Cleansing the Caliphate: Insurgent Violence against Sexual Minorities

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Why do insurgents target certain groups for extermination? Despite a great deal of attention to the targeting of civilian ethnic minorities, comparatively little scholarship exists on insurgent violence against sexual minorities (lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transsexual individuals). This article maintains that the decision to target sexual minorities follows three distinct logics: two strategic and one ideological. First, insurgents face an incentive to outbid rivals by targeting sexual minorities when homophobic violence is politically and socially legitimated. Second, territorial control creates an incentive for insurgents to signal their ability to selectively punish, which they can accomplish through homophobic violence. Third, revolutionary ideologies provide legitimation for exclusionary violence in the pursuit of transforming society. Statistical analysis of insurgent violence against sexual minorities from 1985 to 2015 lends strong support for these arguments. Process tracing of the spread of violence against sexual minorities in Iraq and Syria clarifies the strategic causal mechanisms. When progovernment militias targeted perceived homosexuals with impunity, antigay violence was adopted by insurgent groups seeking to legitimize their claims to power; violence then quickly spread to competing insurgents. Two additional cases from Latin America demonstrate that ideology plays an important role in influencing which groups embrace homophobic violence even under these strategic constraints.

Why do insurgents target certain groups for extermination? A large body of scholarship on civil wars now investigates the causes of mass killing, conflict severity, and civilian targeting ([Valentino 2014](#)). It provides significant insights into the conditions under which insurgents engage in indiscriminate or selective violence and terrorize civilians or adopt restraint toward noncombatants ([Kalyvas 2006](#); [Weinstein 2006](#); [Eck and Hultman 2007](#); [Stanton 2013](#)). Yet, such dichotomies fail to capture significant variation in the patterns of violence—the repertoire, targeting, technique, and frequency that characterizes organizational violence—that insurgent groups regularly use ([Gutiérrez-Sanín and Wood 2017](#)). Distinguishing only between more and less civilian victimization often overlooks the distinctiveness of identity-based violence ([Gutiérrez-Sanín and Wood 2017](#), 22). Thus, some scholars explore the causes of violence that targets specific ethnic groups ([Pape 2005](#); [Bhavnani 2006](#); [Fjelde and Hultman 2014](#)), but seldom does this research look to other forms of identity ([Gutiérrez-Sanín and Wood 2017](#), 23). Given that extremist groups like the Islamic State (IS) have targeted homosexuals, refugees, and religious minorities, academics and policymakers must better understand why some insurgents target nonethnic social groups.

This article examines the causes of insurgent violence against sexual minorities.[1] Political violence against the lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transsexual (LGBT) community is an especially puzzling form of civilian targeting, since sexual minorities, unlike many ethnic groups, do not threaten the basic goals of insurgents. They do not stake territorial claims, maintain allegiances to coethnics in neighboring states, or enjoy the capacity to engage in collective action against combatants. Why, then, do some insurgents divert effort and resources into targeting groups that do not pose a threat to their wartime goals or existence? Despite growing scholarly attention to related issues such as the occurrence of wartime sexual violence ([Wood 2009](#); [Leiby 2009](#); [Cohen 2013](#); [Cohen and Nordås 2015](#)), few studies investigate violence against sexual minorities. This is surprising. There is a sizeable literature on LGBT discrimination and antigay violence across numerous societies ([Mole 2011](#); [Asal, Sommer, and Harwood 2013](#); [CNMH 2015](#); [Hayes and Nagel 2016](#)). Scholars of civil war should investigate the causes of violence against sexual minorities perpetrated by nonstate actors.

I contend that the decision to target sexual minorities stems from three distinct logics: two strategic and one ideological.

First, insurgents face an incentive to target sexual minorities in order to outbid opponents when homophobic violence is politically and socially legitimated. In particular, when other political and social actors select the LGBT community for violence, this signals to insurgents that targeting sexual minorities will garner support. Once one insurgent group begins targeting sexual minorities, competing organizations feel compelled to perpetrate similar atrocities, lest they lose their share of popular support and witness dwindling recruitment pools as a result.

Second, insurgent groups with territorial control have an incentive to demonstrate their ability to selectively punish individuals in order to deter defections ([Kalyvas 2006](#), chap. 6). One way to accomplish this task is to target sexual minorities. Accurately targeting members of the LGBT community involves successfully monitoring, identifying, and punishing individuals.

Third, insurgents adhering to revolutionary ideologies are more likely than comparatively moderate rebels to legitimate homophobic violence. Revolutionary ideologies can lead to extreme violence through an exclusion mechanism,

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[1] Sexual minorities are defined here as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) individuals. Certainly, this definition could be expanded to include other identities, such as questioning (Q) or queer (Q). While the self-ascribed identities of those targeted by insurgents remain largely unknown, the perpetrators often justify their violence by constructing their victims as LGBT. For this reason, this article uses the terms sexual minorities and LGBT people interchangeably.

whereby the aspiration of transforming society provides a justification for repressing or eliminating categories of people (Harff 2003, 57). Since it is frequently congruent with the goals of transforming society, social cleansing of sexual minorities is more readily legitimated by revolutionary insurgents.

Statistical analysis using original data on the targeting of sexual minorities from 1985 to 2015 lends strong support for these arguments. Insurgent groups with active rivals, territorial control, and revolutionary ideologies are significantly more likely to target sexual minorities. Process tracing of a crucial case, homophobic violence in present-day Iraq and Syria, tests the strategic causal mechanisms. After pro-government militias in Iraq targeted individuals that they believed to be homosexual with impunity, insurgent groups such as IS adopted antigay violence to legitimate their claims to power. The violence then quickly spread to competing jihadist organizations in Syria, which careful sequencing indicates occurred inside recently captured territory. Two additional cases from Latin America illustrate the ways that ideology influences targeting decisions. Although insurgents in both cases faced pronounced strategic incentives to target sexual minorities, committed revolutionaries in the Peruvian civil war consistently resorted to homophobic violence while their more ideologically moderate counterparts in the Colombian civil war did not. This paired comparison demonstrates that ideology can influence the decision to target sexual minorities even in the context of strategic constraints on the use of violence.

Civilian Victimization

Why do some insurgent groups target civilians? Early research on civilian victimization focused largely on mass killings and genocides perpetrated by the state (Valentino 2000; Harff 2003). However, observing the prevalence of lower-level violence, many scholars have turned their attention to insurgent characteristics and civilian targeting. Valentino, Huth, and Balch-Lindsay (2004), for instance, find that because guerilla fighters blend into local populations governments have incentive to perpetrate mass killings in the areas where these insurgents hide. Others explicitly examine nonstate actors as perpetrators of violence against civilians. In the terrorism literature, there is an ongoing debate over the effectiveness of civilian targeting (Kalyvas 2004; Abrahms 2006; Thomas 2014).[2] Organization-level characteristics, such as group structure, may also make it more likely that nonstate actors use terrorism or adopt terrorist innovations (Abrahms and Potter 2015; Horowitz 2010). Clearly there is a burgeoning race to find explanations for why nonstate actors target civilians.

One strand in this research program incorporates identity into its analyses. For example, Pape (2005) maintains that nationalist ambitions of expelling foreign occupants from ethnic homelands compel terrorist organizations to adopt suicide bombing. On a more general level, there is research suggesting that armed actors are more likely to target civilians in areas where the coethnics of their enemies reside (Fjelde and Hultman 2014). Ethnic identity is also featured prominently in the literature on genocide. When

attempting to control territory, state or nonstate actors may perceive ethnic minorities as naturally "unreliable" and therefore as targets for extermination or ethnic cleansing (Bell-Fialkoff 1993, 115).

Despite this increased attention to identity, few scholars look beyond ethnicity and consider other types of group identity. The main exception is gendered violence, in particular sexual violence against women, which is now an important topic in the study of civil war. Prominent explanations for sexual violence committed by insurgents focus on socialization processes and group ideology (Wood 2009; Cohen 2013). However, the existing research on civilian victimization lacks general explanations for the occurrence of homophobic violence.[3] Such violence presents a pressing moral issue. But it also involves vexing puzzles. Given the negligible threat they pose, why do some organizations divert effort and resources into tracking down and targeting sexual minorities? Selectively targeting individuals requires private information that is costly to gather (Kalyvas 2006, chap. 7). Why should insurgents devote limited time and resources to collect information on sexual minorities, who present no physical threat to insurgents?

