Perceptions and Misperceptions in War:
Civilian Beliefs about Violence and their Consequences in Pakistan, Iraq, and Beyond

DISSERTATION

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Abstract

Why do civilians in warzones often hold wildly divergent beliefs about the “facts on the ground” in conflict – *that is, about what is happening in the fighting*? While there has been a recent explosion of micro-level research on behaviors and attitudes in war, variation in factual beliefs has received little attention. Yet such beliefs are critical, as they form the basis for opinion and action – civilians react not to what is happening, but to what they think is happening in war. In this dissertation, I build an original theory of factual beliefs in war. Indeed, I argue that such beliefs depend on (1) the information that civilians have about violence, and (2) their psychological motivation when they process it. In particular, I differentiate between “local” civilians living in areas directly affected by a given form of violence, who have superior information about it as well as a powerful motive to process it carefully, and “non-local” civilians living elsewhere in the warzone, whose beliefs are driven by motivational biases and media narratives in the dispute.

I investigate these dynamics with multiple types of evidence from the contemporary armed conflicts in Pakistan and Iraq. First, I explore the factual beliefs of non-local civilians with existing survey data as well as an original national survey experiment in Pakistan. I show that these beliefs among non-locals are driven not primarily by an action’s objective results, but by civilians’ prior orientations and information streams in the dispute. Second, I explore
the factual beliefs of civilians local to the violence using a micro-level analysis of 4,046 Coalition “condolence payments” during the heart of the Iraq War. This analysis shows that, after direct and persistent exposure to combatant behavior, local civilians “get it right” and rationally update their beliefs about events. While the project’s empirical approach is primarily quantitative in nature, it is steeped in anecdotal evidence from a wide range of conflicts (historical and contemporary) that breathe life into these findings.

Overall, the dissertation makes several key scholarly contributions. For conflict scholars, it introduces variation in factual beliefs as a key issue in war, and it deepens our knowledge of civilian populations – showing that there are two distinct layers of civilians in modern armed conflicts which process new information quite differently. These findings thus help to unify rationalist and motivational models of civilian behavior, showing how they coexist at different levels of removal from the violence. For scholars of political behavior more broadly, the findings speak to the surge of research on political rumors, conspiracy theories, factual misperceptions, and “fake news” in democratic political life, extending it into new domains. Yet they also push back against these “post-truth” literatures, showing how high stakes and personal exposure pierce through propaganda and misinformation. In so doing, the dissertation illuminates both the depths – and the limits – of lies in war.
Dedicated to

Barry, Fern, Rachel, and Joel
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Chapter 1: Introduction

The first casualty when war comes is truth – U.S. Senator Hiram Johnson, 1917

On October 7, 2012, thousands of Pakistanis amassed in the capital of Islamabad and its twin city of Rawalpindi to embark on a “peace march” toward Pakistan’s tribal areas in order to protest the U.S. drone strikes frequently conducted there. Led by cricketer turned politician Imran Khan, the nine-mile-long convoy was packed with red-and-green flags for Khan’s Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaf (PTI) party and anti-drone posters bearing slogans such as “Drones Fly Children Die.”¹ At one of his several speeches along the route, Khan captured the mood when he thundered, “Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaf is with the people of Waziristan during this American war. These cruelties by the Americans in which women and children are killed by drones…we will raise this issue with the entire world, and, God willing, this party of yours will bring peace here!” While this picture of drone strikes as indiscriminate and destructive undoubtedly represented the sentiment of a major segment of the Pakistani population, some perceived the strikes quite distinctly. “Son, bangbangane (local name for drones) go after the gunehgar (sinner) and not the innocent,” one old woman in a camp for

those displaced from the tribal areas said recently in an interview. Drone strikes are “the closest thing to getting our prayers answered,” explained another. Even the brother of a drone victim stated that he “would always go for drones,” attributing his brother’s death to a targeting error and not American malice. These statements reflect a growing trickle of pro-drone testimony in Pakistan – mostly by the very “tribal people” that Khan is claiming to represent – which holds that the U.S. drone campaign in the country is actually quite precise and productive.

How can we understand these wildly divergent beliefs about the nature of violent events in a conflict setting such as Pakistan? In fact, this variation is far from unique. From Palestinian perceptions of Fatah vs. Hamas clashes to Nigerian beliefs about Boko Haram bombings, civilian perceptions of violent events vary widely throughout war torn societies. These differences often transcend questions about the legitimacy or the desirability of the violence to what it is even doing, and who it is even targeting – that is, to its factual nature. Are the rebels killing civilians or not? Is the state’s incarceration campaign actually picking up criminals or terrorists? Was that truly a massacre? How civilian populations in countries engulfed in conflict answer these questions is tremendously important. Civilians not only provide essential material support – such as funding, shelter, recruits, and information – to combatants in conflict (e.g., Mao 1961, U.S. Army 2007), but they can also vote, protest, or mobilize in a range of ways that can escalate or mitigate the dispute (Jaeger et al. 2012). And whether they think that one side is carrying out abuses or atrocities will affect their

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choices. In Pakistan, for instance, anti-drone beliefs not only fueled the rise of Imran Khan and his strategy of negotiating with the Pakistani Taliban, but also forced key concessions from the U.S. – like the closure of U.S. air bases and NATO supply lines – and, according to some accounts, boosted militant recruitment in the country.5

Nonetheless, existing conflict research has paid little attention to this variation and why it occurs. Indeed, while there has been an explosion of research on the micro-dynamics of violent conflicts in recent years, it has focused on combatant actions and behaviors – such as patterns of violence (Kalyvas 2006, Lyall 2009, Condra and Shapiro 2012, Schutte 2015, Johnston and Sarbahi 2016) – within war. Recently, a small handful of studies have deviated from this trend and analyzed civilian loyalties and attitudes within violent conflict (e.g., Jaeger et al. 2012, Lyall, Blair and Imai 2013, Garcia-Ponce and Pasquale 2013). However, neither stream of research tackles the task of examining civilians’ factual beliefs – what they even think is going on – in armed disputes. This is particularly surprising given the ongoing surge of attention to such beliefs – with growing literatures on political rumors, conspiracy theories, factual misperceptions, and “fake news” – within the social sciences more broadly. Yet despite the growing interest in these phenomena in peace, there is little to no interest in how they work in war.

Overview of the Argument:

5 Specifically, the U.S. was forced to close the Shamsi drone base in Balochistan and NATO supply lines via Quetta and Peshawar in 2011 due to backlash against U.S. drone strikes and other cross-border incursions. See, e.g., “Tensions Flare Between U.S. and Pakistan After Strike,” New York Times, November 26, 2011. The lines have also been shut down at other times due to drones, as in late 2013. Meanwhile, for claims about drones fueling recruitment to the Pakistani Taliban, see, among others, Boyle (2013).
In my dissertation project, I aim to address this gap and help us understand these widely divergent beliefs about what is happening in conflict among civilian populations. Specifically, I draw an important distinction between “local” civilians living in the area(s) immediately exposed to a given type of violence (or other conflict event) and “non-local” civilians living elsewhere in the wartorn country, based on (1) the information they possess about the conflict events, and (2) their motivation when interpreting it. In brief, the locals will form fairly accurate factual beliefs about conflict events – due to their superior local information about them and strong motivation to interpret it carefully – whereas nonlocals will form biased beliefs about them driven by their preexisting orientations and information streams in the dispute. Ultimately, this means that – unless the non-local population harbors no motivated bias toward the warring parties and violence is reported accurately across the conflict environment – there will be profound gaps between the factual perceptions of local and non-local civilian populations in warzones.

I examine these dynamics in the context of the distinction between selective and indiscriminate violence in war. In essence, this refers to the extent to which the perpetrator of violence tries to avoid harming civilians or not. A growing literature shows that selective and targeted violence is more effective as a tool of coercion than indiscriminate repression (Kalyvas 2006, Weinstein 2007, Fortna 2015, Schutte 2015). The basic logic behind this is that indiscriminate violence alienates civilian populations, pushing them away from its user and toward its rivals. However, this logic relies on the assumption that civilians can tell the difference between selective vs. indiscriminate attack – if not, both should be equally futile. In fact, one of the key scholars behind these concepts even concedes that “in practice, the
distinction between selective and indiscriminate violence hinges on public perceptions” (emphasis added) (Kalyvas 2006: 145). Accordingly, this offers an ideal context in which to investigate these questions, as an important distinction in the nature of violence that “works through” the perceptions of civilians. The argument predicts that selective violence will be perceived accurately by local civilians living in immediately affected areas while non-locals living elsewhere in the warzone will view its degree of “selectivity” via their motivational biases and media narratives in the dispute.

I support this argument with a variety of evidence from two contemporary armed conflicts: (1) the War in Northwest Pakistan, 2004-present, and (2) the Iraq War, 2003-11. These disputes each offer various forms and sources of violence, including substantial use of selective violence by both domestic as well as foreign actors. In order to explore civilian perceptions of and reactions to this violence, I use a variety of different types of evidence, including preexisting survey data, quasi-experimental “event studies,” an original national survey experiment, and micro-level violent event data. In addition, all of this is informed by fieldwork in Pakistan and conversations with numerous Pakistanis and Iraqis about their factual beliefs and political attitudes. Ultimately, the analyses largely support the project’s central argument: local civilians perceive the violence accurately, updating their beliefs to reflect new information about its nature, while non-locals perceive its selectivity based on their prior orientations toward the perpetrator and information channels about the fighting. Thus, the evidence shows that it is actually the very people most affected (and even harmed) by selective violence who perceive it as the most selective. In addition, the project also links these divergent factual beliefs to key political consequences, showing that they can fuel
widespread civilian opposition and alienation to the perpetrator – or enhanced cooperation and violence reduction – in conflicts like those in Pakistan and Iraq.

Primary Implications:

The argument has several key implications, both for scholars of war and conflict as well as for scholars of political behavior more broadly. First, the dissertation project brings the issue of factual perceptions – as well as misperceptions – to the study of war. Indeed, the rapidly growing literature on the micro-dynamics of armed conflict has shed much light on behavior and attitudes in war, but factual perceptions have received very little attention. This project shows that there is substantial – and strategically consequential – variation in beliefs about the “facts on the ground” in conflict. Moreover, such beliefs are not simply a product of existing civilian attitudes, as they often diverge from prior attitudes among local populations and they are strongly affected by both informational and motivational factors.

Studying civilian beliefs about what is happening in ongoing conflicts like those in Syria, Yemen, or Ukraine – among civilians both close to and far from the “line of fire” – is thus a ripe topic for future conflict research.

Additionally, the project also helps expand our knowledge of civilian populations and what makes them “tick” in warzones. Indeed, research on civilians has often been split between two different perspectives: one in which they are modeled as “rational peasants” who recognize and respond to combatant rewards and punishments in ways that boost their chances of survival (Popkin 1979, Kalyvas 2006), and another in which they are understood as “ethnic partisans” who harbor powerful in-group vs. out-group attachments that shape their attitudes and behaviors in the dispute (Lyall 2010, Lyall, Blair, and Imai 2013). The
results of this project reveal that both of these views are partially right, and partially wrong. Specifically, they suggest that civilians living directly in the line of fire fit the rationalist model well – their prejudices and preferences are disciplined by a motivation to survive – but that millions of civilians living elsewhere in wartorn societies do not. In other words, rationalist models may work well in a localized area, but beyond that, what civilians think and do begins to resemble the motivated biases that plague the rest of political life. In this sense, the project has a deeply unifying impact on different strands of literature on civilian populations, showing how they work together in concert and in tandem. Conflict scholars should take into account the dynamics of these different “layers” of civilian populations, which may view events more as right-and-wrong or life-and-death – and possess different kinds of information – depending on where they are situated in a dispute.

The dissertation also has something to offer to research on political psychology and behavior more broadly. This is because, on one hand, it is a dissertation about lies in war. As such, it connects to the growing body of literature on factual misperceptions, conspiracy theories, and “magical thinking” in electoral politics (Nyhan and Reifler 2010, Oliver and Wood 2014, Miller, Saunders, and Farhart 2016), showing that similar types of dynamics are pervasive in conflict as well. Indeed, lies are endemic in war, maybe even more so than in mainstream politics for reasons explored in the project. Yet at the same time, this is also a dissertation about truth in war. Indeed, the project shows that factually false narratives are punctured when people have enough “skin in the game” and have direct and personal knowledge of events. In this sense, it offers a counterweight to literatures that highlight the
prevalence of factual manipulation and misperception in politics, showing that high stakes and personal experience are effective antidotes to lies and misinformation.

