope of detaching one of these powers from the Entente. Fearful of defection, the British strategy of “fighting to the last Russian” was no longer tenable. By the beginning of 1915, “British strategy therefore shifted towards being seen to be doing whatever they could to give their allies material and moral assistance.”¹⁰⁰ Sending a large British army to the continent was no longer avoidable, which meant that the costs of the war would vastly exceed what Britain had initially anticipated.

96. David Lloyd George, *War Memoirs, 1914–1915* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1933), p. 317; and Martin Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill, Vol. 3: 1914–1916: The Challenge of War* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1971), pp. 225–226.

97. For these quotations, see David Lloyd George, “Suggestions as to the Military Position,” CAB 42/1/8, p. 2; *H.H. Asquith Letters to Venetia Stanley*, sel. and ed. Michael and Eleanor Brock (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 345; and Lord Esher, “The War: After Six Months,” January 29, 1915, CAB 42/1/29.

98. The French figure is from Tucker, *The Great War, 1914–18*, p. 38; the Russian from Keegan, *The First World War*, p. 184.

99. French, “Allies, Rivals, and Enemies,” p. 25.

100. *Ibid.*, pp. 25, 26.

INSTITUTION OF THE STARVATION BLOCKADE

As British leaders realized that the war would be far more costly and protracted than they had originally believed, they sought ways to continue to prosecute it without paying the awful blood price of trench warfare on the western front. Several members of the cabinet advocated a peripheral strategy of attacking Germany's weaker allies, what Lloyd George described as "bringing Germany down by the process of knocking the props under her."¹⁰¹ Several such operations were mounted, including the opening of the fronts at Gallipoli and Salonica, as well as in the Middle East, and the seizure of German colonies in Africa; none, however, was decisive.

Another weapon Britain employed was to tighten the naval blockade and use it to "stop all German trade, imports and exports alike, without reference to its contraband or noncontraband character," including food.¹⁰² This strategy was formalized in the order in council of March 1, 1915, which declared that "the British and French governments will hold themselves free to detain and take into port ships carrying goods of presumed enemy destination, ownership or origin."¹⁰³ The German declaration of submarine warfare on February 4, a result of a series of tit-for-tat escalations since the beginning of the war and Germany's perception that Britain was already trying to starve German civilians, provided Britain with an excellent pretext to interdict German food imports in a way that avoided offending neutral opinion. Indeed, as the costs of the war rose and the prospect of it ending any time soon plummeted, the deterrent effect of alienating the powerful United States eroded: as Foreign Secretary Grey's "confidence in the war's quick termination lessened, his determination to preserve American friendship [through restraints on the blockade] similarly weakened."¹⁰⁴ Admiralty officials, however, did not believe that German U-boats posed a serious threat to British trade: "Losses no doubt will be incurred," Churchill warned, "but we believe that no vital injury can be done."¹⁰⁵ Thus it was not the threat to British trade represented by the U-boats that sparked the order to cut off all German imports and exports. Rather, British authorities seized on the perceived intention of Germany to sink indiscriminately all merchant vessels in the North Sea as a means to institute terms that were not previously acceptable to neutral states, calculating

101. Lloyd George memo of January 1, 1915, quoted in Lloyd George, *War Memoirs, 1914-1915*, p. 326.

102. Siney, *The Allied Blockade of Germany, 1914-1916*, p. 67.

103. Quoted in Bell, *A History of the Blockade*, p. 233.

104. Vincent, *Politics of Hunger*, p. 38.

105. *The Parliamentary Debates*, 5th Ser., Vol. 69, p. 937. Indeed, the 1915 submarine campaign was hardly unrestricted. See Philip K. Lundeberg, "The German Naval Critique of the U-Boat Campaign, 1915-1918," *Military Affairs*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (Autumn 1963), p. 110 n. 35.

that the heinousness of the German violation of international law would pave the way. In this estimation, the British were correct: U.S. protests were muted, and the Scandinavian countries confined themselves to a pro forma note of protest.