Indeed, there is little reason to suspect that sexual minorities are naturally unreliable. As previously mentioned, sexual minorities are unlike many ethnic minorities in that they do not stake territorial claims or have the collective action capacity to deter insurgents. Thus, we can focus our attention on dynamics of identity-based victimization that operate independently of threats that the targeted group might pose to insurgents. This also sidesteps the problem of inferring whether insurgents victimize ethnic minorities intentionally—because of their identity—or unintentionally because regions most likely to harbor insurgents are also populated by minorities (Valentino, Huth, and Balch-Lindsay 2004). Sexual minorities are not bounded by location, and hence we avoid these methodological challenges.

The Strategy and Ideology of Insurgent Homophobic Violence

What drives some insurgent groups to take on the costs of seeking out and targeting sexual minorities? One explanation for terrorist violence attributes civilian victimization to the logic of outbidding; competition, the argument goes, leads to increasing levels of terrorism (Chenoweth 2010). Competition not only increases overall violence among nonstate actors, but also fuels innovations such as suicide bombing and qualitatively more shocking types of brutality (Bloom 2005; Conrad and Greene 2015). Outbidding may also influence the identity of those targeted by nonstate actors.

Several scholars note that the impact of competition on violence is conditional on environment and particularly on whether state and society legitimate using violence (Bloom 2004; Bloom 2005; Mullins and Young 2012). This is suspected to result partly from a spillover mechanism, whereby groups model and adopt the state's use of violence (Nemeth 2014, 347). States may legitimize violence in two ways: by committing violence directly or by permitting violence to go unpunished. We should therefore expect nonstate actors to target sexual minorities when the state does so itself, or when its supporters are allowed to do so with impunity. Although insurgent mirroring of their opponents seems counterintuitive, hardline state policies may have popular

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[2] In these studies, terrorism is defined as nonstate actor violence against civilians. From this perspective, all groups that target sexual minorities are by definition terrorist groups. This means that this article examines one subset of terrorism. Unlike studies distinguishing between insurgent and terrorist groups based on organizational characteristics (Sánchez-Cuenca and Calle 2009), this article examines all violent nonstate actors and refers to them interchangeably as insurgent groups.

[3] There have nevertheless been important descriptive accounts of homophobic violence (CNMH 2015).

support when applied selectively. For instance, states can divert attention from their failings by targeting ethnic minorities when doing so might heighten their popular support (Tir and Jasinski 2008). Whether the state commissions violence against sexual minorities or merely permits it, nonstate actors are more likely to mirror this violence when it proves popular. They are unlikely to initiate this violence first, since miscalculating social receptiveness to violence can prove detrimental to nonstate organizations (Cronin 2009, chap. 4). When the state moves first, it absorbs the attendant costs and thereby allows nonstate actors to adopt socially legitimated violence free of risk.

Accordingly, nonstate actors are likely to adopt violent tactics when they are socially legitimated. State-sponsored homophobia is only one indication that violence against sexual minorities is perceived as legitimate. In the Palestinian context, suicide bombings spread across competing groups once popular support for the tactic grew from one- to two-thirds of the population; each organization then started competing for part of the market share of public support (Bloom 2004). As early adopters of suicide bombing became more popular, competing organizations were quick to deploy suicide bombers to avoid losing their market share of support. This competitive transmission of suicide terrorism occurred without spillover from the state, suggesting that insurgents learn about the social receptivity of violence from various sources. For homophobic violence, these signals can include nonstate repudiation of sexual minorities such as social tolerance of honor killings for homosexuality. Recent work has shown that preexisting social conditions can influence conflict patterns, such as female willingness to participate in insurgency (Thomas and Wood 2017). Societal homophobia prior to conflict should similarly influence homophobic violence during the war.

Not all insurgents are competitors over a given market, however. They are bounded by the "ideological market" they seek to capture, implying that nationalist organizations will compete primarily with other nationalist organizations, and so on (Nemeth 2014, 346). Similarity breeds competition, an observation that dates back at least to Freud's (1961, 108) concept of the "narcissism of minor differences." In social movements, near-identical organizations with exclusive membership requirements competing for a limited pool of potential recruits are likely to breed high levels of conflict.[4] This particular form of active rivalry, defined generally as confrontation over resource pools, should not only occur among social movements but also among their violent analogs (Metelits 2009a, 2009b). Indeed, outbidding theories often maintain that terrorists compete to attract members from the same recruitment pools (Bloom 2005; Kydd and Walter 2006, 70–78; Nemeth 2014, 347). The logic is straightforward: to attract a greater proportion of the recruitment pool, nonstate actors will outbid their opponents through novel forms of violence. If these tactics prove effective, then competitors will adopt them in turn to compensate. Just as this logic unfolded in the case of Palestinian suicide bombing (Bloom 2004), I argue that it unfolds with regard to target selection. Weaker and newer competitors should be second movers, since miscalculating receptivity toward new violence is even riskier for them.

Outbidding theory has contributed greatly to our understanding of the intensity, tactics, and spread of terrorism.

It can also help explain the identity groups that insurgents target. We can use outbidding theory to derive the following hypotheses regarding the likelihood that nonstate actors will target sexual minorities:

H1: *Nonstate actors are more likely to target sexual minorities when competing with active rivals.*

H2: *Nonstate actors are more likely to target sexual minorities when such violence is perceived as politically and socially legitimate.*

However, this story is incomplete. Selective violence, such as targeting sexual minorities, is partially a function of territorial control. Insurgents have an incentive to deter defections to the opposing side, which can be achieved by creating "a *perception of credible selection*" (Kalyvas 2006, 190, emphasis in original). In other words, individuals are reticent to defect when they believe doing so can result in selective punishment. Insurgents therefore have an incentive to demonstrate this capability to deter defections. But selective punishment requires the capacity to monitor, police, and identify individuals, capabilities that come with territorial control (Kalyvas 2006, chap. 5). Although in this view selective violence singles out individuals based on their actions rather than identity, it is nonetheless true that insurgents can use identity as a proxy indicator of behavior (Gutiérrez-Sanín and Wood 2017, 24). Moreover, some identities are not always visible. This means that accurately identifying group members signals the ability to selectively target. Certainly, this is true for selectively punishing sexual minorities, which presupposes the ability to accurately identify individuals with little or no outwardly visible markers of their identity through monitoring or reliance upon informants. When insurgents gain territorial control, they can therefore signal the ability to selectively punish individuals through homophobic violence. This way they can deter potential defectors and others whose behavior the group wishes to regulate. Given the logic of outbidding, homophobic violence can certainly spread to competing organizations without territorial control. Nevertheless, since they do not need to initially demonstrate the ability to selectively punish, they are unlikely to absorb the costs associated with moving first. They also lack the monitoring capabilities necessary to sustain violence against particular identity groups. We should therefore expect that, on average, groups with territorial control are more likely to target sexual minorities, leading to our third hypothesis:

H3: *Nonstate actors with territorial control are more likely to target sexual minorities.*

Finally, the role of ideology in the targeting of sexual minorities must be considered. Ideological explanations for violence are sometimes framed as being at odds with strategic ones. Yet, a growing body of scholarship posits that the two are reconcilable and that ideology matters even under strategic circumstances (Straus 2012; Gutiérrez Sanín and Wood 2014).[5] Rivalry and control heighten incentives for selective targeting, but they do not prescribe the identity of those targeted. In the terrorism scholarship, it has been established that ideology does identify which potential targets are legitimate ones (C.J.M. 1998). Research on the causes of genocide also focuses on framing effects (Straus 2015). This literature highlights the importance of "exclusionary ideologies"—ideologies that create "opportunities to eliminate groups, including those that pose no obvious threat" (Harff 2003, 63)—and themes

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[4] Zald, Mayer, and John McCarthy. 1979. "Social Movement Industries: Competition and Cooperation among Movement Organizations." Unpublished Manuscript.