Finally, the results also provide some key implications for policymakers. For those seeking to win – or at least not lose – “hearts and minds” in modern war, it suggests that avoiding civilian casualties, aiding refugee populations, and exhibiting “good behaviors” more broadly on the battlefield is necessary but not sufficient. Without addressing deeper motivational biases and media narratives in the dispute, these deeds may only be factually recognized by a small slice of the population. Indeed, the U.S. and its allies have invested billions in weapons, intelligence, and training to minimize civilian casualties – along with condolence payments and other concessions to mitigate their political impact – in ongoing foreign interventions from Libya to Yemen to Afghanistan. Yet the American government is generally silent after drone attacks in countries like Pakistan, Yemen, and Somalia, and only sporadically speaks – usually after costly mistakes – about specific military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. This dissertation indicates that such a strategy is deeply naïve: the U.S. should not expect high levels of restraint to even be factually recognized in wartorn societies unless it can leverage local political capital and media outlets to communicate it. Put simply, instead of assuming that it has the moral high ground when using force abroad, America needs to aggressively try to claim it. In the conclusion of this project, I discuss

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6 In addition to the multi-billion-dollar budgets on armed drones and other precision weapons, see the frequent admonitions not to harm civilians within U.S. military doctrine (U.S. Army 2007, Petraeus and Amos 2009). Funds for condolence payments are nontrivial as well: they accounted for 8% of all reconstruction spending in Iraq in 2005 and 5% in 2006 (GAO 2007).

7 For example, U.S. officials went on a media blitz after the Kunduz airstrike in Afghanistan in 2015. See, e.g., New York Times, October 5, 2015.
some ways in which this might be achieved, as well as some implications for policymakers and organizations interested in peace-building as opposed to war-fighting objectives.

Empirical Scope Conditions:

Despite these contributions, the project does have some empirical scope conditions. In fact, although the theoretical argument applies broadly at a conceptual level, I approach these questions empirically through an International Relations (IR) lens. This means that I focus primarily on violence that is *perpetrated across national borders*, such as – to select contemporary examples – American violence in Iraq, Israeli violence in Lebanon, or Saudi violence in Yemen. Moreover, the interstate focus in turn leads me to look at *violence that is empirically selective* – such as targeted arrests or assassinations – as the context in which to test my claims. The basic logic for this is that, because the violence originates from an external source, the perpetrator will typically be very unpopular within the target society, so there will be much more “room” for meaningful perceptual variation if the violence is selective and not indiscriminate in nature. In other words, if the U.S. were to “carpet bomb” ISIS controlled areas of Syria or Iraq, few Syrians or Iraqis would see it as discriminate (as the bias and the reality would align). However, as I will attempt to show, the sustained use of selective violence in such a context can unleash powerful cross-pressures and perceptual gaps among civilian populations.\(^8\)

These decisions also mean that, in practice, I concentrate my energies on violence

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\(^8\) Moreover, although I do not focus on violence that is empirically indiscriminate (like communal shelling, bombing, or massacre), it is a key “reference category” for civilians in the empirical analyses.
conducted by state actors. Simply put, nonstate actors – like insurgent or terrorist groups – that employ violence against foreign populations typically do not do so discriminately. This is probably because such campaigns are difficult or expensive – they require both the capabilities (precise intelligence and technology) and the intentions (desire to avoid killing foreign civilians) to carry out (Kalyvas 2006). In contrast, it is far easier for nonstate actors to resort to terrorism – the proverbial “weapon of the weak” – or other indiscriminate tactics when they wish to attack foreign societies. It is states – especially powerful, liberal ones – that have the resources and the inclinations to engage in prolonged campaigns of selective violence on foreign soil (even though they do not always elect to do so). Thus, I focus on selective violence by externally intervening state actors as an empirical “first cut” in which to explore these dynamics.

These scope conditions do, however, confer at least two additional key advantages. First, they give the project particular relevance for contemporary policy debates, in addition to its deeper theoretical implications. As noted above, selective violence is typically seen as more effective than indiscriminate violence as a tool in modern armed conflicts, except under very limited circumstances. Thus, any effort to bolster our understanding of when violence actually “works” to weaken armed opponents and not provoke greater resistance should focus on investigating variation on the selective side of the violence spectrum. More specifically, the focus enables us to speak directly to the military operations and campaigns of the U.S. and its Western allies, who expend vast resources attempting to wield violence

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9 In particular, indiscriminate violence can be more effective when there is a severe power imbalance in favor of the perpetrator (e.g., Downes 2007) or when there is no organized armed resistance that can capitalize on civilian alienation (Kalyvas 2006).
discriminately from Libya to Pakistan in the hope that such restraint will be recognized by foreign populations, as noted above.

Second, this focus provides more and better data to work with. In fact, the behavior and decision-making of the states who conduct these campaigns – such as the U.S. and UK – can be much more easily observed and studied than that of their local authoritarian allies or the militant groups that they face. Because of their relatively open and democratic nature, in addition to the prominent leaks of their national security documents (such as Wikileaks or The Drone Papers), we know much more about the “data-generating processes” behind these operations than those of their adversaries. Leaked (or declassified) state documents about U.S. drone strikes and condolence payments, for example, provide a relatively rich window into these processes, supplementing the various publicly available databases that focus on tracking their incidence and outcomes.¹⁰

That said, I see no compelling reason why the dynamics highlighted in this project – the presence of motivational and informational bias outside immediately affected areas – do not extend to factual beliefs about indiscriminate and non-state violence as well. In fact, the anecdotal material used throughout the project provides evidence of these processes in a wide range of conflicts and contexts, including violence that is both state and non-state, selective and indiscriminate, and external and domestic in origin. That said, research must start somewhere, and for a variety of reasons my dissertation has started here. Ultimately,

¹⁰ For an internal assessment of U.S. drone strikes in East Africa, see Jeremy Scahill, “The Drone Papers,” The Intercept, October 15, 2015. For efforts to track the strikes and their effects, see the databases maintained by the New America Foundation and Bureau of Investigative Journalism among others. For data on military activities, civilian casualties, and other dimensions of the war in Iraq, see the Empirical Studies of Conflict project at Princeton.
I hope it is just that – a start – and that other scholars will build on these ideas and arguments and investigate whether there is rigorous empirical evidence for them across a wider range of combatant behaviors and conflict environments.

Conceptual Ground-Clearing:

Before proceeding to present the argument and evidence, a brief word is necessary on the definition of selective violence and its distinctions from other associated concepts. Although it is often operationalized as such in empirical studies, selective violence is not simply the absence of collateral damage or civilian casualties. Collateral damage is about the outcomes or results of violence, while the selectivity of violence is about its intentions or targeting practices. As explained by Kalyvas, selective violence means that violence is used based on individual suspicion of joining or aiding the opposing forces (2006). A good indicator of this, he notes, is that the targeting happens at the individual level, as opposed to based on broader ascriptive characteristics like race, ethnicity, or location of residence. In other words, if an entire village is bombed because it is controlled by rebels or inhabited by non-coethnics, this would be a very indiscriminate use of force. If, however, the military enters the village and goes house to house, only attacking those who fire rocket propelled grenades (RPGs) at them and arresting those found to have stashes of improvised explosive devices (IEDs), this would be far more targeted or selective in nature.

Of course, in reality, there is a spectrum of how selective an attack is – that is, its level of selectivity – based on how hard the perpetrator tries to avoid harming civilians. Figure 1 shows a visualization of this spectrum, with common examples of different uses
or force arrayed along it. I have tried to choose examples within each category that will be familiar to a Western audience. At the most indiscriminate end of the spectrum, we see attacks against entire “enemy” cities, like the firebombing of Dresden in WWII or the brutal Siege of Sarajevo in the Balkans in the 1990s. At the most selective end, we see attacks against individual “enemy” combatants or even top leaders, such as the capture of Saddam Hussein in 2004 or the assassination of Osama bin Laden in 2011. Needless to say, there are a number of nuances within each one of these broad categories, such as location (is the attack carried out in an empty forest or a busy market?), timing (is it conducted during the day or at night, when streets are emptier?), and other precautions (are people warned before a building is bombed?) that affect its level of selectivity. However, this visualization should help make the key idea of selective vs. indiscriminate violence clearer and more concrete. The discussion here is not meant to be particularly innovative or novel, as the idea is used widely in the literature on political violence and conflict.
Yet what is investigated in this project is not (mostly) whether violence is actually selective, but whether it is *perceived* as selective by civilian populations. Indeed, as noted by Kalyvas, this distinction is at heart one that “hinges on public perceptions” (2006: 145) and violence that is actually selective can be seen as indiscriminate (and vice versa). As an example, he mentions the Vietcong assassinations during the Vietnam War. Although this violence was actually quite discriminate (Wickham-Crowley 1990: 215), it is often seen as indiscriminate due to its vast scale (up to 50,000 victims in 15 years). The key theoretical quantity of interest is thus not ultimately the perpetrator’s intentions – given that the idea of selective violence is only meaningful through the reactions of civilians – but rather the civilian population’s perceptions of its intentions. Figure 2 summarizes these distinctions between the concepts of collateral damage, selective violence, and perceived selectivity –
and the connections between them – in order to clarify the conceptual terrain of this project. Ultimately, I investigate whether violence that is actually selective is perceived accordingly by the civilian population. The quantity of collateral damage is likely to be one major input into this perception, but there are, I argue, other key ingredients as well.

Figure 2: Collateral Damage, Selective Violence, and Perceived Selectivity

Summary of Chapters:

The outline of the dissertation is as follows. In Chapter 2, I develop the theoretical argument about how people develop factual beliefs in war. In particular, I differentiate between civilians in the “line of fire” of a given type of conflict event vs. those in the wider
wartorn society, based on two crucial factors: (1) their information and (2) their motivation about the violence. Drawing from literature from social psychology, I first describe the role of motivation in general, and then discuss its application to war in particular. Specifically, I draw on the distinction between “directional biases” and “accuracy motives” popularized by Kunda (1990), arguing that people will interpret violence directionally unless they live in affected areas and are disciplined by a need for accuracy. Then, I move on to review the role of “information diets” on political attitudes and the small but growing literature on the media in conflict settings. I argue that the media in such contexts is often deeply polarized and politicized in how it presents violence, fueling divergent factual perceptions among its respective audiences. Yet I also posit that not everyone is equally affected by these factual narratives. Indeed, those in the directly affected areas will resist false media narratives due to their superior information and accuracy motivation, as will those outside them who hold strong directional bias in the dispute. In sum, then, locals will tend to accurately recognize the nature of wartime violence – including whether it is selective or indiscriminate – while non-locals will tend to perceive its factual nature through the lens of their motivated biases and information streams.

Chapter 3 explores these issues in the case of the U.S. drone campaign in the tribal regions of Pakistan. It first shows that, while the U.S. drone campaign is empirically quite selective, it is largely perceived as anything but selective in mainstream Pakistani society. In other words, there is a widespread factual misperception about the nature of the U.S. drone campaign in Pakistan among non-local civilians. Second, the chapter shows that this misperception is strategically important. To begin with, I find that Pakistani concerns about
the operations’ collateral damage are among the strongest predictors of their unpopularity in the country. In addition, using a novel “event study” design, I provide evidence that this unpopularity has broader alienating consequences. Specifically, the results of my analysis show that U.S. drone strikes regularly fuel anti-American, anti-incumbent, and pro-Taliban sentiment throughout Pakistani society. In sum, this chapter shows that there are pervasive factual misperceptions surrounding the U.S. drone campaign in Pakistan, and that these misperceptions are politically and strategically consequential.

In Chapter 4, I explore the sources of these factual misperceptions among non-local civilians. In order to do so, I fielded a national survey experiment throughout Pakistan with a mock news story about a counterinsurgent airstrike in the tribal regions – varying whether it was perpetrated by the U.S. or Pakistan and whether it killed civilians or not. This survey experiment indicates that beliefs about selectivity are shaped primarily by the perpetrator’s identity (the U.S. vs. Pakistan), as well as by civilians’ prior identities (Pashtun ethnicity and Islamist ideology) and information sources (informal news) in the dispute. While actual reported casualty levels do have an influence, they are secondary to these motivational and informational factors. Overall, these results illuminate how the factual beliefs of non-local civilians are informationally and motivationally biased in war.

In Chapter 5, I analyze the other side of the coin and look at these dynamics among local civilians directly exposed to conflict events or dynamics. Specifically, I examine the impact of 4,046 Coalition “condolence payments” to civilians during the heart of the Iraq War as an empirical window into these dynamics, as these payments represent signals to civilians about the selectivity of incidents of collateral damage. Overall, I find that these
payments are effective in reducing the subsequent level of insurgent attacks in the affected areas, especially when provided swiftly and sustainably, and regardless of the community’s prior level of trust toward the Coalition. Ultimately, I argue that these patterns suggest that local civilian communities are accurately updating their beliefs about the selectivity of the collateral damage in the face of new and relevant information. I draw on anecdotal evidence about civilian reactions to help rule out alternative explanations involving civilian demands for justice and prior pro-Coalition orientations. Overall, these results provide evidence that local civilian populations understand conflict events and dynamics relatively accurately, in stark contrast to their deeply biased non-local counterparts.