The underlying cause of this escalation against Germany's civilian population, however, was the British realization at the end of 1914 and beginning of 1915 that Britain was engaged in a protracted war of attrition in which the country would need to use every weapon at its disposal to prevail. As leader of the Conservative opposition in Parliament Andrew Bonar Law put it after hearing Asquith read the reprisal order on March 1, "In taking that course the Government will have, not the support of the House of Commons only, but it will have the support to the end, of the whole of the people of this country when they determine that no power which is in their hands will be left unused to bring at the earliest moment this terrible conflict to an end." Maurice Hankey, secretary of the Committee of Imperial Defense, agreed, writing at the end of 1914, "If our main military effort against German territory is unattainable for the present, the principal weapon remaining is economic pressure, and this, in the writer's opinion, is the greatest asset we have in the war." Asquith himself acknowledged that denying food to Germany might cause "hardship" to the civilian population, but averred that "under existing conditions there is no form of economic pressure to which we do not consider ourselves entitled to resort."¹⁰⁶

Despite a concerted effort to conceal their true intentions after the war, there is little doubt that British leaders intended to starve the German people, hoping that the suffering inflicted would destroy their morale.¹⁰⁷ In response to a memorandum by Lord Crewe in June 1915 querying "whether we should lose anything material by ceasing to prohibit the import of all foodstuffs into Germany through neutral ports and by falling back, as far as foodstuffs are concerned, upon the ordinary rules that apply to conditional contraband,"¹⁰⁸ the British government in an internal memo frankly admitted its intention to starve German civilians. "Although we cannot hope to starve Germany out this year," Hankey wrote, "the possibility that we may be able to do so next year cannot be dismissed. . . . In view of this possibility it would appear to be most inexpedient at the present time to decide even in principle on a relaxation of our blockade." Hankey argued that although neither battlefield reverses nor

106. Bonar Law and Asquith, respectively, are quoted in *The Parliamentary Debates*, 5th Ser., Vol. 70, p. 609 and pp. 600–601. For Hankey's words, see his memo "The Apparent Deadlock on the Western Front," December 28, 1914, CAB 37/122/194, pp. 3–4.

107. On official British silence regarding the blockade, see Offer, *The First World War*, pp. 227–229.

108. "Memorandum by Lord Crewe," June 18, 1915, CAB 37/130/15, p. 1.

“economic and food pressure” would prove decisive on their own, the combination of the two could lead to the collapse of enemy resistance. Moreover, Hankey averred, “in view of the moderate degree of success which has attended our military pressure, we cannot afford to forgo any one of these means.”¹⁰⁹ U.S. leaders expressed similar sentiments when they entered the war two years later: commenting on the U.S. policy of total embargo, a *Times* correspondent remarked, “While it is realized here that this complete starving out of Germany will bring keen suffering to non-combatants, the United States takes the position that every measure tending to hasten the end of the war will save thousands of American lives and millions of American dollars, and that it would be folly to permit supplies to reach Germany directly or indirectly, as the only effect would be to prolong the sufferings of the world.”¹¹⁰ The blockade, Bell concludes, “originally directed solely against the armed forces of the enemy . . . had been diverted from them, by pressure of circumstances, and re-directed against the enemy population.”¹¹¹

The abortive British plan to burn German and Austro-Hungarian grain crops using incendiary devices dropped from aircraft provides further evidence of British intentions. In a detailed report dated April 1, 1915, Hankey and two others concluded that one-third of German wheat and rye was vulnerable to air attack from Britain, France, and Russia, whereas 50 percent of Hungarian wheat and 35 percent of its rye lay within the range of Allied aircraft.¹¹² The report’s authors contemplated using small incendiary bombs to burn the enemy’s ripe corn.¹¹³ The scheme appears to have been vetoed by the French, who feared German retaliation against their own crops.¹¹⁴

British government officials were by no means unanimous that the starvation blockade would succeed, yet they proceeded with it anyway. Some officials—notably Hankey—were optimistic about the effects of blockade. Others disagreed: “The process of economic exhaustion alone,” opined Lloyd

109. “Notes on Lord Crewe’s Memorandum,” June 23, 1915, CAB 37/130/25, pp. 1, 2.