[5] Wright, Austin. n.d. "Terrorism, Ideology, and Target Selection." Unpublished Manuscript.

of "utopia, purity, fantasy, and obsession" in legitimating atrocities (Straus 2012, 548). Since homophobic violence, like genocide, is identity-based violence, ideologies that predict genocide might also predict homophobic violence. Indeed, insurgents with exclusionary political aims are generally more likely than their inclusive counterparts to target civilians (Stanton 2013). Accordingly, these insurgents should be more likely to resort to specific forms of violence against civilians. Revolutionary ideologies provide an especially powerful opportunity for exclusion. The revolutionary aspiration to fundamentally transform society—for example, by imposing religious rule in a secular state or communism in a capitalist society (Fortna 2015, 533)—allows revolutionaries to justify excluding those perceived as inhibiting radical change, whether they are ethnic, religious, or economic groups. Indeed, "ideological genocides" almost always follow revolution (Harff 2003, 61). Insurgent groups with revolutionary aspirations to purify society or reach a utopian ideal are thus potentially more likely than nonrevolutionaries to target sexual minorities via an exclusion mechanism.

Furthermore, recent studies have found that ideology can also mitigate civil war violence (Hoover Green 2011; Thaler 2012; Hoover Green 2016). Specific examples are available from the literature on identity-based violence. Ideology, for instance, helped constrain the Tamil Tigers from perpetrating widespread sexual violence (Wood 2009, 136). Armed actors that could benefit from recruiting women decline to when it conflicts with their political ideology (Wood and Thomas 2017). Even if strategic logic suggests that they will benefit from outbidding, some groups may still refrain from adopting forms of violence that are incongruent with normative commitments to their ideology (Gutiérrez Sanín and Wood 2014). Groups committed to moderate ideologies that emphasize restraint should thus be less likely to target sexual minorities.

H4: *Nonstate actors with a revolutionary ideology are more likely to target sexual minorities.*

H5: *Nonstate actors with a moderate ideology are less likely to target sexual minorities.*

Data and Methodology

Quantitative tests of these hypotheses are conducted using original data gathered on violence against sexual minorities by every nonstate actor in the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP), Armed Conflict Dataset active since 1985. For the purposes of this article, the original conflict-year structure of the dataset is disaggregated so that the unit of analysis is insurgent state dyad year. Insurgent groups are thus separated into distinct observations while also allowing for variation across state contexts. Each observation in the dataset is coded dichotomously on the dependent variable for any year in which the insurgent group in the dyad deliberately killed sexual minorities. Original data on insurgent violence against sexual minorities was gathered using numerous sources. These include news databases such as LexisNexis and Factiva, the START Global Terrorism Database, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, and secondary sources on specific conflicts. The dependent variable, *targeting*, is coded 1 if at least one source indicates that the insurgent group deliberately killed any sexual minorities during the year in question. Since this coding requires fine-grained information on the perpetrator of homophobic violence and the year in which it occurred, there are

Table 1. Incidents of homophobic killings by insurgent groups, 1985–2015

Group	Country	Years
Al-Mahdi Army	Iraq	2007–2008
Al-Shabaab	Somalia	2013
Al-Nusra Front	Syria	2015
Ansar al-Islam	Iraq	2006
Armed Islamic Group (GIA)	Algeria	1994, 1996–1997
AQAP	Yemen	2011, 2013–2015
Chechen Republic	Russia	1999
FARC	Colombia	2000
INPFL	Liberia	1990
IS	Iraq	2013–2015
IS-Libya	Libya	2015
MRTA	Peru	1989–1990
Shining Path	Peru	1986, 1988

Note: Based on insurgent groups listed in the nonstate actor dataset (Cunningham et al. 2009).

only twenty-three positive cases—one values on the dependent variable—identified for this analysis. These cases are listed in Table 1. However, all groups that the sources indicate have targeted sexual minorities are represented in at least one dyad-year observation. The main potential data limitation is that groups coded as targeting sexual minorities in one year have possibly done so in subsequent years despite insufficient information to pinpoint incidents to a given year.[6] Although it is also possible that sexual minorities are sometimes killed incidentally, in most recorded instances the insurgents themselves are quite vocal about their homophobic intent. An accompanying online appendix addresses these limitations and others with a more detailed discussion of coding rules, sources consulted, and positive cases listed in Table 1. The appendix also includes additional analysis using rare events logistic regression to address potential bias resulting from the small number of positive values on the dependent variable.

In the quantitative literature on outbidding, competition is sometimes measured through proxies such as the number of active insurgents in a state or the competitiveness of political institutions (Conrad and Greene 2015; Chenoweth 2010). While suitable for some research questions, these proxies do not capture the concept of active rivalry, which has hitherto been employed in small-N research designs (Metelits 2009a). The theoretical expectation is that groups competing over recruitment pools are likeliest to adopt novel forms of violence. Confrontation over recruitment pools not only provides a straightforward mechanism for adopting new tactics, but it also provides a proxy for social receptivity toward certain types of violence. Violence that alienates society will, a priori, limit the number of potential recruits. Building off of previous work in the outbidding literature, nonstate actors are coded as competitors when they are fighting over the same incompatibility and "ideological market" (Nemeth 2014, 346). Groups are therefore coded 1 on the variable *rival* when they meet three criteria. First, they must be fighting over the same incompatibility: government or territory.[7] Insurgents fighting to replace the state are unlikely to become embroiled in active rivalry over recruits with regionally oriented separatists. Moreover,

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[6] For instance, al-Shabaab executed three men for homosexual acts in 2017 (Omar 2017), making it likely that the group carried out similar homophobic violence between the 2013 and 2017 incidents.

[7] Data on incompatibilities are taken from the UCDP Armed Conflict Dataset.

separatists are not considered rivals if they are fighting from different constituencies. Kashmiri and Sikh rebels in India, for instance, draw from mutually exclusive recruitment pools. Second, they must have broadly comparable ideologies, as discussed below, if they are competing over ideological markets. Third, groups that meet these criteria but are cooperating or aligned are not coded as rivals.[8] This coding scheme provides a hard test of the rivalry hypothesis, since confirming evidence of violent confrontation or conflict is not necessary for coding rivalry—lack of cooperation is often sufficient.

For testing Hypothesis 2, the variable *state* legitimation is created. This is an ordinal measure for whether the state implements the death penalty or imprisonment for sexual behaviors like sodomy. Data on the death penalty and the legal status of sexual minorities is gathered from the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association's (ILGA) State Sponsored Homophobia reports (Carroll 2016) and from various context-specific sources when necessary. For a given dyad, this variable is coded 2 if the state implements the death penalty for homosexuality, 1 if the state imprisons individuals for homosexuality, and 0 otherwise. This measure might fail to capture the full range of state legitimation since states can also use extralegal measures for mistreating sexual minorities while not legally sanctioning homosexuality. By capturing only formal legitimation, the following analysis also represents a hard test for Hypothesis 2. Moreover, there are potential signals to insurgents that homophobic violence is perceived as socially legitimate other than state-sponsored homophobia. This implies that the *state* variable will underestimate the effect a permissive environment has on insurgent homophobic violence.

To test Hypothesis 3, a variable for control is coded dichotomously based on whether the nonstate actor controls *territory*. Data on territorial control is made available in the Non-State Actor (NSA) dataset (Cunningham, Gleditsch, and Salehyan 2009). This variable is coded dichotomously: 1 if the actor controls territory and 0 otherwise. The strict criteria for positive coding on control should underestimate the effects of control on targeting sexual minorities. For instance, the Shining Path is not coded as controlling territory in the NSA dataset even though it consistently and rigorously enforced moral codes over its "liberated zones" (Rosenau 1994, 316). Indeed, as the Peruvian case study below demonstrates, the Shining Path maintained territorial strongholds where it perpetrated homophobic violence. Control as conceptualized here is more or less a continuous, dynamic element in any civil war (see Kalyvas 2006). Using narrow measures for control should underestimate its effect on homophobic violence.