I conclude with a discussion of the project’s generalizability and its implications in Chapter 6. Indeed, I first draw attention to similar dynamics in a wide range of wars beyond those in present-day Pakistan and Iraq, including WWII, the Israeli-Palestinian dispute, the Balkan Wars of the 1990s, and the ongoing conflicts in Ukraine, South Sudan, and Syria. Such “shadow cases” suggest that there similar dynamics are at work across a wide array of conflict types and issues, although further research will be essential to more rigorously investigate these claims. I also use these cases to sketch out a typology of four key domains of factual manipulation in war. Then, I move on to explore the project’s broader theoretical and practical implications. As mentioned in this introduction, the dissertation pushes us to consider variation in factual beliefs as a key issue in war – a topic that has been neglected in spite of the surging interest in factual beliefs in peace. It also deepens our knowledge of civilian populations in armed conflict, helping to unify existing models of civilian behavior and show how they are complementary rather than competing. Moreover, it provides key
implications for broader behavioral literatures on factual misperception and manipulation in politics, showing the limits of these phenomena in new and important ways. Lastly, the conclusion also discusses the implications of this dissertation for policymakers, journalists, activists, and engaged citizens. Ultimately, the dissertation has something to offer anyone interested in the dynamics of truth and lies in war – as well as perhaps a roadmap for those of those who would like to begin to cultivate more truth.
Chapter 1 References:


Chapter 2: A Theory of Factual Beliefs in War

*The truth is not half so important as what people think to be true* – *Napoleon*

How can we explain the oftentimes wide variation within conflict settings in how people perceive the factual nature of conflict events – *in other words, in what they believe is happening in the fighting*? And specifically, when do civilians believe that violence is selective or indiscriminate in nature? In this chapter, I develop a theoretical model of these dynamics, drawing on literature from communications on the role of the media in war as well as literature from social psychology on motivated reasoning and survivor psychology. The argument I build distinguishes broadly between civilians who live in area(s) directly and repeatedly affected by a particular type of violence – who have both higher-quality, local information about it and a motive to process it carefully – and those living elsewhere in the wartorn society, whose perceptions will be driven by their motivational biases and media narratives about the violence. To develop this argument, I first review the existing literature (or lack thereof) on how civilians perceive the empirical nature of conflict, and the need for further research on such dynamics. I then examine the two main variables of motivation and information that shape these factual beliefs, in turn, and how they diverge for the “local” and the “non-local” civilian populations. Finally, I put the two pieces of the
argument together to form a general theoretical explanation for how civilians perceive the nature of violence – including whether it is selective vs. indiscriminate – in war.

Existing Literature:

Imagine that an improvised explosive device (IED) erupts on a road in southern Afghanistan, an Israeli bulldozer smashes a house in Gaza, or a band of rebels raids a small village in Liberia. How do civilians – both within the immediate areas and beyond – form beliefs about what happened in these routine acts of violence? Specifically, how do they know whether the perpetrator tried to avoid killing innocent civilians or not? As suggested in Chapter 1, such questions are critically important. It is almost a truism of modern warfare that the support of the civilian populace is a prerequisite of victory, as reflected in common refrains such as “winning hearts and minds” (Condra and Shapiro 2012, Lyall et al 2013). Civilians not only aid combatants with key resources like funds, supplies, personnel, and information, but they can also influence their wartime strategies – including whether they escalate or de-escalate the conflict – by voting, protesting, or mobilizing in other ways in the warzone (Jaeger et al. 2012). And crucially for our purposes, whether they believe one side is massacring civilians will influence these choices.

But how do civilians make these judgments? Existing literature on armed conflict largely ignores this question. Indeed, much of the micro-level conflict literature focuses on the localized and militarized dynamics of wars happening on the “battlefield,” such as whether different types of counterinsurgency operations and strategies decrease the number of insurgent attacks within a particular village, district, or area (Kalyvas and Kocher 2007,
Condra and Shapiro 2012, Berman et al. 2013). While this work has helped identify the causes and consequences of combatant behaviors, such as types of violence, it has generally “bracketed” the issues of civilian beliefs and attitudes, most likely due to the ethical and methodological concerns that surround fielding public opinion surveys in conflict settings (Lyall, Blair, and Imai 2013). Yet simply ignoring or assuming away civilian attitudes is problematic, as they may diverge from combatant behavior and control in important ways, particularly over the long-term.

A handful of recent studies have begun to fill the gap by analyzing civilian reactions to wartime violence using public opinion data from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe (Jaeger et al. 2012, Lyall, Blair, and Imai 2013, García-Ponce and Pasquale 2013). While this work has made some key contributions, it has two critical limitations. First, like the combatant behavior literature noted above, it typically only explores how civilians respond to violence within a highly localized area, such as the particular village (or district) in which occurs. In contrast, there is scant attention to the factual perceptions of larger audiences throughout the conflict setting about different military operations and campaigns, and the roles of mass media, combatant propaganda, and psychological factors in determining them. Indeed, this omission is particularly glaring in the prevailing era of “mass-mediated political violence” (Nacos 2007) or “mediatized war” (Maltby 2012), when information about conflict events typically reaches millions of civilians within wartorn societies and beyond. Second, these studies analyze how civilians react to violent events, not how they form beliefs about them to begin with. In other words, the onion of civilian behavior has several layers. For instance, Lyall, Blair, and Imai (2013) find bias in civilian reactions to violence in Afghanistan, in
which self-reported “harm” by the in-group is less alienating than harm by the out-group. Yet, a judgment about harm requires attribution: when do civilians think that their families or communities were harmed by a combatant in the first place? This project thus builds on existing wartime survey research by tackling the prior question of how civilians’ factual beliefs about conflict events – which may then shape their attitudes and behaviors – come to form in the first place.

One partial exception to this neglect of factual beliefs in conflict zones is a recent study by Driscoll and Maliniak (2016). These scholars fielded a pair of surveys in post-Soviet Georgia, one shortly before and one shortly after the society’s short and ill-fated war with Russia in 2008. While the main focus of this study is on leadership evaluations in foreign policy crises, the study does document a "Fog of War" effect in which "many respondents earnestly reported believing different things about the events they had just lived through" (266). Yet in this sense, the study merely drives home the point that there is variation in factual beliefs, but does little to actually explain and examine this variation. Indeed, Driscoll and Maliniak primarily attribute the variation in these perceptions to the chaos and confusion (or "fog") of the war, stating that "our interpretation of these trends is simple: media coverage of the war was confusing, and these confusions were internalized by Georgian citizens in the form of internally coherent narratives" (272). On the contrary, I argue that variation in factual perceptions is not only the result of cognitive confusion and wartime uncertainty, but of systematic informational and motivational factors in conflict. Ultimately, this dissertation thus aims to build on Driscoll and Maliniak’s observation by offering a full theoretical explanation and empirical exploration of these dynamics.
Yet while such issues have gone largely unnoticed in research on conflict processes, they have been increasingly investigated by scholars of American political behavior and political psychology more broadly. Indeed, there has been a recent explosion of research in these areas on how and why citizens form different factual beliefs about their political environments, and on the causes and consequences of factual misperceptions, conspiracy theories, political rumors, "fake news," and other similar phenomena in democratic politics (e.g., Taber and Lodge 2006, Nyhan and Reifler 2010, Miller, Saunders, and Farhart 2016). This project seeks to link this fast-growing literature in American political behavior to the study of the dynamics of violent conflicts, building a bridge between two corners of the discipline not normally in conversation with each other and studying the extent to which they point toward similar processes at work in very different settings. In fact, for reasons which I illuminate in this project, these issues may be even more severe in the deeply polarized and heavily politicized landscapes of warzones.

The Role of Motivation:

The first key factor that shapes how civilians perceive violence is their motivation in interpreting it. Decades of research from social psychology show that individuals often process new information in ways that preserve their preexisting attitudes and attachments. Specifically, they frequently indulge in “motivated reasoning”: thinking directed toward reaching the conclusions that satisfy their fundamental emotional and psychological goals (Kunda 1990, Taber and Lodge 2007). In fact, studies reveal that when people hold strong “directional biases,” they not only arrive at self-serving conclusions, but they actually
process and access information differently in doing so. These dynamics cut across a wide array of social, economic, and political settings, from legal disputes (Braman and Nelson 2007) to political campaigns (Taber and Lodge 2007) to market outcomes (Benabou 2013) and even to beliefs about life-threatening issues like crime and gun control (Campbell and Kay 2014).

These tendencies should apply to civilian communities in armed conflicts as well. While individual civilians may not all be microcosms of overarching “master cleavages” (Kalyvas 2006), neither are they only “blank slates” that all interpret battlefield dynamics in the same exact way. On the contrary, individuals often harbor strong preexisting attitudes and attachments toward the combatants in war which they will attempt to preserve when processing an incident of violence. For example, if a civilian holds deep animosity for one of the combatants, he or she will “want to believe” that it was indifferent to any collateral damage that occurred during its operation – or even that such harm was intentional. To do otherwise would be to threaten or challenge this deeply entrenched belief, which would be cognitively and emotionally costly.

Indeed, there is a rich history of this type of thinking in war. In fact, in his scathing critique of the propaganda that fueled WWI, *Falsehood in War-Time* (1929), former British MP Arthur Ponsonby contends that wartime manipulation is possible not only because of the lies and liars, but because of the public’s willingness to believe them (1). Citizens in war, he notes, often “quite willingly delude themselves in order to justify their own actions. They are anxious to find an excuse for displaying their patriotism” (2). In the infamous WWI report of “the Belgian baby without hands,” in which a fake story that a Belgian baby
whose hands were chopped off by German soldiers circulated widely in Allied nations, inflaming anti-German sentiment, Ponsonby’s critique is telling:

*No one paused to ask how long a baby would survive with its hands cut off unless expert surgical aid were at hand to tie up the arteries (the answer being a very few minutes). Everyone wanted to believe the story, and many went so far as to say they had seen the baby (emphasis added).*

Similar dynamics helped foster what is perhaps the most notorious piece of anti-German atrocity propaganda created in WWI – the “German corpse factory” story. This was a fake report that the German military was rendering trainloads of its own battlefield dead in a factory in order to extract their oils and fats for the war. Although it was probably the most “appalling atrocity story of the war” (Knightley 2004: 114), it nevertheless grew quite popular and influential in Allied nations. One scholar links its vast appeal to the fact that “many people wanted to believe it. The war was well under way, with all its horrors and grief. To think that the enemy was the incarnation of evil helped the war effort” (Martin 2002: 72). Thus, civilians with strong animosities toward a particular combatant are much more willing to embrace fake stories about that actor’s atrocities.

We can see these kinds of dynamics in contemporary conflict settings as well. In the case of U.S. drone strikes in Pakistan, for instance, scholars have argued that one of the main sources of negative beliefs about them is the widespread latent anti-Americanism that exists in Pakistani society, which makes Pakistanis much more ready to accept narratives that revolve around their indiscriminate and destructive consequences. In the words of Karl Kaltenthaler and his coauthors, “a Pakistani who is anti-American is more likely to oppose the drone strikes because she would believe the attacks are for a malevolent purpose” (2012: 11). And, empirically, anti-Americanism is indeed a powerful predictor of Pakistani anti-drone views (Kaltenthaler, Miller, and Fair 2012).
Accuracy Motives:

Yet people do not always, or unconditionally, hold self-serving beliefs. When the stakes are high enough, they will process new information more carefully and thoroughly in the pursuit of accuracy (Kunda 1990). Indeed, scholars have induced such an “accuracy motive” in subjects by increasing the payoffs or stated importance of tasks (McAllister et al 1979) or making people publicly defend their answers (Tetlock 1983). In these contexts, individuals tend to take longer, use fewer cognitive shortcuts and heuristics like outgroup stereotypes, and reach more accurate and unbiased conclusions about the situations or the issues at hand.

While these studies use economic incentives or social pressure in order to motivate subjects, there is no more powerful “accuracy motive” than physical survival. When people think strongly that they (or their loved ones) could be killed – when their actual lives are “on the line” – they will expend much more time and energy than they would under normal circumstances to process information about the threat, adjusting (or abandoning) their preexisting attitudes and attachments as needed. While the process may be cognitively and emotionally costly, such cognitive effort or emotional discomfort is vastly overshadowed by the motive to survive. In fact, studies show that the process of learning, updating, and adjusting preexisting beliefs is deeply linked to anxiety (Redlawsk et al 2010), which is in ample supply in such life-and-death circumstances.

Examples of the intense motivation for survival and careful attention to threats in conflict situations abound. For instance, in Zlata’s Diary (1994), the diary of a girl named
Zlata Filipovic who survived wartime Sarajevo in the early 1990s, this reaction becomes all too clear. Driven by fear, Zlata and her family soon learn to survive the daily rounds of artillery shelling by hiding out in a neighbor’s bomb shelter, and to survive sniper fire by rearranging their apartment, avoiding exposed rooms and windows, and turning around all of their furniture (387). In other words, the family becomes deeply motivated to understand the nature of the different dangers facing them, as their very survival hinges on it. A similar dynamic is clear in the memoir of war correspondent Megan K. Stack, in her account of the Israeli bombardment of Lebanon in 2006:

_A few days under bombardment teach you everything about your nerves—where they live in your body, how they can vibrate and ache and make you shake, make you want to bite right through your finger or peel your skin off your body just to get free of them. All around you is the crashing sound of the bombs, the smell of the bombs, the bodies and buildings that have been hit by the bombs. And still you stand, for now. You think all the time about shelter._

Like Zlata, Stack was intensely focused on the bombing, her own survival, and the concrete goal of finding shelter. Indeed, Stack quickly absorbed key lessons about the nature of the dangers she faced – such as the fact that “roads are death” (237), because the Israeli planes were targeting southern Lebanon’s road network – in order to boost her odds of survival.