110. “The New Blockade,” *Times* (London), October 5, 1917.

111. Bell, *A History of the Blockade*, p. 117.

112. M.P.A. Hankey, G. Herbert Fowler, and Mervyn O’Gorman, “Proposed Devastation of the Enemy’s Crops,” April 1, 1915, CAB 42/2/16.

113. The report also recommended using incendiaries carried by balloons, but the cabinet ruled this out as being too indiscriminate. See M.P.A. Hankey, “Proposed Devastation of the Enemy’s Crops: Report of a Conference,” September 28, 1915, CAB 42/3/32. The British made much of the humanity of burning German crops and blockade compared to the brutality of the enemy’s practice of sinking merchant ships, and tried to shift the blame for any harm done to civilians by these policies to the German government’s refusal to surrender. Hankey, Fowler, and O’Gorman, “Proposed Devastation of the Enemy’s Crops”; and A.J. Balfour, *The British Blockade* (London: Darling and Son, 1915), p. 4.

114. See “Proposed Devastation of the Enemy’s Crops: Report of a Conference,” p. 4. References to this plan disappear after 1915.

George, "will not bring us a triumphant peace as long as Germany is in possession of these rich allied territories. No country has ever given in under such pressure, apart from defeat in the field."¹¹⁵ Indeed, the British could only hope that the cumulative effect of future military victories and economic deprivation would prove decisive, as there was little evidence in 1915 that the blockade would quickly lead to a German collapse.¹¹⁶ Despite these uncertain views, British leaders believed they could not afford to abstain from the use of every means at their disposal that might contribute to subduing Germany.

THE CONTRIBUTION OF DEMOCRACY

There is little evidence that liberal norms acted as a restraint on British blockade policy. On the contrary, the Parliamentary opposition and the press routinely pilloried the Balfour and Lloyd George governments for being too soft on Germany and on the neutral countries supplying the Germans with foodstuffs.¹¹⁷ Some critics actually charged that the Foreign Office was preventing the British navy from doing all that it could.¹¹⁸ In December 1916, for example, the City of London passed a resolution condemning the feeble enforcement of the blockade and calling on the government to permit the British navy to tighten the ring around Germany.¹¹⁹ One member of Parliament went so far as to say that "the policy of agreements with neutral countries was exceedingly unpopular. The attitude of the ordinary Englishman was that he did not like to have any truck with any kind of arrangement which would directly or indirectly benefit his enemies."¹²⁰

Even after the war ended, many Britons argued that the blockade should be maintained to punish the Germans for starting the war. A few days after the war ended, several British newspapers denounced German pleas for food as "Hun food snivel" and later denounced candidates for Parliament who displayed "any tenderness for the Hun."¹²¹ "In December 1918," writes Vincent, "few Englishmen were prepared to be receptive to German accounts of starva-

115. Lloyd George, "Suggestions as to the Military Position," p. 6.

116. See "Food Supplies of Germany," June 2, 1915, CAB 37/129/7, p. 4; and "Report on the Working of Food Legislation in Germany during the War, August to December 1914," July 1915, CAB 42/3/13.

117. "House of Commons: The Blockade," *Times* (London), March 16, 1917.

118. Bell, *A History of the Blockade*, pp. 408, 449–452, and Siney, *The Allied Blockade of Germany, 1914–1916*, pp. 101–102, 129–132.

119. "Full Use of Sea Power," *Times* (London), December 2, 1916.

120. "Two Blockade Debates," *Times* (London), March 28, 1917. Some Britons positively reveled in German suffering: one article published in September 1918 commented approvingly that "not only are ten thousands of unborn Germans destined to a life of physical inferiority . . . but also that thousands of Germans, not even yet conceived, will have to face the same fate." Quoted in Werner Schaeffer, *War against Women and Children* (Scotch Plains, N.J.: Flanders Hall, 1941), p. 1.