Three ideology variables are constructed for testing Hypothesis 4 and Hypothesis 5. Recent studies on terrorism decompose group ideology into three categories based on group aim to transform society, secede, or achieve moderate goals, where transforming society is operationalized according to whether groups fight over the central government (Fortna 2015, 535). However, nonstate actors fight over the central government for various reasons. Some rebels fight for goals as moderate as seeking a place in the current government (Englebert 2002, 593). This study retains the

transform society, separatist, and moderate typology, but instead codes aspirations to *transform* society using revolutionary ideologies whose transformative aspirations have been observed to facilitate exclusion. Following Harff (2003), such revolutionary ideologies include variants of Marxist-Leninism or communism, Islamism, and doctrines of ethnonational superiority. Groups adhering to these ideologies are coded positively on the *transform* variable, retaining the requirement that they strive to topple the central government.[9] *Separatist* groups are those seeking to cleave away a separate state from the one in which they currently reside. *Moderate* groups include those fighting over the central government without revolutionary ideologies and those seeking regional autonomy short of advancing separatist claims. Although this means that some moderate groups are fighting to replace the central government, they are not motivated by revolutionary aspirations to transform society (for example, by imposing theocracy in a secular state). Coding decisions are based on the NSA dataset and original research on insurgent ideology.[10]

Finally, several control variables that might be expected to influence group targeting decisions are included. Since the existence of several nonstate actors can influence outbidding behavior (Conrad and Greene 2015), a binary variable for the presence of *multiple* nonstate actors in the conflict is included. Positive findings on this variable would cast doubt on the relevance of active rivalry in compelling targeting choices, rather than simply the existence of multiple violent actors. Similarly, democracy has been observed as a cause of outbidding through mirroring of institutional competitiveness (Chenoweth 2010). A binary variable for *democracy* is therefore included, following the convention where dyad years in which the government has a Polity score of 7 or higher are coded as democratic. Using data from the NSA dataset, binary variables are included for the nonstate actor's *strength* relative to the state and whether the group has an external state *sponsor*.[11] Either strength or sponsorship could provide alternative explanations for homophobic terrorism (such as groups doing so at the request of external patrons). And, lastly, in order to address potential temporal dependence in the data, a count variable for the number of years since the nonstate actor in the dyad targeted sexual minorities has been included, along with its square and cube (Carter and Signorino 2010). Although these last three variables—*time*, *time²*, and *time³*—are included in the following regression models, their coefficient estimates are not shown.

Results

Since the dependent variable is dichotomous, logistic regression is a proper method of analysis. Figure 1 graphically presents the results of three logistic models using recently developed tools for plotting coefficient estimates

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[8]Information on these coding decisions is drawn primarily from the UCDP conflict encyclopedia and case-specific sources when needed. This imposes some uniformity on coding decisions at the cost of potentially missing fine-grained details. Later sections compensate for this tradeoff through contextual, process tracing analysis.
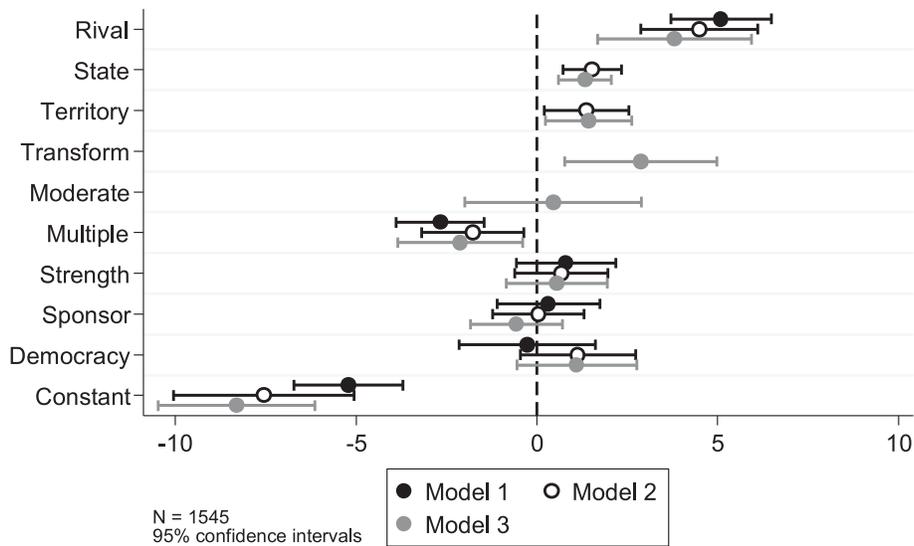
[9]Religious groups that are not Islamists but seek to impose theocratic rule, such as the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), are also coded as revolutionary. However, the central government requirement excludes groups like the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). Despite its Marxist leanings, this group strives to create a separate state rather than imposing communism in Turkey.

[10]The NSA dataset identifies some conflict types as Islamist or communist rebellions. Additional research from context-specific sources was needed to properly identify all insurgent groups that adhered to communist, theocratic, or ethnonationalist ideologies. A fuller discussion of the coding scheme, as well as a discussion of the sensitivity of the following analysis to alternative coding, is available in the online appendix.

[11]Strength is coded dichotomously based on whether the insurgent group is coded as *stronger* or at *parity* with the state (1) as opposed to *weaker* or *much weaker* (0) in the NSA dataset.

Figure 1. Results

([Jann 2014](#)). Regression tables and additional robustness checks, using rare events logistic regression and statistical matching, are presented in an online appendix. Each point at the center of the 95 percent confidence band represents the coefficient estimate, and each band that does not cross the vertical line at zero is statistically significant at the 5 percent error level or higher (*p*-value less than or equal to 0.05). Given the lack of independence among observations associated with the same organization, each model is estimated with robust standard errors clustered on insurgent group. Model 1 is the simplest specification, regressing the *targeting* of sexual minorities on the presence of an active *rival* and the seven control variables. Next, Model 2 incorporates the two additional strategic independent variables: *state* legitimation of homophobic violence and insurgent control of *territory*. Finally, Model 3 includes the two binary ideology variables relevant to the hypotheses—*transform* and *moderate*—with *separatist* serving as the reference category. Rivalry is a consistent statistically and substantively significant predictor of homophobic violence across model specifications, which provides strong evidence in support of Hypothesis 1. State legitimation of homophobic violence, insurgent territorial control, and a transformative ideology—relative to a separatist ideology[12]—are also statistically significant across models. None of the control variables are statistically significant at any error level,[13] with the exception of the presence of multiple nonstate actors. However, *multiple* is negatively related to the dependent variable, indicating that the effect of rivalry is not an artifact of multiple violent organizations operating simultaneously.

Overall, these results provide strong support for the first four hypotheses. However, there is no clear support for Hypothesis 5. Moderate groups, in other words, are not less likely to target sexual minorities when compared with separatist groups. This result obtains from data limitations, since only two observations involve homophobic violence by an insurgent organization coded as moderate—Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPLF) in 1990 and Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) in 2000—which surpasses the number of observations with separatist

Figure 2. Substantive effects of rivalry

groups that have targeted sexual minorities—Chechen Republic in 1999.[14] In the following qualitative sections, the role of ideology in mitigating violence against sexual minorities is examined further.

How large are the substantive effects in the analysis above? Figures [2](#) and [3](#) better convey the substantive effects of the four statistically significant independent variables. Figure [2](#) displays the substantive effect for *rival* by graphing the predicted probability of insurgent homophobic violence when switching from nonrivalry to rivalry and holding all control variables constant at their sample modes, since means are not substantively plausible with dichotomous variables.[15] As depicted, the probability that a group with an active rival targets sexual minorities is 17 percent (with a 95 percent confidence interval from 7 to 27 percent), compared with 0.1 percent for nonstate actors lacking an active rival. In other words, there is a nearly 0.17 higher probability of targeting sexual minorities for dyad-years in which the insurgent group has an active rival. Such a low predicted probability for nonrivalrous groups indicates that the likelihood that nonstate actors will target sexual minorities in absence of active rivalry is very small. Indeed, only four of the twenty-three

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[12] Results hold when estimating a model using a binary variable for *transform* and excluding the other ideology variables.
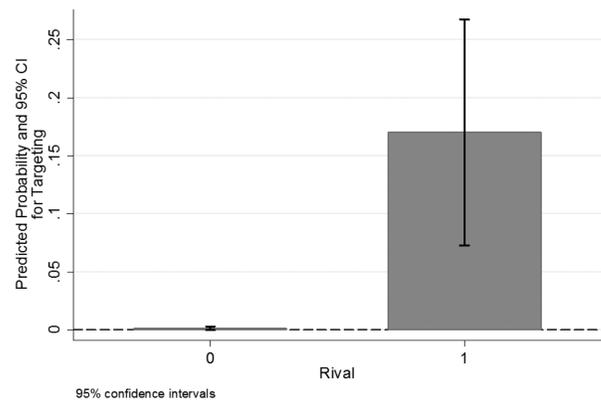
[13] This includes the three time controls.

[14] See the appendix for a fuller discussion of these cases.