These dynamics are also clear in civilian reactions to the U.S. drone program in Pakistan. For instance, one Pakistani journalist who spent time in the tribal areas explained that the precise and careful nature of the program is broadly recognized there – as opposed to throughout the rest of the country – because “for those who live the closest to the strike zones, drones are not some abstract talking point. _Just getting through the day has become a high-stakes game._ Adil Zareef feels that each day could be his last. And for Karim Khan, the possibility of dying in a strike, like his son and brother before him, remains all too
real” (emphasis added). This makes clear the fact that, for civilians living in the line of fire – within the “high-stakes game” – carefully and accurately understanding the nature of violent threats is a matter of life and death.

Survivor Psychology:

In addition, this portrait of how people respond to circumstances of acute physical threat is consistent with another body of psychological work – that on the “psychology of survival.” This stream of research centers on the social psychology of individuals working in occupations with severe physical risks, such as urban police officers, combat soldiers, and other so-called “death workers” (Lifton 1991, Henry 2004, Capps 2014). One of the core findings of this research is that, in life-and-death circumstances, people often undergo a process of “psychic numbing,” in which they experience a diminished sense of emotion and a heightened sense of cognition and concentration on the immediate threat at hand in order to survive (Henry 2004). Such a process is often associated with an elevated sensory experience and even a perceived slowdown of time. As described by one NYPD officer:

I think that the experience becomes heightened in time. There was a time when I would do a car stop, for example, and I would not appreciate the full danger of the situation. In other words, the more you see and the more you do, the more you realize the dangers, and you stop trusting people. You treat people nicely, but things come into sharper focus at that point. Certain guards go up and it’s almost something physical. Certain guards go up and you become more focused. In a car stop, with the level of focus, you still know exactly where your partner is and you still know where you are, but your attention is into this car and into this man’s movements. So I think, talking about it now, that there are different levels of intensity. In the extreme situations, everything else gets blocked out except that.

This shows how, in lethal situations, police officers learn to become hyper-focused on and hyper-attentive to the different threats facing them in order to survive. Indeed, the officers

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“learn to sort citizens into categories (suspicious persons, ass-holes, and know-nothings), based on the potential danger…that they may present” (Paoline 2003: 202). In essence, the officers become highly motivated to approach these risks carefully due to the high stakes involved in doing so. This closely mirrors the need for accuracy felt by local civilians in armed conflict.

**Accuracy vs. Bias:**

Putting these two crucial mechanisms together, I contend that civilians in societies experiencing significant violent conflict will be free to indulge in their “directional biases” about an event or type of violence, unless they live in or around directly and repeatedly exposed areas – in which case they will be “disciplined” by their motivation for accuracy. In other words, they only need to process conflict events carefully and unbiasedly when they themselves (or their families) are routinely exposed to them. This gap between the way in which “local” vs. “non-local” civilians think about conflict is visible in the case of the U.S. drone strikes in the tribal areas of Pakistan. In fact, one Pakistani reporter notes that the chief secretary of Khyber Pakhtunkwha province, a province adjacent to the tribal regions, “was of the view that the further away people were from the drone attacks, the more worked up they got about them.”

In a similar fashion, a scholar with family ties to the tribal areas notes that the narrative of Pakistani sovereignty violation by drones – one of the major moral criticisms of the strikes – is a “luxury for those who enjoy the comforts of the big cities of Pakistan but it only extracts a wounded smile from the face of a

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tribesman.” Such quotes suggest that it is only those outside the line of fire who can afford to use a primarily moral or emotional lens to understand the incidents, whereas those living in it must approach the danger through a more immediate and material one. In fact, some observers have even lamented that – inside the confines of “Pakistan proper” – there seems to be an “inability, and sometimes unwillingness, to consider the experience of those who actually live in the FATA” (emphasis added) with respect to the drone strikes.

Alternative Reactions:

However, at least two key alternative psychological reactions merit consideration. First, terror management theory (TMT) suggests that the prospect of death and one’s own mortality produces a fundamental, existential anxiety and corresponding desire to invest life with meaning and self-esteem (Becker 1973). This, in turn, leads people to construct and depend on systems of shared culture, identity, and religion (Greenberg, Solomon, and Pyszczynski 1986). In this vein, experimental studies about mortality salience show that priming individuals to think about their death encourages them to adopt stronger religious beliefs, social identities, and other attitudes or behaviors which produce self-esteem (Jessop et al 2008, Heflick and Goldenberg 2012, Jong et al 2012). For our purposes, this might imply that living in a context with a sustained risk of violent death such as armed conflict would make people anchor more on their preexisting attitudes and identities and thus view the conflict dynamics through more of a directionally biased lens.

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14 See f.n. 2.
Yet this point conflates an abstract and existential anxiety about death with an acute and immediate fear of survival, as when bombs are falling and bullets are flying inside of warzones. As noted by evolutionary psychologists, distracting yourself from thoughts about death – which is the first step in TMT – would be highly maladaptive in actual deadly situations, as when you enter a cave and there is a predator waiting (Landau et al 2007). In addition, TMT is easily induced in laboratory contexts when there is no immediate physical risk (Navarette and Fessler 2004). These facts suggest that it is something distinct from the response of people under real physical threat. Moreover, the psychological processes at work in TMT are deeply at odds with the forms of responses we outlined above from people in conflicts or death occupations, who report a shutdown of emotion or “psychic numbing” as they center on personal survival. In fact, one trauma scholar and veteran NYPD officer explains that during “a profoundly threatening event or image, the survivor experiences a debilitating loss of the capacity to symbolize, and often the simultaneous loss of the capacity to fully experience emotion” (2004: 200). This clashes sharply with the existential and emotional reaction at the core of TMT.

Another potential line of critique holds that, in situations of acute physical threat, people simply psychologically shut down or “freeze.” In fact, a strand of research on the psychology of human reactions to disasters, such as shipwrecks, plane crashes, and fires, shows that individuals often suffer cognitive collapses such as losses in working memory and executive functioning during such episodes (Leach 1994, 2004, Robinson and Bridges 2011). In fact, there is a wealth of anecdotal evidence supporting this notion, such as the fact that approximately 11% of skydiver deaths are due to unopened parachutes (so-called
“no-pull” fatalities), or that one of the leading causes of death among firemen is unbuckled ambulance seatbelts. While we tend to focus on the examples of heroism or perseverance against all odds – the “Jon Krakauers” of the world – one scholar in this line of research estimates that about 75% of people in life-threatening situations are “unable to think clearly or plot their escape. They become mentally paralysed.”¹⁵ The primary implication of this literature for our purposes is that people in warzones may fail to internalize any meaningful information about the war when bullets and bombs are flying around them, and thus not have a very accurate picture or perception of the dangers facing them.

While this would indeed be a cause for concern, such responses apply mainly to people in their initial encounters with the extreme situation. The first time (or, even, the first few times) that someone is in a building that catches on fire or has a gun pointed at them, they may well “freeze” or “black out.” Yet, over time, after sustained exposure to building fires or armed robberies, people learn what to expect from these situations. This is why – while rookie police officers and first-year medical students are often quite anxious about handling corpses – veteran officers and surgeons do so with relative ease (Henry 2004). Indeed, the entire point of disaster preparedness training is to make people anticipate their response in a crisis, so that they can act like they have been there before (Leach 2004). This is closely linked to work on “recognition-primed decision making,” which examines how people like first responders make quick and effective decisions in extremely stressful situations (Klein 1998).

The crucial point for our purposes is that people who survive a warzone for any

extended stretch of time become like a veteran policeman, and not like an ordinary citizen seeing a gun for the first time. This adaptation point can be driven home by returning to some of our prior anecdotes. Consider the words of the NYPD officer we quoted earlier: “there was a time when I would do a car stop, for example, and I would not appreciate the full danger of the situation. In other words, the more you see and the more you do, the more you realize the dangers, and you stop trusting people” (Henry 2004: 268). This process also is visible in the case of Megan Stack, the veteran Middle East war correspondent we quoted above. After several days in the 2006 Lebanon War, she reports that “the war no longer feels temporary. Now there is a hardening, an acceptance of this condition. Roads are death and sky is fear and people scurry down into the scorched earth like moles” (2010: 237). In sum, this theoretical and empirical discussion demonstrates that the “freezing” critique may be relevant in peoples’ first experiences with violence, but not relevant for their reactions and perceptions after any protracted immersion in war.

The Role of Information:

In addition to motivation, the other key variable affecting how civilians perceive the nature of violence is the information that they consume about it. In fact, we know that the political information “diet” that people absorb influences their attitudes and beliefs in a broad range of areas, from foreign policy opinions (Baum 2013) to economic perceptions (Soroka et al 2014) to voting preferences (Lelkes et al 2015). Different channels of news and information change what their audiences see in two key ways: (1) selection bias, which refers to which events they choose to report, and (2) description bias, which refers to how
they choose to report or frame them (McCarthy et al 1996). Indeed, empirical studies show broad variation in which events attract the attention of different newspapers (e.g., Danzger 1975, McCarthy et al 1996, Mueller 1997), and, of course, there is a large body of research on the divergent framing of events in distinct media sources, such as the dueling cable news networks Fox, MSNBC, and CNN in the U.S. (e.g., Morris 2005, Feldman et al 2011, Hyun and Moon 2016). Such variation may arise from different resources and constraints as well as different interests and agendas. Meanwhile, people can also acquire “local information” through their social networks that pushes back against these broader media-driven frames and narratives (Druckman and Nelson 2003). Thus, the information about political events that people receive – from both vertical media channels as well as horizontal peer networks – can heavily shape their political preferences and perceptions.

These dynamics apply in armed conflict as well. Indeed, after most significant clashes or battles that take place in a violent conflict, there is an inevitable contest between the two “sides” to control how they are painted in the media in the conflict setting (Tugwell 1986). In the words of one scholar, “each violent event creates an ‘opportunity space’ into which both insurgent and state seek to inject their narrative” (Stevens 2013: 93). Consider the following example – used by Philip Schrodt and his colleagues to illustrate the inherent challenges in coding violent event data – of how state vs. insurgent can “spin” the same violent incident:

**State**: Terrorists slaughtered innocent civilians in the town of Ochos Rios before being driven off by government troops.

**Insurgent**: Liberation forces battled occupying forces in the town of Ochos Rios, causing several casualties before retreating.
While these headlines describe the same attack, their audiences would most likely draw very different conclusions about what happened. In addition, this is only an illustration of description bias, and ignores the potential for selection bias – that the event might not be reported at all in many sources. In fact, tales of wartime horrors can be entirely fabricated by one side in an effort to smear the reputation of the enemy, a shamefully commonplace practice that philosophy scholar Randal Marlin has termed “atrocity propaganda” (2002). While some of these issues have been noted as methodological challenges surrounding the use of armed conflict databases, such as the *Uppsala/Prio Armed Conflict Dataset* (Gerner et al 1994, Otto 2013, Weidmann 2015), their implications have not yet been considered for ordinary civilians living in conflict settings. If we are concerned that these issues affect teams of researchers trying to identify what happened years after an incident of violence, should we not expect them to do the same for civilians trying to learn what is going on around them in real time, while shrouded by the proverbial “fog of war”?

*Wartime Media Control:*

Indeed, the conditions in conflict settings often make the problem of media bias particularly severe. First, much of the media in war is actually owned by the combatants. For instance, a World Bank report on patterns of media ownership around the globe found that the state owned 29% of the top five newspapers, 60% of the top five TV channels, and 72% of the top five radio stations in each country (Djankov et al 2003). Moreover, these figures are even higher in regions suffering from the most conflict, such as Africa and the Middle East. Likewise, most major insurgent organizations have their own media channels
(e.g., Hezbollah’s *Al-Manar TV*, Al-Shabaab’s *Radio Andalus*, or ISIS’s “Voice of the Caliphate” radio) that broadcast their messages directly as well. Thus, much of the media in war is directly owned by the combatants, and is thus little more than a propaganda arm in times of war and conflict.

Second, the media landscape in wartorn societies often naturally polarizes along the lines of the war. Media outlets often represent distinct constituencies or communities engaged in the fighting, such as Shi’a, Sunni, and Kurd in Iraq, or Croat, Serb, and Bosnian in the Balkans, and have strategic (viewership) and sincere (partisanship) incentives to cater to their audiences. For example, the media environment in Iraq is deeply polarized between the pro-Shi’a channels like *Al-Iraqiya TV* vs. pro-Sunni ones like *Al-Baghdadiya TV* (Amos 2010). This polarization is readily apparent in Iraqi media coverage of ISIS, which some pro-Sunni networks have branded as “tribal revolutionaries,” while pro-Shi’a outlets use far more nefarious terms such as “terrorists” or “terrorist gangs.”