121. Quoted in Harold Nicolson, *Peacemaking, 1919* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1939), p. 61.

tion. According to the generally accepted consensus, appeals for food were likely to be another instance of 'Hun' trickery."¹²² Indeed, article 26 of the armistice continued the blockade, which the Allies used to wring compliance with its terms from Germany.¹²³ The first shipment of food relief did not arrive in Germany until late March 1919; the blockade itself was not terminated until July.

Although the policy of starving Germany won widespread public approval, and members of Parliament and the public applied substantial pressure to the British government, the evidence for democracy as a cause of civilian victimization is not strong. British officials, for instance, did not respond to repeated calls early in the war to declare cotton absolute contraband, for fear of unduly alienating the United States. Later on, despite intense parliamentary criticism of the rationing agreements with neutral countries, the government refused to enact total embargoes that would please its domestic constituency but would probably drive those states into the enemy camp. In short, public preferences in Britain were punitive toward "the Hun" and viewed the blockade as a means to penalize Germany for starting the war and as revenge for the sinking of passenger liners and merchant ships. But government leaders, while they surely shared such outrage, viewed the blockade primarily as a tool to help win the war at an acceptable cost for Britain, and ratcheted up the pressure slowly so as not to drive neutral countries into the enemy camp. Democratic accountability, therefore, did not cause British leaders to take a more severe stance toward German civilians than they might have otherwise.

Conclusion

The targeting and killing of noncombatants has always been a regular—if abhorrent—feature of war. In the post-Napoleonic era, belligerents in interstate wars used strategies that targeted civilians about one-third of the time. This article tries to ascertain why civilians find themselves in the crosshairs in some wars but not others, and which factors inhibit or promote civilian victimization in modern wars.

I argue that there are two circumstances in which states are likely to employ civilian victimization. First, when conflicts devolve into protracted and costly wars of attrition, belligerents target enemy noncombatants because they become desperate to win and to save lives on their own side. Using civilian victimization to coerce the other side by destroying civilian morale or under-

122. Vincent, *The Politics of Hunger*, p. 79.

123. Offer, *The First World War*, pp. 77–78.

mining the adversary's ability to fight may help to win the war and reduce costs at the same time. Civilian targeting in wars of attrition, however, rarely occurs early because coercive strategies do not deliver quick and decisive victories. Second, when a belligerent wages a war of territorial conquest and intends to annex land inhabited by an adversary's civilian population, civilian victimization is often utilized to cow the people into submission or to evict them altogether from the territory in question. Such a policy eliminates potential fifth columns, reduces the likelihood of future rescue operations, and solidifies the conqueror's claim to the territory. When the goal is annexation of territory, systematic attacks on civilians may begin right away because they pay immediate dividends.

Quantitative and qualitative evidence supports these arguments. A statistical analysis of interstate wars between 1816 and 2003 shows that states involved in costly, protracted wars, and belligerents aiming to conquer and annex enemy territory are more likely to target civilians. In most instances, attrition warfare preceded decisions to target noncombatants. The case study of Britain's imposition of a starvation blockade on the Central Powers in World War I traced how the expectations of British leaders regarding the cost and length of the war changed drastically in the winter of 1914–15. As trench warfare descended on the continent, the British searched for ways to prevail in the conflict at a reasonable cost. One means they hit upon was to tighten the naval blockade and deny food to the German population in the hope that going hungry would dampen their ardor for war.

Liberal democracies, far from being immune to these forces, victimize civilians in war just as often as autocracies, a pattern that continues in the post-World War II period. In fact, the statistical evidence shows that democracies are even more likely than autocracies to target noncombatants in wars of attrition. This may be because the electoral institutions of democracies give leaders greater incentives to target civilians to mitigate their costs of fighting or to win a stalemated war.