[15] Results for all predicted probabilities are identical when instead holding the time-related variables, which are not binary, at their mean values.
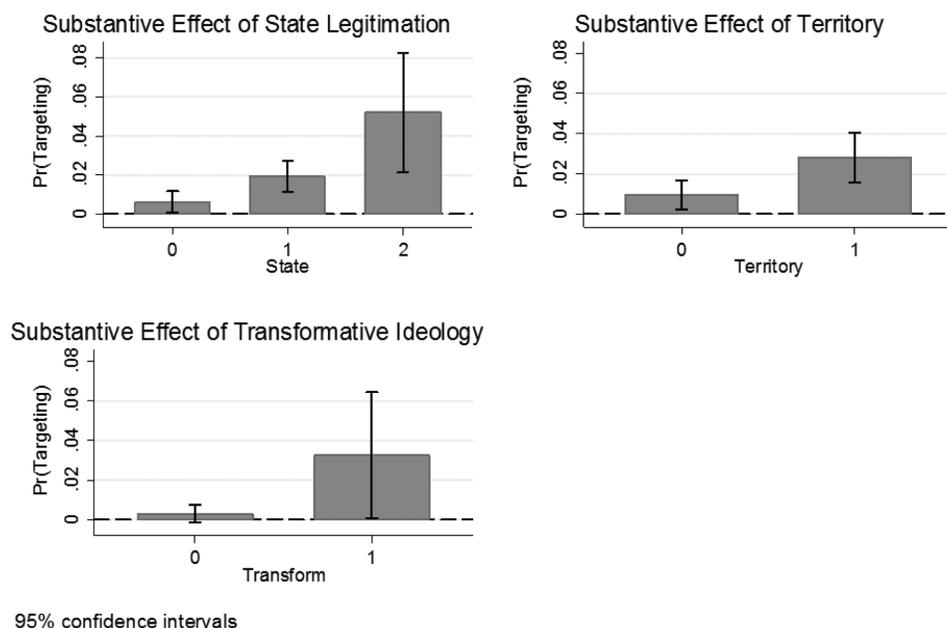
95% confidence intervals

Figure 3. Additional substantive effects

observations coded positively on the dependent variable are dyad-years in which the insurgents were not engaged in an active rivalry. Given the rarity of homophobic violence, these results imply a strong positive effect of rivalry on homophobic violence.

Figure 3 graphs the predicted probability of homophobic violence for the remaining three theoretically relevant variables that achieved statistical significance. *State* and *territory*, the other two strategic variables, both have substantively meaningful effects on violence against sexual minorities. As shown, insurgents operating in dyads where the state reserves the death penalty for homosexuality have a 5.2 percent probability of also targeting sexual minorities, versus a 0.6 percent chance in states without sanctions for homosexuality (1.9 percent for states with legal sanctions short of the death penalty). Insurgents with territorial control have a 2.8 percent chance of engaging in homophobic violence, compared with only 1 percent for groups without territory. Transformative ideology also sees a substantively significant jump, from 0.3 to 3.25 percent for insurgents scoring positive on this value. However, the 95 percent confidence intervals overlap more than for the strategic variables. These results imply that strategic variables display greater explanatory power than ideological ones. Given these findings, two different qualitative analyses are presented in the following sections. First, a process tracing analysis is conducted to demonstrate that the strategic causal mechanisms identified as statistically and substantively significant actually operate as posited. Second, despite modest support in the statistical analysis, a paired comparison of two cases demonstrates that variation in ideology can lead to variation in homophobic violence.

Cleansing the Caliphate

Do the posited causal mechanisms actually play out in the relevant cases? Statistical analysis is well suited for estimating average causal effects across cases, but alternative methods are better equipped to infer the presence of within-case causal mechanisms. One methodological tool

useful for drawing inferences about causal mechanisms is process tracing, which involves sequential examination on the processes argued to generate an outcome (Bennett and Checkel 2014). This study selects cases from the above large-N analysis for small-N process tracing, thereby carrying out a nested analysis. When results from preliminary large-N analysis are robust and satisfactory, a model-testing small-N analysis (Mt-SNA) using cases well predicted by the statistical model is recommended (Lieberman 2005).[16] In this way, the hypothesized link between cause and effect can be illustrated and the likelihood of endogeneity dampened by demonstrating that cause indeed precedes effect.

The theory outlined above posits that homophobic violence arises in part through strategic mechanisms of competition, mirroring, and control. Despite strong findings in the statistical analysis, this theory implies a sequence that, if violated, would nonetheless cast doubt upon its validity. First, the theory indicates that homophobic violence can spill over from the state to nonstate actors, since it is risky for the latter to adopt forms of violence whose social support has not been tested. States or their supporters should therefore implement homophobic policy or practice before nonstate actors if they display such tendencies at all. A reversed sequence would cast significant doubt on the explanatory power of the mirroring mechanism. Second, mechanisms other than competition should be ruled out as potential causes for the spread of violence. Some scholars have argued that novel tactics are adopted through diffusion, whereby strategic innovations are transmitted through intergroup contact and cooperation (Horowitz 2010). Evidence of collaboration between groups targeting sexual minorities would lend support to a theory of diffusion through cooperation. A complete lack of relationship between groups might instead suggest a vicarious learning mechanism. Process tracing can demonstrate whether or not competition is truly the mechanism driving target selection. Third, homophobic violence should first occur in areas under insurgent control. If targeting sexual minorities

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[16] This requires switching the level of analysis from dyad-year to dyad.

is driven in part to create a perception of credible selection, then it should first occur under insurgent control in order to dissuade potential defectors. As mentioned previously, homophobic violence can spread to competing organizations without territorial control. Yet, in the rare case when they do target sexual minorities, nonterritorial groups are unlikely to absorb the risks associated with moving first.

Additionally, within-case analysis may support the veracity of results found in regression analysis using rough proxy measures. Cross-national indicators for social attitudes toward sexual minorities are lacking, but case studies can help overcome this limitation through the reliance on available contextual sources. Antihomosexual legislation captures some element of state legitimation of homophobic violence. It also omits several other important ones. Namely, states signal the legitimacy of homophobic violence if they enable their supporters, such as progovernment militias (PGMs), to execute sexual minorities with impunity.[17] States often delegate extreme or shameful violence to these militias (Mitchell, Carey, and Butler 2014).[18] The remainder of this section conducts a process tracing analysis to track the spread of violence against sexual minorities in postinvasion Iraq. Evidence suggests that there are two waves of homophobic violence, both of which follow similar patterns in their development. First, the state legitimated violence against sexual minorities through the direct commissioning of violence or by allowing PGMs to target sexual minorities unimpeded. Second, the violence was mirrored by a nonstate actor seeking to capitalize on socially legitimated violence. Third, the tactic was then adopted by newer or weaker insurgent competitors. Lastly, the contrasting experiences of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) in both Saudi Arabia and Yemen demonstrate that homophobic violence is unlikely to occur unless insurgents achieve territorial control.

First Wave, 2004–2009

Iraq has an uneasy history with LGBT rights. Under Saddam Hussein's Baathist regime, Iraq was one of four states to oppose the second application of the International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA) for consultative status with United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) (Sanders 1996, 99). In 2001, the death penalty was enacted for "the crime of sodomy."[19] Despite the formal reversal of this resolution, extrajudicial killing of homosexuals and other sexual minorities became rampant following the invasion of Iraq. During the war, homosexuals were routinely beaten publicly, tortured, or executed. Such atrocities were legally tolerated through a penal code that "la[id] out protections for murder when people are acting against Islam" (Copestake 2006). Early reports attribute the homophobic violence to the Badr brigades—a PGM that served as the armed wing of the largest Shia bloc in the Iraqi parliament and infiltrated the Iraqi police force—including the first recorded assassination for homosexuality in 2004 (Copestake 2006; McDonough 2006; Tatchell 2006). Another incident involved the abduction and disappearance of gay activists by police officers

themselves, although this was the same force under the influence of the Badr brigades (Tatchell 2008).

Even if the Shia-dominate Iraqi government only permitted rather than perpetrated it, these incidents helped bolster the regime since antihomosexual violence is socially legitimated. Grand Ayatollah Sistani, an Iranian cleric and spiritual leader for Iraqi Shia Muslims, claimed that homosexuals should be killed "in the worst, most severe way" (Green and Ward 2009, 617). *Fatwa* issued by Sistani's predecessor, Ayatollah Khoei, permitted followers to kill homosexuals by methods ranging from burning them alive to throwing them from high places. Honor killings of gay family members are also not uncommon, as in the case of a father who hung his gay son as a warning to another son (Green and Ward 2009). By appealing to both Shia and tribal conservatism, the Iraqi government can maintain support and divert public attention from its manifold failings. Any attempt to curb homophobic violence risks turning public opinion further against the regime.