Finally, if a media source is not biased by its ownership or its audience, combatants can still influence it in a number of ways. To begin with, censorship is pervasive in war. Indeed, reporters have been banned from the front lines of many conflicts, from Korea to Grenada to Sri Lanka for long periods (Knightley 1975, Oberg and Sollenberg 2011), and sources that are seen as hostile to a belligerent and its interests – such as *Al-Baghdadiya TV* in Iraq or *Al-Aqsa TV* in Gaza – have often been completely shut down. At the extreme, belligerents can employ violence to silence hostile media. Indeed, the number of journalists killed within conflict has risen drastically over time, from two in WWI to 66 in Vietnam to

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127 in Iraq – often by assassination (Liosky and Henrichsen 2009). In some cases, armies have even intentionally destroyed news outlets, as in NATO’s bombing of Radio Television of Serbia (RTS) in the Balkans or Israel’s regular bombings of Al-Aqsa TV in Gaza during Israeli-Palestinian armed confrontations. Yet violence is not the only tool that is available to combatants, as a number of other subtler tactics – from social and economic pressure to “information subsidies” and embedded reporters – are used to control the media in wartime as well. As summarized in one article:

*It is not uncommon for governments even in countries with relatively high levels of press freedom to impose censorship on particular types of reports, for instance on military operations, or to ban journalists from areas of combat...Even in the freest countries where there is no censorship of the news media, governments and military authorities still attempt to control or influence the flow of information. They do this for example by arranging press conferences, providing video material or privileged access, or embedding reporters with their own troops.*

In brief, most media in wartime is not independent: combatants tend to view the media not as an impartial observer, but as a crucial tool and potential “weapon” in their armed struggle (Kalb and Saivetz 2007: 43). One quantitative analysis shows that societies experiencing conflict have much lower press freedom even after accounting for other factors, leading its author to suggest that – if “truth is the first casualty of war” – a free press is the second (Vultee 2009). As one *New York Times* correspondent famously bemoaned about reporting on the Algerian War of Independence in 1957, “all information in Algeria is controlled by the French” (Knightley 1975: 371).

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Biased Violence Coverage:

Unsurprisingly, given this weaponization of information in armed conflict, there is a long and rich history of biased reporting of wartime violence. As documented by Phillip Knightley in *The First Casualty: From the Crimea to Vietnam, the War Correspondent as Hero, Propagandist, and Myth-Maker* (1975), these issues were widespread from even the earliest days of professional war reporting in the 19th century. In media coverage of the American Civil War, for example, Knightley explains that:

> Accuracy became a minor consideration. Casualties were grossly underestimated; generals listed as killed lived on to die of old age; battles were reported on days when there was no action at all; at times the whole Southern army was reported to be marching on Washington. Atlanta was reported captured a week before the battle for the town took place. It was but a small step from ignoring accuracy to faking whole reports. Julius Browne of the New York Tribune collected from officers details of the Battle of Pea Ridge (March 1862) and wrote a brilliant, but entirely imaginary, eyewitness report...The Battle of Shiloh (April 1862) caught correspondents by surprise, so they dashed off dispatches about desperate hand-to-hand fighting that had never occurred, a mass effort of faking reports that led to a cynical acceptance of the practice. Even war artists were not above faking their sketches...

Likewise, in one infamous (and perhaps apocryphal) exchange symbolic of journalistic practice during this period, a war illustrator working for William Randolph Hearst’s *New York Journal* in Spanish Cuba cabled back to Hearst in 1897 that there was no conflict for him to cover, to which Hearst allegedly retorted “You furnish pictures. I’ll furnish war.” And, in fact, the sensationalistic reporting of the sinking of the USS Maine by Hearst’s *Journal* – which ran the headline “CRISIS IS AT HAND: SPANISH TREACHERY” despite Spain’s denials of involvement – along with that of other U.S. newspapers, helped to spark the Spanish-American War and the dawn of American empire (Knightley 2004: 58).

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18 See, e.g., Milton (1989). The quote is potentially apocryphal, but still illustrative of early war reporting.
It was WWI, however, that helped elevate these arts to new heights. As noted above, the Allied press churned out a steady stream of anti-German atrocity propaganda reports in order to sustain public support for the war effort. These included not only the abovementioned accounts of the “Belgian baby without hands” and the “Germany corpse factory,” but dozens of other stories of mutilation, humiliation, brutalization, and even crucifixion by German soldiers (Ponsonby 1929). While these tales often had the intended nationalist result, they were frequently fake (Marlin 2002). For example, five leading U.S. correspondents penned the following letter after the war, worth quoting here at length:

To let the truth be known, we unanimously declare the stories of German cruelties, from what we have been able to observe, were untrue. After having been with the German Army for two weeks, and having accompanied the troops for over one hundred miles, we are not able to report one single case of undeserved punishment or measure of retribution. We are neither able to confirm any rumours as regards maltreatment of prisoners and non-combatants. Having been with the German troops through Landen, Brussels, Nivelles, Buissière, Haute-Wiherie, Merbes-le-Château, Sorles-sur-Sambre, Beaumont, we have not the slightest basis for making up a case of excess. We found numerous rumours after investigation to be without foundation...For the truth of the above we pledge our word of honour as journalists.


Similar post-war denials were made by other witnesses who saw the front lines (Ponsonby 1929). Ultimately, war reporting in WWI was perhaps best captured by Ernest Hemingway, who said that “the last war, during the years of 1915, 1916, and 1917 was the most colossal, murderous, mismanaged butchery that has ever taken place on earth. Any writer who said otherwise lied. So the writers either wrote propaganda, shut up, or fought” (1942: 9).

These wartime media biases continued as the 20th century wore on. During the 2nd Italo-Abyssinian War of 1935-36, the veteran war correspondent Herbert Matthews of the New York Times judged that “of all the photographs published of the war, ninety-nine out of a hundred had been faked” (Knightley 1975: 186). Similarly, the Spanish Civil War of
1936-39 was marked by pervasive wartime propaganda, sparking George Orwell to remark that “early in life I had noticed that no event is ever correctly reported in a newspaper but in Spain, for the first time, I saw newspaper reports which did not bear any relation to the facts, nor even the relationship which is implied in an ordinary lie” (1943: 4). Meanwhile, in WWII, there is a vast literature on the wartime propaganda and media bias by both the Axis and the Allies (see Short 1983, Koppes and Black 1990, Earhart 2008, Kallis 2008).

For instance, Phillip Knightley writes that, in the Pacific Theatre, “neither side reported its own atrocities. Throughout the war, there was not a single mention in Japan of any atrocity by a Japanese soldier, and I have been unable to find any report in the Allied press of an atrocity committed by an Allied soldier. Both sides emphasised atrocities committed by the enemy” (1975: 294). And such censorship, propaganda, and bias in conflict reporting persisted throughout the Cold War, from Korea to Algeria to Vietnam (Knightley 1975, Chs. 14-17; Carson 2015).19

Nor have these biases abated in the post-Cold War period. Indeed, the 1st Gulf War was partially fueled by atrocity propaganda from Kuwait, in particular the “incubator babies” report that Iraqi soldiers dumped Kuwaiti babies on hospital floors and left them to die. After the war, however, the report proved to be fake, an invention of the Kuwaiti government to provoke U.S. intervention against Iraq (Marlin 2002). Meanwhile, the Rwandan Genocide was a paradigmatic case of war propaganda, as radio outlets like Radio Television Libre des Mille Collines (RTLM) emitted a flood of nationalist finger-pointing

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19 In Vietnam, for example, the real degree of the massive escalation of fighting into neighboring Laos and Cambodia was unreported until the “Pentagon Papers” leak by the New York Times in 1971. See, e.g., “25 Years Later; Lessons from the Pentagon Papers,” New York Times, June 23, 1996.
that turned the Hutus against their Tutsi neighbors. Indeed, one quantitative study even estimates that such broadcasts were responsible for 10% of the total violence in Rwanda (Yanagizawa-Drott 2010). Likewise, the Balkan Wars of the 1990s were fueled by the nationalist propaganda of the war machines in the former Yugoslav republics (Thompson 1999). Strategies like the invention of atrocity stories, inflation of casualty figures, and incitement of ethnic hatreds all featured prominently in the Balkan media environments in the 1990s. And these biases persist today, in wars from Iraq to Pakistan to Turkey. Indeed, one study of the Iraqi media finds that it had “approximately 10-15 references to erroneous reporting on casualty numbers” per month (Cioppa 2009: 38). Similarly, content analysis of the local and international news coverage of the U.S. drone campaigns in countries like Yemen, Somalia, or Pakistan indicate “clear divergence…particularly in their treatment of the collateral damage frame” (Sheets et al 2015: 15). And analyses of local media coverage in Ukraine show widely divergent patterns of reporting about the quality and the quantity of violence depending on the source’s affiliation with either the government or the rebels (Zhukov and Baum 2016).

In sum, this brief overview of the historical record is not meant to condemn specific actors or events, but to vividly convey the fact that manipulation of the media in wartime – and particularly its reporting of violence by the different warring parties – is ubiquitous. Moreover, as stated earlier, even relatively independent media sources will still diverge in subtle but important ways in what violent events they report (selection bias) and how they frame and report them (description bias) that shape their audiences’ beliefs. Ultimately, all of this is to say that we should expect that how civilians perceive the nature of violence in
war – including whether they think it is selective or indiscriminate – will be strongly shaped by the media or information sources that they consume in the dispute.

Resistance to Media Bias:

Yet, people do not always accept media narratives uncritically. In fact, I argue that there are at least two key conditions under which civilians in conflict settings will resist biased media narratives about violent events in war. The first of these is – building on our earlier discussion – if they live in or around the immediately exposed area. Civilians who reside in the communities directly and repeatedly affected by a given type of violence have an informational advantage in the form of local knowledge about the nature of its targets, consequences, and other features. Locals will not be persuaded by broad elite narratives if they clash with the accounts of their families, friends, and peers who actually experienced the attacks or who witnessed their immediate aftermath. Moreover, the resistance to biased media narratives will be supported by the “accuracy motive” discussed above, which will make local civilians more likely to seek out alternative channels of information about the violence due to its significance for their survival.

The capability of this local “ground-level” information to puncture biased media narratives in conflict settings is often quite clear. One context in which this is evident is in the observations of war reporters, and their clashes with their editors back home. Indeed, recall the letter from the American war correspondents in WWI: “we unanimously declare the stories of German cruelties, from what we have been able to observe, were untrue” (emphasis added) (Ponsonby 1929: 76). Similarly, one U.S. reporter for the Chicago Daily
Chronicle who was captured by the Germans during WWI was then asked by his editors to write a story on the poor morale and living conditions in Germany, but declared that this “was simply not true, and he resigned” (Knightley 1975: 89). The experience of Herbert Matthews of the New York Times during the Spanish Civil War is maybe even more telling. In 1937, Matthews visited the locale of a failed attack by Franco near Madrid and found that the attacking force was unequivocally Italian. Matthews – who knew Italian – spoke with the defeated soldiers and examined their equipment. This revelation was important, as it was the first evidence of Mussolini supplying not only arms and advisors, but soldiers to the Nationalist cause. But his editor, who disliked the story, changed every appearance of the word “Italian” to “Insurgent.” Matthews was furious at these changes, announcing that “when an accredited correspondent tells his newspaper that he has seen something with his own eyes, the paper must believe [and] trust him more than it trusts his competitors, or his editors 3,000 miles away” (Knightley 1975: 200) (emphasis added). In some ways, this story mirrors the recent propaganda efforts by Russia to mask its involvement in Ukraine, which was exposed by reporters observing the Russian uniforms and accents of the troops in interviews. In these cases, war reporters gained local, first-hand knowledge that pierced through a biased elite- or media-driven narrative.

Similar dynamics occur with civilians in war as well. Indeed, Davenport and Ball (2002) compare the quality of three different sources of information on Guatemalan state terror from 1977-95: newspaper stories, human rights reports, and eyewitness testimony.

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While they find that all three sources have value, their analysis reveals that civilians are often the best informed – at least on the events in their localities. Specifically, they write that interviewees tended to recall “the perpetrator who abused the victim(s) and specifically what was done during the violation. As a result, such sources are useful for identifying what happened and who did it within particular locales” (447). Civilians thus have an informational edge on events within their communities, for which they can rely on local knowledge or experience. Likewise, in the case of the U.S. drone campaign in Pakistan, the local communities in the tribal areas have always had the most knowledge of the strikes. As recounted by one local journalist, when the first drone strike was launched against local Taliban leader Nek Mohammed on June 18, 2004, “no one in the Pakistani public or media knew that it was a drone…the villagers, however, supplied the explanation: they collected the fragments of the missile, on which was printed in black, ‘Made in USA.’”21 Indeed, another strike in 2005 produced similar uncertainty until a journalist from a nearby village sifted through the debris and found a Hellfire missile.22 Such local revelations punctured the Musharraf regime’s false narrative that Pakistani forces were behind the attacks.