Further research is necessary to confirm or invalidate the implications of my analysis. First, more and better data on civilian casualties is needed to see whether my finding that democracies are just as likely as autocracies to target civilians also applies to the numbers of noncombatants they kill. My finding for interstate wars from 1816 to 2003, for example, clashes with Valentino, Huth, and Balch-Lindsay's finding that democracies are less likely to engage in mass killing in all types of wars after 1945. Acquiring actual numbers of civilian deaths would help to resolve this debate, as would obtaining these data for all types of wars over a greater period of time.

Second, further process tracing of cases is necessary to determine if democ-

racy actually plays a causal role in fostering civilian victimization in wars of attrition, or whether this correlation is the result of some other factor. The British blockade, for example, revealed a great deal of public outcry to starve “the Hun,” but this pressure was also present in Germany—a nondemocracy—and the impact of this pressure on policy is unclear, as the British government resisted calls in Parliament and in the press to tighten the blockade when it would have alienated key neutral powers. In the end it may not be possible to parse out the independent effects of each variable, but careful process tracing will help.

Finally, there remains the question of whether or not my arguments still apply today. My data set, after all, covers two centuries of history, and there is no guarantee that empirical regularities identified in the past will hold in the present or future. Critics might argue that civilian victimization by democracies in today’s world is unlikely for a variety of reasons, such as the growing salience of liberal norms in democratic societies, the “humanitarian” nature of many current democratic wars, the law-observant cultures of democratic militaries, the growing power of international law and norms against targeting civilians, the information revolution that beams violations of the laws of war around the globe in mere minutes, and the precision-guided munitions revolution that makes it possible to destroy targets with one smart bomb that fifty years ago would have required hundreds or thousands of dumb bombs.

If anything, however, the dilemma that democracies face has become more intransigent over time. On the one hand, today’s international environment generates significant reputational costs for targeting civilians. On the other hand, many analysts argue that democratic publics have become ever more reluctant to tolerate military deaths in battle, creating pressures on policymakers to conserve on casualties.¹²⁴

In fact, some evidence suggests that the cross-cutting pressures on democracies to preserve the lives of enemy civilians and their own soldiers at the same time have combined to create a hybrid form of civilian victimization that is more deniable but no less deadly. In the 1991 Persian Gulf War, for example, U.S. air strikes attempted to put pressure on Iraqi civilians without killing them by incapacitating Iraq’s electrical power grid. These strikes led to widespread civilian suffering, however, by eliminating the country’s ability to process sewage and purify water. I do not code this case as civilian victimization because the strategy was not directed at noncombatants themselves, and the

124. For example, see Edward N. Luttwak, “A Post-heroic Military Policy,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 75, No. 4 (July/August 1996), pp. 33–44; and Harvey M. Sapolsky and Jeremy Shapiro, “Casualties, Technology, and America’s Future Wars,” *Parameters*, Vol. 26, No. 2 (Summer 1996), pp. 119–127.

damage it did was apparently unforeseen.¹²⁵ But this attempt to remain within the rules of war (and thus avoid international condemnation) yet still pressure civilians ended in probably more than 100,000 deaths.¹²⁶ Similarly, although outside of the purview of this study, the economic sanctions on Iraq in the 1990s contributed to the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Iraqi civilians. Responsibility in this case was even more diffuse, however, as Western policymakers argued that Saddam Hussein was mainly to blame because he continued to defy the international community and hoarded the country's oil wealth rather than allow it to be spent on goods for the civilian population. Both of these episodes suggest the emergence of a new, indirect, more deniable means of exercising coercion by punishing noncombatants rather than the extinction of civilian victimization.

125. Daniel T. Kuehl, "Airpower vs. Electricity: Electric Power as a Target for Strategic Air Operations," in John Gooch, ed., *Airpower: Theory and Practice* (London: Frank Cass, 1995), pp. 254, 265 n. 57.