While it was still an opposition group,[20] the al-Mahdi Army, a Shia militia, responded by initiating its own campaign of homophobic violence (Tatchell 2007). This violence required intensive information gathering. Homosexuals were tracked down by name and abducted before being murdered (Human Rights Watch 2009a). As mentioned earlier, this capability is largely a function of territorial control. The al-Mahdi Army indeed consistently controlled the part of Baghdad, Sadr City, where its violence against sexual minorities was most intense. Although the Iraqi security forces were also implicated in the killings, by 2009 most violence against sexual minorities was attributed to the al-Mahdi Army (Human Rights Watch 2009a, 2009b). During the height of homophobic violence, between 2006 and 2009, Sunni militias "competing to show their moral credentials" also engaged in executions of sexual minorities (Human Rights Watch 2009b; Williams and Maher 2009). The earliest such instance was the 2006 beheading of homosexual transvestites by Ansar al-Islam, a Kurdish Sunni group seeking to establish an Islamic state in the same region (Bryce 2009).[21] Little else is known about homophobic violence by Sunni groups until the advent of IS.

Second Wave: 2012–2016

Violence against sexual minorities subsided after 2009, but attention increased in 2012 following the emo massacres (Ruhayem 2012). Young individuals following alternative lifestyles were associated with homosexuality, and as many as one hundred were beaten to death or shot over the course of several months in Sadr city. Militias also circulated leaflets with the names of young people they felt should be punished (BBC 2012). Official government statements declared accounts of the violence as "fabricated" and previously characterized emo youths as "Satanist" (Human Rights Watch 2012). Other accounts aver that the government itself "declared war on sexual minorities," that its operatives rallied in the streets of Baghdad to elicit information on homosexuals, and that the attacks were directed by a government that stood to lose its grasp on power through further liberalization (Levine 2012). One of the PGMs responsible for this round of homicides, League of the Righteous, was assembled by former Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki to fight

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[17] Although *nonstate actor* ostensibly denotes any actor involved in conflict besides the government, including PGMs, the UCDP dataset is limited to opposition fighters traditionally labeled insurgents or terrorists. This article follows the convention of defining nonstate actors as organizations on side B of the conflict and those supporting the government as side A (Cunningham et al., 2009).

[18] However, see Cohen and Nordas (2015) for an opposing view.

[19] IRCC Resolution of 240 of 2001. http://gjpi.org/wp-content/uploads/rcc-resolution-234-of-2001.pdf.

[20] It is coded as *side B* in the UCDP/PRIO dataset between 2004 and 2008. Although it remains active much later, after this point it is no longer in opposition to the government.

[21] The al-Mahdi Army had been targeting sexual minorities for at least several months before this instance (Taylor 2006).

IS (OutRight 2014, 11). During his tenure, al-Maliki reputedly encouraged the paramilitary group to commit atrocities, such as the killing of Sunni Muslims, and allowed it to operate freely (Kirkpatrick 2014). At the very least, the state tacitly supports violence against sexual minorities by refusing to acknowledge the murders or punish their perpetrators. In June 2014, the League of the Righteous beheaded two teenage boys believed to be homosexuals (OutRight 2014, 2).

IS started its systematic execution of sexual minorities in this environment of politically permissible homophobic violence. In November 2014, the group first executed two allegedly homosexual men by stoning them in the Syrian province Deir el-Zour (Variyar 2014). Although this happened outside of Iraq, it very shortly followed IS's capture of Mosul and the border areas between Iraq and Syria where the execution occurred (Stern and Berger 2015, xx). In other words, only after its capture of territory did IS begin murdering sexual minorities. Territorial control allowed the group to police and monitor individuals, evinced by the fact that IS determined one of its victims was homosexual after mining his cellphone (Variyar 2014). This was not a singular instance. During one forty-eight-hour period in 2015, IS executed several homosexual men by tossing them from a high building. Far from being a discreet event, these executions were carried out in front of large crowds in the city of Nineveh just outside the IS stronghold of Mosul (Withnall 2015). Coercion and intimidation play a role in public executions, but so does the need to signal the adoption of legitimate forms of violence. Many Iraqis certainly do not approve of IS or its excesses. Sexual minorities nonetheless routinely proclaim that the execution of homosexuals is largely approved or tolerated. One homosexual medical student who was beaten several times leading up to the capture of his city by IS relates how his father, upon learning that his son was gay, resolved to turn him over to IS with full knowledge of the consequences. He further describes receiving death threats from family members after escaping to Lebanon and being dismayed at general approval for the execution of homosexuals across Iraqi social media, even among those who otherwise find IS distasteful (BBC 2015). Fatal violence against homosexuals was not new, only more visibly in the public sphere than it had been previously. In its 2012 human rights report, the US Department of State observed that violence against homosexuals by "family and nongovernmental actors" (referring to Shia militias) was frequent but "generally unreported" (US Dept. of State 2012, 49–50). Despite covertly searching for information on homosexuals through phone records and informants, IS further brought the already widespread violence against homosexuals out into the open.

Targeting of sexual minorities was not only an instrument for IS to establish local control, but was also publicized as part of its recruitment program. An issue of the group's English-language magazine, *Dabiq*, features a segment entitled "clamping down on sexual deviancy," providing commentary on the execution of another homosexual man by throwing him off a building (Islamic State 2015, 42–43). Like many of its articles, the message is directed toward foreigners who are more dissatisfied with Western lifestyles than foreign policy. The passage condemns at length the West's "sexual deviance and immorality" since the "sexual revolution" and frames its own violence as a counterbalance necessary to "protect … Muslims from treading the same rotten path that the West has chosen to pursue" (Islamic State 2015, 42–43). With a desperate need to attract foreign recruits—*Dabiq* is also filled with entreaties to skilled,

foreign talent such as doctors and engineers—and a limited supply of willing candidates, IS needs to brand itself as having greater religious authority than competing organizations proclaiming to establish an Islamic state. One way to signal its superiority in this regard is to convey willingness and capacity to punish those they believe are sanctioned targets in Islam, including homosexuals and other sexual minorities. Despite little direct evidence that recruitment needs are driving these tactics, observable implications of an outbidding theory are available. Recent content analysis of *Dabiq* compared with other jihadist publications, such as Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula's (AQAP) *Inspire* and Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent's (AQIS) *Resurgence*, reveals that it is the publication dedicating the most content to the strategy of outbidding (Novenario 2016). Whereas most jihadist publications focus on convincing readers to strike their enemies in lone-wolf attacks, *Dabiq* is designed to convince readers that IS is the organization most deserving of their allegiance. Because it frames the targeting of homosexuals as lending credibility to its quest of imposing Islamic rule, IS is using the tactic as part of a broader program to convince readers that it has greater legitimacy than its competitors.

Competition quickly led competing organizations to begin their own campaigns of homophobic violence. Closest to IS is Jabhat al-Nusra, an offshoot of the former group that operates throughout Syria. Created when IS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi sent member Abu Mohammed al-Jawlani to initiate his own jihadist organization, al-Nusra proclaimed itself an independent organization with no direct link to IS. When Baghdadi announced a merger with al-Nusra, both Jawlani and Zawahiri—current leader of al-Qaeda Central—rebuked the claim (Stern and Berger 2016, 41–42). Fighting broke out between IS and al-Nusra as a result. In addition to combat, this included a "campaign [by IS] for hearts and minds on social media" to highlight its strengths and al-Nusra's weaknesses (68–69). Heated competition between the two groups eventually led al-Nusra to adopt the violence of its more successful rival. After it captured the city of Idlib in early 2015, al-Nusra almost immediately commenced its own operation of systematic execution of homosexual men. One escapee of the violence conveyed his story, uncannily similar to the one outlined above, of being caught between a homicidal insurgent occupation and a murderously abusive father (Segalov 2015). Again, the executions did not begin until after the organization captured territory over which it could reasonably exert its control. This behavior is perhaps unexpected, since al-Nusra has previously tried competing against IS by taking a more moderate stance, such as promising to protect and restore Christian churches devastated by IS (Weiss and Hassan 2015, 150, 195). Substantial defection of foreign fighters from al-Nusra to IS leading up to the former's capture of Idlib, however, seems to have driven the group to extremity (Byman 2016, 146). The need for members provided the ultimate strategic motive for adopting a socially legitimated form of violence.