The second condition under which individuals may not be influenced heavily by a biased media narrative is if they hold strong “directional biases” themselves toward the warring parties, even if they are not close to the events. This is simply an extension of the motivated reasoning logic outlined above: individuals with strong beliefs cannot be easily swayed by alternative narratives. They often resist the opposing arguments or information,

22 Ibid.
and become more firmly entrenched in their existing beliefs post exposure (Taber et al 2009). In this vein, DellaVigna and his coauthors find that Croatian villages which receive Serbian television signals have more nationalist graffiti in their communities and are more likely to support nationalist parties (2011). Relatedly, Kressel shows that Americans with strong partisan ties in the Arab-Israeli conflict tend to perceive media coverage of the conflict as biased if it does not confirm their preexisting attitudes (1987). Indeed, Kressel sums up the results by noting that such “judgments of media bias rest upon three social psychological processes: a general, cognitive confirmatory bias in judging evidence, a tendency for deeply involved partisans to have a wide latitude of rejection, and a tendency for partisan to perceive (and misperceive) media stimuli in accordance with their overall views” (211-212). In this way, if civilians have deep loyalties to groups in the dispute – if they are strong partisans – we should expect their beliefs to be shaped relatively little by alternative media narratives.

Summarizing the Model:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivation Information</th>
<th>Weak bias</th>
<th>Strong bias</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Accurate perception</td>
<td>Accurate perception</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supra-local</td>
<td>Bias equal to media narrative</td>
<td>Bias equal to existing beliefs</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Table 1 sums up the argument thus far about civilian perceptions of the nature of violence in armed conflicts. I argue that they depend primarily on two core variables: (1) civilians’ information about the violence, and (2) their motivation when they interpret or process it. Specifically, I argue that if people live in or around the locally exposed areas, they will have both the information and motivation to process it accurately. In contrast, if they live outside of the affected areas, their perceptions of the violence will be shaped by their motivational biases – if they hold strong prior attitudes toward the perpetrator or target of an attack – or else their exposure to media narratives. Ultimately, this means that in violent conflict, whether populations perceive violence as selective is a function of much more than objective risk levels and civilian casualties. Indeed, the nature of violence – including its level of selectivity – is only likely to be recognized accurately by a small slice of the populace. Literature on the dynamics of civil wars and other forms of violent conflict should thus incorporate civilians’ factual perceptions and misperceptions, particularly once it extrapolates beyond a highly localized setting.

The various components of the model can all be well illustrated by one key incident from the Arab-Israeli War of 1948: the Deir Yassin massacre. In the spring of 1948, Deir Yassin was a neutral Palestinian village near Jerusalem – it had stayed out of the fighting and was not a Zionist strategic target. On April 9, 1948, however, the Zionist paramilitary organizations Irgun and Lehi elected to attack the village. Encountering fierce resistance from the town, the organizations soon turned to relatively indiscriminate tactics, such as destroying full Palestinian homes with mortars or grenades in order to clear the village, and also mowed down a number of Palestinian prisoners after the battle in a nearby quarry.
(Gelber 2001: 311-12). All in all, about 110 Arabs were killed, including a number of innocent civilians or prisoners after the battle (Kan’ana and Zaytuni 1987: 5). Clearly, the attack approached something of a massacre.

However, Palestinian and Arab media elites decided to exploit and exaggerate the extent of the massacre in order to stir Arab sympathy and support for Arab intervention in the war. As stated by Hazem Nusseibeh, the editor of the *Palestine Broadcasting Service* during the event: “I asked [Dr. Hussayn Khalidi] how we should cover the story. He said, ‘We must make the most of this.’ So he wrote a press release, stating that at Deir Yassin, children were murdered, pregnant women were raped, all sorts of atrocities.”23 These false reports were subsequently transmitted to Palestinian and Arab radio stations in Cairo, over the protests of the villagers of Deir Yassin themselves. As explained by one local villager, “there was no rape. He [Khalidi] said, ‘We have to say this so the Arab armies will come to liberate Palestine from the Jews.’”24 Another villager who fought the attackers said that “There were no rapes. It’s all lies. There were no pregnant women who were split open. It was propaganda that…Arabs put out so Arab armies would invade.”25

The spread of this type of atrocity propaganda had a powerful and unintentional influence on the local Palestinian civilian populations: Palestinians started to flee en masse. As noted by Nusseibeh: “This was our biggest mistake. We did not realize how our people would react. As soon as they heard that women had been raped at Deir Yassin, Palestinians fled in terror. They ran away from all our villages.”26 In fact, the Deir Yassin episode is

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24 Ibid.
26 See f.n. 16.
seen as one of the crucial events, along with the fall of Haifa, that prompted the Palestinian exodus of 1948 (Morris 2005). It thus had a profound effect on the course of the 1948 war, and the broader Arab-Israeli conflict to come. This illustrates nicely the different elements of the model sketched out above: the event was perceived relatively accurately by local villagers, who saw it first-hand in the line of fire, but was grossly misperceived by those elsewhere in the warzone – who saw it through media propaganda, reinforced by their own predispositions and prejudices within the dispute – and it ultimately shaped their behavior in the conflict in profound and lasting ways.
Chapter 2 References:


Chapter 3: Misperceptions and Why They Matter in Pakistan

U.S. drone strikes in Pakistan are “killing nearly 100 percent innocent people” – Syed Munawar Hasan, head of Pakistan’s Jamaat-e-Islami party, 2012

Myths and rumours about US predator strikes are the casualty figures are many...Yes, there are a few civilian casualties in such precision strikes, but a majority of those eliminated are terrorists, including foreign terrorist elements – Pakistani Major-General Ghayur Mehmood, 2011

In this dissertation, I investigate why civilians often develop widely varying beliefs about the “facts on the ground” in war, focusing on their perceptions of the selectivity of wartime violence. In particular, I differentiate between civilians who live in areas directly exposed to a form of violence – who possess both superior local information about it and a powerful motivation to interpret that information carefully – and those living elsewhere in the warzone, whose beliefs are produced by motivational biases and media narratives surrounding the dispute. In other words, the dissertation advances a key distinction between

local and “supra-local” civilians in warzones that profoundly shapes the accuracy of their beliefs about war.

In this chapter, I examine these issues in the case of the U.S. drone campaign in Pakistan. The chapter has two major goals. First, I show that, although drone strikes have been empirically quite discriminate in Pakistan, they are widely perceived as anything but discriminate by the vast majority of Pakistanis who live outside the tribal areas where they are conducted. Thus, there are widespread factual misperceptions about the violence among non-local civilians in Pakistan. Second, I demonstrate that these factual misperceptions are consequential. Specifically, concerns about the strikes’ collateral damage are among the most important elements of their unpopularity in the country. Moreover, I use a novel event study design to show that this unpopularity has real strategic costs, as the strikes produce significant anti-American, anti-incumbent, and pro-militant sentiment across mainstream Pakistani society.

Factual Misperceptions in Pakistan:

This section is split into two key parts. First, I explain why Pakistan – specifically the U.S. drone campaign in Pakistan – is a useful case in which to explore the dynamics analyzed in this project, and I provide a brief historical overview of the campaign. Second, I show that there have been widespread factual misperceptions in Pakistan surrounding the nature of the U.S. drone campaign: while the violence has been empirically quite selective, it is widely perceived as indiscriminate throughout most of Pakistani society.
Case Selection:

The U.S. drone campaign in Pakistan is a useful case in which to examine civilian beliefs about violent events for several reasons. First, it fits the primary scope conditions of the violence that is analyzed in the project, as explained in Ch. 1. Indeed, as noted in the introductory chapter, I elected to focus primarily on selective violence that is conducted across borders by state actors as an empirical “first cut” in which to test the arguments and ideas developed in this dissertation. Among other advantages, these choices allow me to speak directly to IR (as well as Comparative Politics and conflict studies) audiences in the project. The U.S. drone program in Pakistan fits all three conditions quite nicely (more on its selectivity below).

Second, studying the U.S. drone campaign in Pakistan offers significant benefits in terms of data availability. Indeed, there are a number of strike-tracking databases that keep track of the incidents, locations, and outcomes of U.S. drone strikes in Pakistan, including major data collection efforts by American, British, and Pakistani think tanks, scholars, and even government agencies. This allows me to compare and triangulate between a number of distinct sources of violent event data in the project. Moreover, Pakistan is a country that has been surveyed often by international polling initiatives since 9/11, including the Pew Global Attitudes Project and Gallup World Poll. Consequently, there is a decent amount of data on Pakistani attitudes about the drone strikes that are already publicly available and can supplement my original data collection efforts.

Third, and finally, the case offers substantial policy relevance for the U.S. and its allies in their use of force abroad. Indeed, the Pakistani case in many ways represents the
prototypical U.S. military strategy in the aftermath of Iraq and Afghanistan: avoiding U.S. “boots on the ground” and turning to local states and proxies to fight militant organizations, while intervening directly with targeted killings and limited applications of force when deemed appropriate (Posen 2013). The U.S. has reasoned that – via the logic of selective violence – the targeted or selective nature of these interventions will restrict local alienation and counter-mobilization in the target country and thus limit the strategic costs of using force abroad (Byman 2013). However, this depends in some important ways on the extent to which the violence is actually believed to be selective as opposed to indiscriminate by the target civilian population, otherwise it may have deeply alienating and inciting effects within the targeted society. In Pakistan, as elsewhere, there are some indications that this has indeed been the case, yet there is also variation in civilian reactions to the violence. Understanding when and why such violence is seen as selective vs. indiscriminate is thus key to minimizing the costs of this local-proxies-plus-targeted-killing model.

*Historical Overview:*

Before examining the U.S. drone campaign in Pakistan in depth, I first provide a concise overview of the context in which it has been conducted. While Islamist militancy has deep roots in Pakistan, its present struggles with the Pakistani state can be traced back to the 2001 invasion of neighboring Afghanistan, when scores of Al Qaeda and Afghan Taliban militants fled over the porous border between the two countries – the “Durand line” – into the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) region of Pakistan. Under intense American pressure, the Pakistani military entered FATA in 2002 to root them out, but its
operation only enraged the fiercely independent local tribes (Qazi 2011). This enabled the militants to win some tribal support, which they used along with killings of pro-government tribal elders to consolidate control of FATA in 2004. In 2007, a number of these militant factions coalesced into the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), or Pakistani Taliban, under the leadership of Baitullah Mehsud. The TTP then proved itself to be an existential threat to Islamabad (and thus a serious one to Washington), rolling through the Swat Valley to within 60 miles of the capital in a full-scale national insurgency. While this bold advance was blunted in 2009, the group continues to unleash lethal attacks from its stronghold in the tribal areas as indicated by the 2014 Peshawar school massacre in which 132 children were slaughtered inside an army public school. Nor is the country’s struggle with Islamist militancy limited to the northwest; the TTP and affiliated groups are active throughout the sprawling slums of Karachi, the rural reaches of southern Punjab, and a number of other pockets countrywide. Moreover, FATA itself continues to serve as a major “launching pad” for the Afghan Taliban against NATO forces in Afghanistan, as well as a sanctuary for key elements of Al Qaeda and various other Islamist militant organizations outside the grasp of the Pakistani army (Fair 2004).

In order to confront these threats, the American and Pakistani governments have conducted a variety of military campaigns and operations. The Pakistani army has, at times, engaged in quite pitched battles against these groups, including in its counterinsurgency operations to clear Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the tribal regions, which have often required heavy airpower to defeat the militants. It has also conducted a steady stream of targeted arrests and raids in contested urban settings, such as operations by the Pakistani Rangers
in Karachi. Meanwhile, the U.S. for its part has launched over 400 strikes from Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), or “drones,” against the insurgent groups within the tribal areas since 2004.\(^{29}\) These strikes were initially infrequent, but their pace accelerated dramatically in 2008 when the insurgent threats emanating from the tribal areas grew, peaking in 2010 with over 100 operations. Over that time, the attacks have scored a number of successes, including the killing of dozens of Al Qaeda and Taliban leaders,\(^{30}\) yet there have also been a number of key mistakes and misfires as well, such as the bombing of religious seminaries and tribal jirgas full of civilians. Moreover, the U.S. has also conducted a number of special forces raids and other “covert operations” in the country, such as the 2011 Abbottabad raid that killed Osama Bin Laden. Figure 3 shows the geographic distribution of American and Pakistani military actions in the conflict, with their heavy concentration in the tribal areas. Overall, this ongoing struggle against Islamist militancy in Pakistan since 9/11 has led to an estimated 50,000 total casualties,\(^{31}\) large numbers of internally displaced persons (IDPs) with a peak of 2.2 million in 2009,\(^ {32}\) and $100 billion in economic losses for the country.\(^ {33}\) While not on the scale of Iraq and Afghanistan, Pakistan has thus been a significant armed conflict setting in the early decades of the 21\(^{st}\) century.

\(^{29}\) See, e.g., the New America Foundation (http://securitydata.newamerica.net/) and Bureau of Investigative Journalism (http://www.thebureauinvestigates.cmcategory/projects/drones/) strike-tracking databases.

\(^{30}\) As of this writing, the NAF database records 84 Al Qaeda and Taliban “senior leaders” killed in Pakistan. The elimination of high-value targets (HVT’s) is not recorded by the BIJ.