126. Alberto Ascherio et al., "Effect of the Gulf War on Infant and Child Mortality in Iraq," *New England Journal of Medicine*, September 24, 1992, p. 933; and Beth Osborne Daponte, "A Case Study in Estimating Casualties from War and Its Aftermath: The 1991 Persian Gulf War," *Physicians for Social Responsibility Quarterly*, Vol. 3 (1993), pp. 57–66.

Appendix: Construction of the Data Set

This appendix describes the procedures used to compile the data set employed in the statistical analysis and provides a list of the cases of civilian victimization it contains. The data set incorporates all states that fought in an interstate war between 1816 and 2003, a total of 323 countries in 100 wars. This list corresponds to the Correlates of War Interstate War Data, 1816–1997, version 3 (<http://pss.la.psu.edu>), with two exceptions. First, I added 7 recent wars: Chad-Libya (1987), Armenia-Azerbaijan (1992–94), Ethiopia-Eritrea (1998–2000), NATO-Yugoslavia (1999), India-Pakistan (1999), United States-Afghanistan (2001), and United States-Iraq (2003). Second, I divided World Wars I and II into separate conflicts (4 and 9, respectively) and the Vietnam and Persian Gulf Wars into 2 each: multiple states versus North Vietnam (1965–73), South versus North Vietnam (1973–75), Iraq versus Kuwait (1990), and coalition versus Iraq (1991).

Not all of these 323 states should remain in the analysis, however, because including them incorrectly assumes that each belligerent was equally capable of attacking enemy noncombatants, and that each also had the option of making this choice. The Franco-Spanish war (1823), for example, was fought entirely on Spanish soil. Spain simply had no ability to target French civilians even had it wanted to. Equating Spain's inability to victimize civilians with France's decision not to conflate two different types of nonevents. Subordinate alliance partners, furthermore, typically have little freedom to implement policies independently in a war in which they fight alongside a great power ally. A long list of countries technically participated on the United Nations' side in the Korean War, but the United States was in charge and was the only belligerent to deploy large air, ground, and sea forces. When UN forces bombed North Korean cities to rubble in the late fall and winter of 1950–51, it was not an Ethiopian, Belgian, or Filipino decision, it was a U.S. decision.

Because observations such as these are irrelevant for testing causal hypotheses,¹ the models presented in this article include only what I call "capable belligerents": countries that had access to enemy civilians because they either invaded their opponent's territory or possessed sufficient air or naval forces to implement strategic bombing or naval blockade. States that lacked access to enemy civilians were dropped from the analysis, leaving 175 belligerents in the data set. Substantial numbers of auxiliary belligerents, for example, were dropped from the Austro-Prussian (1866) and Franco-Prussian (1870–71) wars, World Wars I and II, and the Korean, Vietnam, and Persian Gulf Wars. Similarly, I eliminated states that were invaded and where fighting occurred solely in the victim state, such as Spain (1823), Morocco in the two Spanish-Moroccan wars (1859–60, 1909–10), China in the Sino-Japanese war (1894–95), and Ethiopia in the Italo-Ethiopian war (1935–36).

Some readers might wonder if dropping these cases could bias the results. To address this concern, all of the models in Table 3 were also run on the full data set (valid

1. These are cases where the outcome of interest is absent but was impossible. Relevant cases are those in which the outcome of interest is present and those where the outcome is not present but was possible. See James Mahoney and Gary Goertz, "The Possibility Principle: Choosing Negative Cases in Comparative Research," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 98, No. 4 (November 2004), pp. 653–669.

$N = 286$) as well as a data set consisting of “major belligerents” (i.e., those countries most directly involved in the fighting [valid $N = 230$]). In the Korean War, for example, this included North Korea, South Korea, the United States, and China. Results across these three data sets hardly change, indicating that the decision to drop minor belligerents and states incapable of harming an enemy’s civilians does not bias the analysis. The data set is available on the author’s website, <http://www.duke.edu/~downes>.