Data limitations deny any definitive claims as to whether recruits have been swayed to either organization for their murderous policies toward sexual minorities. Another point, however, is clear: given the intense competition between the two groups prior to the latter's decision to target sexual minorities, this decision arose through competition and *not* through mechanisms of direct transmission or learning between two mutually supportive organizations. Moreover, competition explains the reason for the spread of homophobic violence. Although evidence suggests

social receptivity toward homophobic violence in Syria, the Syrian government did not engage in homophobic violence before al-Nusra did so. The risks of testing receptivity toward violence were not first absorbed by the state, but by a stronger and older competitor. When competitors cross borders, forms of violence can spread to states where they are unlikely to arise indigenously.

Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula

What about the causal role of control in leading to initial adoption? IS controlled the territory in which it carried out its executions, but in this case, it is difficult to isolate the effects of control. The case of AQAP demonstrates that any sustained targeting of sexual minorities is unlikely absent territorial control. Despite operating in a state that legitimated the execution of homosexuals and boasted an Islamist ideology, there are no reports that AQAP engaged in homophobic violence when restricted to Saudi Arabia. This was not due to a lack of resources or members, both of which were quite extensive. Yet, the group was cellular in structure and did not control territory. It was further inhibited by a swift and brutal crackdown from the Saudi regime following an attack on Riyadh. Not only did this collapse the group physically, but also caused it to lose support as it failed in a symbolically important theater of operation. Lacking the territorial control needed to selectively target, AQAP launched terrorist attacks that indiscriminately killed civilians. As a result, AQAP's public image soured, and it failed to recruit new members. By 2006, al-Qaeda's Saudi Arabian campaign had clearly failed (Mendelsohn 2016, 110–15).

This contrasts greatly with the experience of AQAP in Yemen, composed of Saudis who escaped from the clampdown and united in name with the Saudi branch in 2009. Driven by the extreme fragility of the Yemeni state, AQAP captured large swaths of territory in the southern regions of the country in 2011 (Mendelsohn 2016, 138). After capturing the town Zinjibar, AQAP immediately imposed social control and publicly crucified a man accused of homosexuality (Swift 2012, 5). Two years later, AQAP assassinated an allegedly homosexual man they had previously monitored and warned (Almasmari 2013). The deadliest incident occurred in 2015 when the group murdered four gay men in Aden shortly after capturing parts of the city (Manea 2015). The higher causalities in this latest atrocity suggest that previous incidents of homophobic violence at least did not alienate locals enough to offset the benefit they provided the group. Targeting marginalized groups allowed AQAP to signal the ability to selectively punish while simultaneously building local support, an option that was available only with the capture of territory.

Social legitimacy for this violence is likely since homosexuality is widely perceived as unacceptable, at least to nearly everyone in the province where the early attacks took place (Almasmari 2013). Yemen is also one of the few states to reserve the death penalty for homosexuality. Saudi Arabia, however, has also executed homosexuals, and its reliance on radical Wahhabism for legitimacy suggests that homophobic violence could find an audience in the country. As in Saudi Arabia, AQAP in Yemen did not face serious competitors until an IS branch established a regional presence and confrontation with Houthi rebels heightened in 2014 (Karmon 2015). This indicates that competition alone does not explain AQAP's transition to homophobic violence, although it may explain the increased intensity of violence in 2015. Instead, as the case studies above and below reconfirm, control plays a crucial role, along with state legitimation and

revolutionary ideology, in allowing insurgents to adopt homophobic violence. This violence can subsequently spread to rival organizations.

Ideologies and Homophobic Violence in Latin America

In the above cases, ideology is held roughly constant because all the organizations examined are Islamist groups. The revolutionary character of these movements, especially IS, is now well established and thus requires little restatement (Kalyvas 2015; McCants 2015; Byman 2016). Moreover, examining detailed variation in ideology is more desirable than using overarching types such as "revolutionary" as proxies for ideology (Gutiérrez Sanín and Wood 2014, 217). This section attempts a preliminary move toward such fine-grained investigation. Since the quantitative analysis suggested only weak support for the ideological variables, a paired comparison of two most-similar cases uses correlational logic, rather than process tracing logic, to establish that a relationship between the independent and dependent variables exists (Tarrow 2010).[22] Insurgents in both the Peruvian and Colombian civil wars shared strong similarities: both groups controlled territory, were engaged in heated active rivalries, and fought when the state or its paramilitary supporters oppressed sexual minorities. Yet, only in the Peruvian civil war did insurgents target sexual minorities in any sustained way. Although strategic conditions were consistent across conflicts, these cases offer compelling evidence that even subtle ideological variation can influence targeting practices. Indeed, both are coded as *revolutionary* in the quantitative analysis due to their shared adherence to Marxist or communist ideologies. This suggests that any differences in targeting practices attributable to ideological variation would be even wider between groups coded as *revolutionary* and *moderate*. In Peru, the Shining Path and the Túpac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA), strong rivals during the war, both harbored unwavering aspirations to transform society, with the former especially adherent to themes of utopia and purification. In contrast, Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and National Liberation Army (ELN), the most significant rivals in the Colombian civil war, claimed more moderate goals and emphasized commitment to pragmatism and restraint. Not only does this comparison reveal that secular organizations sometimes target sexual minorities when they have transformative goals, but also that ideologies stressing restraint can *inhibit* homophobic violence even when strategic incentives are high.

Peru

During the Peruvian conflict against the Shining Path, a Maoist guerrilla group, sexual minorities found themselves selected for violence. According to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), the earliest incident was the 1984 detention and disappearance of a homosexual man who was denigrated with homophobic slurs by the armed forces

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[22] By again selecting cases from the large-N analysis for small-N analysis, this is also part of the broader nested analysis. Lieberman (2005) writes that large-N analysis can "motivate structured comparisons" when cases "that would ordinarily be predicted to have similar outcomes wind up with different outcomes" (446). Here the observations are still insurgent-state dyads, these being bundled into two cases (the Peruvian and Colombian civil wars). Although the emphasis on correlational logic sets aside the issue of temporality, in the positive case on the Peruvian civil war, it becomes clear that ideological extremity preceded targeting of sexual minorities. This provides further evidence against endogeneity (on the variants and logics of paired comparisons, see Tarrow 2010).

(TRC, vol. 7, 106–12). Little additional evidence exists regarding homophobic violence by counterinsurgent forces, but one expert on the war conjectures that this is simply due to lack of investigation (Boesten 2014, 64). In 1986, the Shining Path executed ten homosexuals and prostitutes in its territorial stronghold at Aucayacu. Eight more victims were murdered for similar reasons in 1988 (TRC, vol. 4, 345; TRC, vol. 1, 126). Leading up to this campaign of violence, the leader of the Shining Path insurgency made utopian pronouncements that the communist "millennium is opening"; similarly, an anthropologist observed group declarations likening armed struggle to "*purifying fire*" (Gorriti 1999, 105–6, emphasis in original). Although the Shining Path was not a religious organization, themes of utopia and purity most often linked to "cleansing" violence were evident. Strong "puritanism" under its liberated zones led not only to the punishment of homosexuality, but also of moral infractions related to prostitution and drug use (Rosenau 1994, 316). Millenarianism in the Shining Path is well documented even in its earliest stages and was therefore not merely a post hoc rationalization for violence (Gorriti 1999). In addition to the patently exclusionary stance toward those perceived as sexual deviants, there is evidence that a general exclusionary current pervaded the movement and extended to those framed as intellectually inferior (Degregori 2012, 49).

In 1989 and 1990, sexual minorities were again assassinated, but this time by the Túpac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) (TRC, vol. 2, 432). MRTA was another revolutionary group that vied with the Shining Path over territory (Kent 1993, 448). When the violence started in 1989—the group assassinated eight sexual minorities in a bar and separately executed a homosexual man that year—the insurgents publicly claimed and justified their actions through their publications (TRC, vol. 2, 432). Both the Shining Path and MRTA clearly targeted sexual minorities as a matter of consistent policy, and the latter publicized this fact. As in previous cases, this violence occurred in the context of active rivalry, but the conflict in Colombia reveals that ideology can mitigate homophobic violence under similar, even more pronounced, strategic conditions.