\(^{33}\) See, e.g., “12-Year War on Terror Cost $100bn, says Dar,” Dawn, June 2, 2014.

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Empirical Nature of the Violence:

Despite its politically controversial nature, a close look at the U.S. drone campaign in Pakistan shows that, empirically, it has been a very selective or discriminate application of force. As a starting point, consider the design of the technology itself. In fact, the drones utilized by the U.S. are designed to minimize collateral damage in at least two core ways. First, drones can collect greater pre-strike intelligence about their targets than conventional
weapons. Indeed, with no onboard human pilot, drones can hover over their targets for hours at a time collecting signals intelligence (SIGINT) from their onboard sensors. This allows their operators to better positively identify the target as well as to wait until they have a “clean shot” when the individual is isolated and removed from any civilians in the surrounding area if possible. Second, armed drones boast very accurate weapons systems, including precision-guided missiles with “the capacity to target individuals, automobiles, or sections of structures such as rooms in a large house” (Walsh 2013: vii). This allows operators to pinpoint targets and limit collateral damage during the strike itself. Thus, U.S. drone warfare is specifically designed to be highly targeted and selective, in terms of its unique intelligence collection and precision strike capabilities.

Of course, such capability would mean little if the U.S. used it in an indiscriminate fashion or made so many errors as to neutralize these advantages. However, a wealth of qualitative and quantitative evidence from Pakistan indicates that this is not the case, and that – despite the vast attention paid to casualties from the strikes – the campaign has actually been quite discriminate in nature. On the quantitative side, there are now several databases that systematically track the incidents, locations, and consequences of the drone campaign in Pakistan. While these efforts are produced by different types of organizations and rely on different types of methods, their data about drone casualties paint a surprisingly consistent picture.

Specifically, there are four key publicly available databases that track the results of U.S. drone warfare in Pakistan. One dataset is maintained by the New America Foundation (NAF), an American think tank that has established a significant national security focus in
recent years. NAF’s database draws on leading Pakistani newspapers (e.g., The Dawn, The Express Tribune, The News) as well as major international news outlets with in-country resources (e.g., the AFP, Associated Press, Reuters). The database relies on at least two credible sources to verify each strike, and records the number of “militant,” “civilian,” and “unknown” casualties within these sources, providing a range whenever there is variation.

As of May 1, 2017, the database records 403 U.S. drone strikes inside Pakistan resulting in 2,342-3,647 total casualties, with an estimated 245-302 of these civilian and another 211-326 categorized as unknown. However, if we categorize all of the unknown casualties as civilians, this gives us a ratio of 4.5 militants for every civilian killed using the means of the ranges provided (this ratio goes up to 9:1 if we exclude all unknowns, as suggested in Plaw and Fricker 2012).

Another significant drone strike-tracking database is maintained by the Bureau of Investigative Journalism (BIJ), a non-profit news organization based in Britain. The BIJ’s database also relies on reputable Pakistani and international media reporting, although it supplements these sources with leaked government documents, academic research reports, and independent fieldwork trips to Pakistan. The database uses a minimum of four separate sources to verify its strikes, and presents narrative descriptions of each event as well as active links to all media sources used to research it. Overall, it is increasingly seen as the most transparent, complete, and reliable public drone strike database by academics (Bauer, Reese, and Ruby 2015). As of May 1, 2017, the database records 426 U.S. drone strikes in Pakistan resulting in total 2,508-4,014 casualties, of which 424-969 are civilians. The BIJ database has higher civilian casualty counts than the NAF in large part because it counts
all individuals reported as “tribesmen,” and anyone under 18, as a civilian (meanwhile, the NAF classifies tribesmen as unknown, and uses 14 as the adulthood age). Still, using the means of the BIJ ranges produces a similar militant to civilian casualty ratio of 3.7:1.

A third source of drone strike data in Pakistan comes from the Long War Journal (LWJ), an online foreign policy publication affiliated with the think tank The Foundation for the Defense of Democracies. The LWJ also relies on Pakistani and international press reports as well as its own reporting which draws on U.S. intelligence sources. As of May 1, 2017, the LWJ database records 392 U.S. drone strikes in Pakistan with 2,799 militants and 158 civilians killed. The LWJ database thus yields a militant to civilian casualty ratio of 16.7:1, significantly greater than the NAF and BIJ estimates. Because the database is not very transparent in its methodology and relies heavily on U.S. government sources, however, the estimate should be treated with caution and perhaps viewed as an upper bound in terms of selectivity.

Finally, a fourth major publicly available source of drone strike data can be found at the Center for the Study of Targeted Killing (CSTK), an academic database based at the University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth. Like the other databases discussed above, CSTK relies mainly on Pakistani and international media outlets, but instead of treating all reputable sources as equally valid, it prioritizes the most high-quality reporting in terms of its (1) level of detail, (2) range of sources, and (3) recency of publication (Plaw and Fricker 2012). Like the NAF database, CSTK classifies casualties as “militant,” “civilian,” and “unknown,” and provides ranges for each type based on the sources used. As of May 1, 2017, the database shows 434 drone strikes in Pakistan causing 3,207 overall casualties,
with 170 of these civilian and 539 unknown. Once again, if we (conservatively) treat all of the unknowns as civilian, this database gives us a militant to civilian casualty ratio of 3.5 to 1 (or 14.7:1 if we exclude unknowns).

Table 2: Militants vs. Civilians Killed in U.S. Drone Strikes in Pakistan, 2004-17

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Militant casualties</th>
<th>Civilian casualties (incl. unknowns)</th>
<th>Ratio of militants to civilians killed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The New America Foundation (NAF)</td>
<td>2,448</td>
<td>547</td>
<td>4.5:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Bureau of Investigative Journalism (BIJ)</td>
<td>2,564</td>
<td>697</td>
<td>3.7:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Long War Journal (LWJ)</td>
<td>2,799</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>16.7:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Center for the Study of Targeted Killing (CSTK) at UMass-Dartmouth</td>
<td>2,498</td>
<td>709</td>
<td>3.5:1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Data include all recorded strikes through May 1, 2017. The means were used for all sources that provided casualty ranges (NAF, BIJ).

Table 2 presents these estimates. As can be seen, all four systematic databases that track the results of U.S. drone strikes in Pakistan produce a militant to civilian casualty ratio of at least 3.5:1, with the three most transparent and comprehensive efforts – the NAF, BIJ, and CSTK – all converging at around four militants to every one civilian killed. This convergence is striking when one considers their methodological and, arguably, political differences. More importantly, the figure they coalesce around is highly discriminate. As noted by Plaw and Fricker (2012) who conducted a comparative review of the different datasets, this is higher than a number of key benchmarks, such as Israeli targeted killings in the Palestinian territories from 2000-08 (1.5:1), Pakistani army operations in the FATA

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34 Specifically, the BIJ arguably leans to the left (given its links to the BBC), while the LWJ leans to the right (given its conservative roots and donors), and the NAF is more centrist in orientation.
region from 2002-07 (2.2:1), and the global average for all armed conflict in the year 2000 (0.1:1) or the period 1989-2004 (2:1). The Pakistani army benchmark is especially relevant, as it allows us to compare the U.S. drone program to operations conducted by the country’s own armed forces against militants in the tribal areas. Crucially, these figures also come from the Pakistani press, yet they show that American drone strikes are at least 50% more discriminate than Pakistani efforts in similar areas (Plaw and Fricker 2012). In sum, a wide range of quantitative evidence shows that – despite perceptions to the contrary – the U.S. drone campaign has in fact been quite discriminate in nature.

A final concern is whether there is any reason to believe that the civilian casualties from drone strikes have been systematically underreported in the Pakistani press (which serves as the foundation for most of these databases). While there are almost certainly errors in both directions, there is actually, overall, significant reason to believe the opposite. This is because, as noted earlier, drone strikes fall almost exclusively in areas of FATA (particularly North Waziristan) that have been largely under the control of the Pakistani Taliban and other militant organizations. This means the targets – and not the perpetrators – of the strikes control the “scene of the crime,” and thus have substantial latitude to shape the reporting of events on the ground. As described by one Pakistani scholar who herself hails from the tribal areas (Taj 2010: 530):

The reason why these estimates about civilian “casualties” in the U.S. and Pakistani media are wrong is that after every attack the terrorists cordon off the area and no one, including the local villagers, is allowed to come even near the targeted place. The militants themselves collect the bodies, bury the dead and then issue the statement that all of them were innocent civilians.

With limited journalistic access to these areas and the U.S. government essentially silent about the campaign due to its ostensibly covert nature – it was once infamously dubbed
Washington’s “worst kept secret” – these estimates often travel unchallenged through the Pakistani and international media. The net effect is that, if anything, the casualty figures in existing data are almost certainly inflated. Indeed, Pakistan expert Christine Fair reaches a similar conclusion, noting that existing datasets include “exaggerated counts of innocents, including women and children” killed by the strikes.\textsuperscript{35} Moreover, a rare Associated Press investigation that dispatched a Waziri “stringer” to interview local villagers after each strike found that the civilian casualties were typically much lower than is widely reported.\textsuperscript{36} Finally, this also fits with the fact that the campaign is widely recognized as selective by the local civilian population in the tribal areas, as examined throughout this project. In sum, a qualitative understanding of the data-generating process inside Pakistan only supports the variety of quantitative estimates presented above and confirms that the U.S. drone program has been highly discriminate or selective in nature.

*Perceived Nature of the Violence:*

Contrary to this empirical record, the U.S. drone campaign in Pakistan is generally seen as anything but selective or discriminate among Pakistanis outside the tribal areas. The primary source of publicly available individual-level survey data about drone strikes in Pakistan is from the Pew Research Center’s Global Attitudes Project (GAP). GAP is a continuous effort to track political attitudes around the globe since 2002, in which Pakistan has been included every year. GAP’s surveys in Pakistan consist of multi stage cluster


\textsuperscript{36} See f.n. 1.
samples of the four major provinces of the country (Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkwha or KPK, and Balochistan) with stratification by province and urbanity. The surveys exclude the tribal areas and are disproportionately urban in nature (though they have been weighted to capture the actual urban vs. rural distribution in the country). However, these attributes are unproblematic for our purposes because the surveys are used to analyze perceptions of U.S. drone strikes among the non-local civilian population – that is, Pakistanis outside the tribal regions where they take place.

Specifically, the GAP surveys began asking Pakistanis a battery of questions about their perceptions of the U.S. drone strikes in 2009, and continued doing so (depending on the particular question used) through 2012, 2013 or 2014. Within these surveys, Pew asked Pakistani respondents a series of questions about drone strikes, including their awareness of the strikes, their general view of the strikes, and their perceptions of some salient issues surrounding the strikes. To gauge Pakistani awareness of the strikes, the surveys asked the following question: *How much, if anything, have you heard about drone attacks that target leaders of extremist groups?* Of those who responded to this question, only 35% said they knew about the strikes in 2009, but that figure grew to 49% in 2010, 71% in April 2011, 71% in May 2011, and 76% in 2012. Thus, while many Pakistanis had initially not heard about the strikes, awareness of them soon became fairly widespread and rapidly expanding in mainstream Pakistani society.
To evaluate Pakistanis’ general perceptions of the drone strikes, the surveys asked those respondents who knew about them the following question: *Do you think these drone attacks are a very good thing, good thing, bad thing, or very bad thing?* Figure 4 reveals the distribution of responses to the question from 2009-12. As can be seen, the drone strikes are widely unpopular in Pakistan. In fact, only 3% of Pakistanis who were aware of the strikes reported a positive view of them in 2009, a figure that shifted little over time – with 6% positive perceptions in 2010, 5% in April 2011, 2% in May 2011, and 4% in 2012. In contrast, the majority of respondents – between 60% and 72%, depending on the year – reported a very negative view of the operations. Indeed, similarly broad opposition to the strikes is evident in Gallup polls in Pakistan (although individual-level data for these are
In sum, the data show that the U.S. drone campaign in Pakistan is generally perceived very negatively in mainstream Pakistani society.

Turning now to some more specific items, the surveys asked Pakistanis about their perceptions of three key issues surrounding the U.S. drone campaign: its military necessity, civilian death toll, and violation of national sovereignty. Table 3 presents the distribution of responses to these three questions, which were asked from 2009-14. As can be seen, there is significant variation in Pakistani perceptions of the military utility and sovereignty violation issues, but more uniformity around the collateral damage issue: the strikes are overwhelmingly perceived as killing too many innocent civilians in the country, although this perception diminishes slightly in 2013. While the question was unfortunately worded very subjectively (“too many civilians”), it does indicate a widespread concern with the collateral damage surrounding the campaign. In other words, the operations do not appear to be perceived as very discriminate by the general Pakistani populace based on existing national survey data.