Appendix. Cases of Civilian Victimization in Interstate Wars, 1816–2003

War	State	Years	Liberal Democracy	Identity Difference	Attrition	Annexation
Franco-Prussian	Prussia	1870–71	0	0	1	1
Russo-Turkish	Russia	1877–78	0	1	1	1
Boxer Rebellion	China	1900	0	1	1	0
Boxer Rebellion	Russia	1900	0	1	1	0
Boxer Rebellion ^a	United Kingdom	1900	1	1	1	0
Boxer Rebellion ^a	United States	1900	1	1	1	0
Boxer Rebellion ^a	France	1900	1	1	1	0
First Balkan	Serbia	1912–13	0	1	1	1
First Balkan	Bulgaria	1912–13	0	1	1	1
First Balkan	Greece	1912–13	0 ^b	1	0	1
Second Balkan	Serbia	1913	0	0	0	1
Second Balkan	Greece	1913	0 ^b	0	0	1
Second Balkan	Bulgaria	1913	0	0	0	1
Second Balkan	Turkey	1913	0	1	0	1
World War I West	Germany	1914–18	0	0	1	0
World War I West	France	1914–18	1	0	1	0
World War I West	United Kingdom	1914–18	1	0	1	0
World War I West	United States	1917–18	1	0	1	0
Hungarian ^a	Romania	1919	0	0	0	1
Greco-Turkish	Greece	1919–22	0	1	1	1
Greco-Turkish	Turkey	1919–22	0	1	1	1
Franco-Turkish ^a	France	1919–21	1	1	0	0
Franco-Turkish ^a	Turkey	1919–21	0	1	0	1
Sino-Soviet ^a	Soviet Union	1929	0	1	0	0
Sino-Japanese	Japan	1931–33	0	1	1	0
Italo-Ethiopian	Italy	1935–36	0	1	0	1
Sino-Japanese	Japan	1937–45	0	1	1	1
Poland	Germany	1939	0	1	1	1
Russo-Finnish ^a	Soviet Union	1939–40	0	1	1	1
World War II West	Germany	1940–45	0	0	1	0
World War II West	United Kingdom	1940–45	1	0	1	0
World War II West	United States	1941–45	1	0	1	0
German-Yugoslav	Germany	1941	0	1	0	0
World War II East	Germany	1941–45	0	1	1	1
World War II East	Soviet Union	1941–45	0	1	1	1
World War II East	Romania	1941–44	0	0	1	1
Pacific War	United States	1941–45	1	1	1	0
Palestine	Israel	1948–49	1 ^c	1	1	1
Korea	N. Korea	1950–53	0	0	1	1
Korea	United States	1950–53	1	1	1	0
First Vietnamese	United States	1965–73	1	1	1	0
First Vietnamese	N. Vietnam	1965–73	0	0	1	1
Cyprus	Turkey	1974	1	1	0	1
Cyprus	Cyprus	1974	0	1	0	1
Cambodia-Vietnam	Cambodia	1975–79	0	0	0	0
Uganda-Tanzania	Uganda	1978–79	0	0	0	0
Iran-Iraq	Iran	1980–88	0	0	1	0
Iran-Iraq	Iraq	1980–88	0	0	1	0
Lebanon	Israel	1982	1	1	1	0
Persian Gulf ^a	Iraq	1991	0	0	0	0
Armenia-Azerbaijan	Armenia	1992–94	—	1	1	1
Armenia-Azerbaijan	Azerbaijan	1992–94	0	1	1	1

^aBorderline case because (1) few civilians were killed, or (2) evidence that civilian victimization was a state-directed strategy is ambiguous. Dropping these cases does not affect the results of the analysis.

^bCoded democratic by Polity 4, but not liberal by Doyle.

^cLiberal democracy that was in its first year as an independent state when war occurred. Israel is coded as a democracy owing to its history of democratic self-rule under the Jewish Agency, whereas Armenia—which had no such history—is coded as missing. Changing these codings does not affect the results.