Colombia

One striking characteristic of the Colombian civil war, when contrasted with its Peruvian counterpart, is the relative absence of homophobic violence committed by insurgent groups. Social cleansing of "disposables"—a group that includes prostitutes, street children, criminals, drug addicts, and the homeless in addition to sexual minorities—was widespread in Colombia during the war. Dozens of paramilitary and social cleansing squads carried out atrocities against sexual minorities throughout the early 1990s (Ordoñez 1995). By far the most excessive and frequent perpetrator of homophobic social cleansing violence was the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC), an informal pro-government militia that collaborated with members of the Colombian security forces in committing acts of violence (US Dept. of State 2003). Although the exact incident marking AUC's first attempt at social cleansing is unknown, eyewitnesses claim that the AUC started "killing sexual and gender minorities" in 1998 due to "civilian … rejection of LGBT people"; the group reportedly killed more than one hundred homosexuals in a single region, with many of the victims left dead in the streets (Payne 2016, 336–37). Based on the strategic factors identified in the quantitative analysis as predicting homophobic violence, we should also ex-

pect insurgent groups in the Colombian civil war to target sexual minorities. First, paramilitary homophobic violence indicates social and political legitimation, which was far more pervasive during the Colombian civil war than during the otherwise similar Peruvian one (Ordoñez 1995). Second, rivalry among the two largest Colombian insurgent groups, FARC and ELN, was protracted and intense, creating a strategic environment ripe for outbidding (Metelits 2009a). Third, both FARC and ELN have held large swaths of territory, giving both groups the ability and incentive to selectively target individuals under their control.

However, evidence for insurgent homophobic violence in Colombia is limited. While FARC and ELN have reportedly engaged in some social cleansing violence, these civilian attacks amount to a small fraction of those committed by paramilitaries. Unlike with paramilitary violence, the victims have not been positively identified as sexual minorities (US Dept. of State 2000).[23] As shown in Table 1 above, the only verifiable instance of violence against sexual minorities was perpetrated by FARC in 2000. In this incident the group forcibly displaced homosexuals from a municipality in the Meta department and "disappeared" two lesbian women (Nagle 2012, 21). For three reasons, there is considerable doubt that this event reflected group policy following the logic of mirroring and outbidding. First, the violence was not systematic. One young homosexual man who lived openly under FARC in 2005, for instance, recounts that the group did not kill anyone for being gay (CNMH 2015, 141). It is therefore likely that the 2000 incident was isolated. Unlike the other cases from Table 1, this represents the only one in which homicide is ambiguous and isolated.[24] Second, the severity of violence was significantly less than side A's, since it was the AUC that resorted to the most gruesome and extreme acts (Payne 2016). Less-fanatical violence also does not accord with recent findings in the outbidding literature that nonstate actors resort to qualitatively more shocking violence than those they are mirroring and outbidding, rather than just greater quantities of violence (Conrad and Greene 2015). This is evident in the Peruvian case, where the Shining Path added excess to its attacks by castrating some of the homosexual men the group assassinated (TRC, vol. 8, 66). Third, no public murders were carried out or claimed by the insurgents. This contrasts greatly with all the other cases presented in Table 1. Moreover, the ELN has not been implicated in any homophobic attacks at all (Payne 2016, n. 2). In short, neither of the two most significant Colombian insurgent groups has systematically persecuted sexual minorities in an attempt to gain an edge over their rivals.

What explains this apparent reticence to attack sexual minorities? Although they are constrained by the same strategic factors that influenced the Peruvian insurgents, neither FARC nor ELN have maintained normative commitments to ideologies of utopia or purification. While remaining true to its longstanding socialist convictions, FARC has nonetheless sidelined "any dogma that promises the achievement of some utopia" to focus more pragmatically on "good governance" to promote its ideology (Ortiz 2002, 131). FARC's apparent lapse into homophobic violence around

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[23] Lack of identifying information is insufficient to definitively rule out the possibility that some sexual minorities were among the victims. However, it is highly suggestive that there is ample documentation on the sexual identities of those targeted by paramilitaries when there is generally much less information on these militants than on the insurgents.

[24] Even where only one insurgent-year is listed in the table, with the exception of FARC there is evidence that sexual minorities were repeatedly targeted during that year.

2000 also reveals the role that ideological restraint played in minimizing identity-based violence, since this occurred at a time when the group downplayed its ideological goals and became increasingly reliant upon narco-profits (Eccarius-Kelly 2012). Several scholars have thus highlighted this time as one marked by especially strong ideological inconsistency (see Ugarriza and Craig 2012, 453). ELN, which did not target sexual minorities, has maintained more consistent normative commitments to its leftist ideology, evidenced in part by its greater reticence to engage in drug trafficking (Renwick 2016). Ideological restraint is therefore an important factor that can, at the very least, inhibit insurgents from openly committing or claiming homophobic violence when faced with strategic incentives. Moreover, recent developments in the civil war provide evidence that restraint may ultimately lead to inclusive policy toward sexual minorities. Not only did FARC fail to adopt the extreme homophobia that characterized paramilitaries, but it has also positioned itself as a champion of LGBT rights at least since the initiation of the Havana Peace Process in 2012. The final peace accord between the rebels and the Colombian government conveys a firm and unambiguous commitment to LGBT rights and efforts to combat discrimination based on sexual orientation (Oficina del Alto Comisionado para la Paz 2016, 3, 47, 54, 233).

Conclusion

Recently insurgent groups like IS, Al-Shabaab, and AQAP have engaged in systematic violence against the LGBT community. This makes it an urgent matter to understand why violent actors sometimes target nonethnic minorities. The explanation and evidence offered in this article carry with them a number of important implications.

First, they demonstrate that outbidding explains, in addition to tactical innovation and levels of violence, the identity of those targeted by insurgents. Just as outbidding led to the rapid spread of suicide bombing (Bloom 2004), it might also lead very quickly to a humanitarian crisis for targeted groups. In only a few years, extreme paramilitary violence against sexual minorities in Baghdad spread from insurgents in Iraq to their competitors in Syria. While we need further evidence to draw a decisive conclusion, it is likely that outbidding explains why other identity groups are targeted in conflict. For example, some research indicates that violence against eastern European Jews during WWII spread rapidly among competing militants in the regional power vacuum created by Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union (Snyder 2015). Similarly, anarchic environments where insurgents hold contested control create a space in which other identity groups, like sexual minorities, quickly find themselves in the crosshairs of competing violent actors. Genocides and other atrocities often happen so quickly that they may seem to defy all rational expectations, and competition within a socially and politically permissive environment may help in understanding how minority groups seemingly become targeted by all sides.

Second, the evidence presented here suggests that insurgents mirror the behavior of the states they fight against. Not only does state violence spill over to nonstate actors, but the forms of violence do as well. When states punish or allow their supporters to punish identity groups, it increases the likelihood that opposition movements will do the same. This finding has actionable policy implications. For one, the Nigerian and Ugandan governments have come under fire for their push for increasingly stringent antigay legislation. The United States has attempted to tie foreign support to these regimes for their fight against revolutionary insurgents—Boko Haram and the Lord's Resistance Army, respectively—to more humanitarian policies toward sexual minorities. This is a viable approach to combating these insurgents. Should the two states in question adopt harsher policies toward LGBT people, they stand to drive insurgent groups into becoming more extreme. Using punitive laws as a diversionary tactic from internal violence could lead to a spiral dynamic whereby insurgents mirror the increasingly extreme behavior of the state.

And, third, I find support for the notion that ideology influences insurgent decision-making even under strategic constraints. Revolutionary and exclusionary ideologies have long been associated with terrorism and civilian targeting (Crenshaw 1981; Stanton 2013), but we still have much to learn about how these ideologies influence variation in civilian victimization. This article shows that these transformative ideologies can legitimate insurgent violence against even those identity groups with little collective action capacity. In this regard, nonstate actor violence sometimes bears similarities to genocide (see Harff 2003), implying that common ideological factors underlie civilian abuse regardless of the actors involved or the modes of political violence that they deploy (see, for instance, Straus 2012). Ideology can also explain restraint even when actors face incentives to undertake extreme violence (Gutiérrez Sanín and Wood 2014). As I show, this holds for particular types of violence such as the targeting of sexual minorities. Ideology can inhibit insurgents from harming certain groups they nonetheless face strategic incentives to target and may even eventually lead insurgents to take more inclusive stances toward marginalized groups.

Supplementary Information

Supplementary information is available at www.jtschantret.com and at the *International Studies Quarterly* data archive.

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