Specifically, Gallup found that 12% of Pakistanis who offered a response supported the strikes in 2009, with 18% in 2010, 21% in spring 2013, and 13% in fall 2013.
Table 3: Pakistani Views of Key Facets of U.S. Drone Campaign, 2009-14

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>They are necessary to defend Pakistan from extremist groups:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| They kill too many innocent people: |      |      |       |       |      |      |      |
| Agree                                | 96%  | 95%  | 93%   | 95%   | 95%  | 86%  | 88%  |
| Disagree                             | 4%   | 5%   | 7%    | 5%    | 5%   | 14%  | 12%  |

| They are being done without the approval of the Pakistani government: |      |      |       |       |      |      |      |
| Agree                                | 67%  | 56%  | 47%   | 52%   | 47%  | 60%  | 64%  |
| Disagree                             | 33%  | 44%  | 53%   | 48%   | 53%  | 40%  | 36%  |


Moreover, this perception of the U.S. drone campaign in Pakistan as indiscriminate in nature is also readily apparent in Pakistani political rhetoric, news coverage, and political mobilization surrounding the strikes. In fact, prominent Pakistani politicians of all stripes have often repeated claims that American drone strikes kill mostly or entirely civilians. For instance, Syed Munawar Hasan, the leader of the right-wing Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) party in Pakistan, declared on Pakistani television in 2012 that drone strikes “are killing nearly 100 percent innocent people.”

Similarly, leading Pakistani opposition figure Imran Khan has oft appeared at broad anti-drone protests decrying the strikes’ high civilian death toll. For example, at one anti-drone protest in 2012 Khan declared that “those who lie to the nation after every drone attack and say terrorists were killed should be ashamed.”

Even Malala Yousafzai, the Pakistani Nobel Laureate and Western media darling, voiced her concerns

38 See f.n. 1.
39 Ibid.
to then-President Obama in a 2013 White House meeting that the “drone attacks are fueling terrorism because innocent victims are killed in these acts and they lead to resentment among the Pakistani people.” These quotes highlight the consensus in Pakistani discourse that the U.S. drone campaign is relatively indiscriminate in nature.

So, too, is this focus on drone strikes’ civilian death toll pervasive in the Pakistani media. Indeed, scholars have noted that the collateral damage from American drone strikes “gets major play in the Pakistani media outlets,” with scenes of their destruction splattered across the front pages of top newspapers such as Dawn and footage of their aftermath of the attacks as well as interviews with outraged villagers receiving substantial airtime on Pakistani TV channels like Pakistan TV and GEO TV (Kaltenthaler, Fair, and Miller 2012: 2). Indeed, a comparative content analysis of news coverage of drone strikes in four leading Pakistani newspapers – Dawn, Daily Times, the Nation, and Daily Express – found that “kill innocents” was the most prevalent theme in three of the four sources, appearing in a total of 36% of the editorials analyzed (Fair and Hamza 2016). Thus, coverage of the strikes also underscores the emphasis on their indiscriminate nature in the country.

A final indicator that points in the same direction is the regular anti-drone protest activity in Pakistan. Indeed, there has been a steady stream of public protests, rallies, and demonstrations against U.S. drone strikes throughout Pakistan in recent years, especially in major cities such as Karachi, Rawalpindi, and Peshawar. Many of these demonstrations have drawn large crowds of thousands of protesters, often chanting against the high civilian death toll in the drone campaign and sporting signs such as “Drones Fly Children Die,”

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“Drones Kill Innocent Pakistanis,” “Stop Killing the Muslims” and “Stop Killing Innocent Tribal Peoples [sic].” In other words, there is a substantial groundswell of mobilization against U.S. drone warfare in the country, one that puts collateral damage issues at its core. Overall, then, even a cursory qualitative look at the political context in Pakistan confirms what can be seen via public opinion polling in the country: that the American drone campaign is perceived as not only very illegitimate but, more importantly for our purposes, very indiscriminate throughout the country.

To summarize the chapter up to this point, then, public opinion data in Pakistan indicates that there is widespread concern about the collateral damage of U.S. drone strikes in mainstream Pakistani society, and that the operations are seen as far from selective or targeted in nature. A qualitative look at the prevalent political discourse, media coverage, and popular mobilization about drone strikes only substantiates this conclusion. Ultimately, what this means is that there is a widespread factual misperception about U.S. drone strikes among non-local Pakistani civilians, whereby the empirical record shows that the violence has been highly selective in nature, and yet it is overwhelmingly portrayed and perceived as anything but selective by most Pakistanis. In the remainder of the chapter, I demonstrate that this factual misperception about the strikes has some important political consequences.

Why These Misperceptions Matter:

To explore the political consequences of the misperception that U.S. drone strikes are an indiscriminate form of violence, I conduct two distinct analyses in the remainder of

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this chapter. First, using the Pew data, I show that this broad concern about collateral
damage is an important component of Pakistani opposition to the strikes. Second, I show
that the widespread opposition to the strikes is politically consequential. In particular, I use
an event study approach to examine the impact of U.S. drone strikes on Pakistani political
attitudes more broadly. In so doing I show that the strikes regularly provoke anti-American,
anti-incumbent, and pro-militant sentiment across “Pakistan proper.”

Impact on Pakistani Opposition to Drone Strikes:

Using the Pew data, I now examine the extent to which concerns about collateral
damage are an important component of Pakistani opposition to the strikes in general.
Specifically, I run a number of regressions predicting Pakistani opinion toward the strikes.
The dependent variable in these regressions is the aforementioned question about whether
Pakistanis view drone strikes as a very good, good, bad, or very bad thing. As noted above,
this question was asked in five different Pew surveys: those fielded in 2009, 2010, April
2011, May 2011, and 2012. Meanwhile, the core independent variables in the model are
the three aforementioned questions about specific aspects of the U.S. drone campaign – its
military necessity, collateral damage, and sovereignty violation. In addition, I also include
items asking Pakistanis about their views of the U.S. government, their own government,
and the Taliban, as well as a number of core demographic covariates and province and
wave fixed effects. The main regressions are presented with OLS, although results are not
sensitive to model selection or specification choices.
Table 4: Predictors of Pakistani Support for U.S. Drone Strikes, 2009-12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>M1</th>
<th>M2</th>
<th>M3</th>
<th>M4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attitudes</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military necessity</td>
<td>0.20***</td>
<td>0.14***</td>
<td>0.13***</td>
<td>0.13***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.02)</td>
<td>(0.03)</td>
<td>(0.03)</td>
<td>(0.03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collateral damage</td>
<td>-0.39***</td>
<td>-0.39***</td>
<td>-0.39***</td>
<td>-0.39***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.04)</td>
<td>(0.05)</td>
<td>(0.05)</td>
<td>(0.05)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sovereignty violation</td>
<td>-0.05*</td>
<td>-0.05*</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.02)</td>
<td>(0.02)</td>
<td>(0.02)</td>
<td>(0.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pro-American</td>
<td>0.06***</td>
<td>0.05***</td>
<td>0.05***</td>
<td>0.05***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.01)</td>
<td>(0.01)</td>
<td>(0.01)</td>
<td>(0.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pro-government</td>
<td>0.05***</td>
<td>0.05***</td>
<td>0.05***</td>
<td>0.05***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.01)</td>
<td>(0.01)</td>
<td>(0.01)</td>
<td>(0.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taliban is threat</td>
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<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.01</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(0.01)</td>
<td>(0.01)</td>
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<td><strong>Demographics</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-0.00</td>
<td>-0.00</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.00)</td>
<td>(0.00)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>0.08**</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.08***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.02)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.02)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>-0.00</td>
<td>-0.00</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(0.01)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.01)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religiosity</td>
<td>-0.18***</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(0.04)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>-0.25***</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(0.08)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pashtun</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(0.04)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Province fixed effects</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wave fixed effects</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>1.63***</td>
<td>1.42***</td>
<td>1.43***</td>
<td>1.49***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.06)</td>
<td>(0.07)</td>
<td>(0.10)</td>
<td>(0.14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>2976</td>
<td>2693</td>
<td>2678</td>
<td>2675</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td>0.098</td>
<td>0.099</td>
<td>0.103</td>
<td>0.116</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Results from OLS regressions. Standard errors in parentheses
*p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001

Table 4 presents the results of these models. The first model includes only the questions about Pakistanis’ perceptions of the U.S. drone campaign, the second model adds their views of different actors involved in the campaign, the third includes some basic demographic covariates (age, gender, and education), and the fourth adds some additional demographic covariates (religiosity, Islamic faith, and Pashtun ethnicity). The dependent
variable in all models is coded such that higher values indicate more support for the attacks. As is clear, concern about collateral damage and civilian death significantly reduces support for U.S. drone strikes in each of the four models – that is, even when accounting for Pakistanis’ beliefs about other aspects of the drone program, their views of the actors involved, and their demographic backgrounds. Moreover, the impact of this collateral damage issue is among the strongest predictors in the model, reducing support for the U.S. drone campaign by roughly 10 percentage points (or 0.39 on a 4-point scale). This effect is comparable to the size of other important predictors such as whether the respondent is Muslim, religiously observant, or from Balochistan, and is substantially greater than the influence of other negative drone-specific beliefs.

Ultimately, what this indicates is that concerns about collateral damage and civilian death are among the most important components of Pakistani opposition to the American drone campaign. Of course, care must be taken to emphasize that these results should not be interpreted in a unidirectional casual manner. As argued in the project, factual beliefs about violence are themselves shaped by preexisting attitudes among civilians beyond the “line of fire.” In other words, animosity toward the U.S. would make someone much more likely to think that American drone strikes are killing large numbers of civilians. But such beliefs are not only the product of preexisting attitudes, but also of other factors such as the information that one absorbs; the relationship between political attitudes and factual beliefs in this sense is bidirectional. Specifically, the fact that we control for Pakistani attitudes toward the relevant actors (including their perpetrator, the U.S.) as well as other negative perceptions of the drone campaign, and still find that collateral damage concerns are among
the strongest predictors of drone opinion suggests that collateral damage is a key element of Pakistani opposition to the strikes in its own right.

**Impact on Broader Political Attitudes in Pakistan:**

Is this opposition to drone strikes – fueled in key ways by factual misperceptions – politically consequential in Pakistan? In fact, there has been a fierce debate among scholars and policymakers about whether – and, if so, how – U.S. drone strikes have shaped political preferences in their target countries. On the one hand, many scholars argue that U.S. drone warfare in countries like Pakistan has fueled substantial alienation and even radicalization – often termed “blowback” – throughout targeted societies (Boyle 2013, Cronin 2013). Yet other analysts have challenged this “blowback narrative,” pointing toward the unpopularity of the perpetrator in these countries before the strikes and questioning the salience of the violence relative to other national concerns (Byman 2013, Fair, Kaltenthaler, and Miller 2014). Moreover, this more policy-oriented dispute speaks to broader theoretical debates around how counterinsurgent and counterterrorist violence shapes the political attitudes and loyalties – or “hearts and minds” – of civilian populations (see, e.g., Bueno de Mesquita 2005, Kalyvas 2006, Lyall 2009).

Despite this heated debate, we have little empirical evidence about the effect of American drone strikes on target public opinion. Indeed, the existing debate around the attitudinal effects of drone strikes in countries like Pakistan is dominated by anecdotal evidence, especially interviews with victims and their families professing innocence and promising revenge. Yet these handfuls of interviewees do not provide a systematic picture
of how the operations impact public opinion within the target society. In fact, Audrey Kurth Cronin recognizes that “much of the evidence is highly contested and the sample sizes used tend to be small and biased” (2013: 51). Meanwhile, there have also been a handful of studies of public opinion about American drone strikes within target societies (primarily Pakistan), linking anti-drone attitudes to anti-Americanism, Islamism, and other attitudes (Fair, Kaltenthaler, and Miller 2012, 2014). Yet while these provide valuable data points about who opposes the strikes, they do not show that the operations actually produce these attitudes. Equally if not more likely is the possibility that these attitudes make the violence appear malevolent in the first place. In sum, we do not have a firm empirical grasp on how U.S. drone strikes shape “hearts and minds” in societies like Pakistan.

Research Design:

In order to estimate these effects, I investigate the impact of American drone strikes that occurred during the fielding of local public opinion surveys. As described by Garcia-Ponce and Pasquale (2014), the best strategy to identify the impact of violence on public opinion – at least methodologically – would be to randomize exposure to violence and then compare the attitudes of exposed (treated) and unexposed (control) populations. However, as this ideal experiment is “neither possible nor desirable in real-life settings” (16), the best feasible strategy is to compare attitudes immediately before (control) and immediately after (treated) the incidents of violence. The key assumption is that the timing of the incidents is exogenous to the timing of the surveys, giving us a “natural experiment” with which to analyze the effects of violence on attitudes. Indeed, similar designs have been used to study
the attitudinal consequences of state violence in Africa (Garcia-Ponce and Pasquale 2014, Young 2015) and the connection between crime and test scores in Chicago (Sharkey 2010).

In order to provide the tightest comparisons possible, I use fairly narrow temporal windows (1-14 days) on each side of the events.

As noted, the core assumption behind the strategy is that the administration of the surveys is not influenced by the application of the violence. The key concern is that survey administrators might be making adjustments after (or perhaps even in anticipation of) the violent events in order to evade the exposed areas for security reasons. While seemingly plausible, this is unnecessary in our case due to the territorial restriction of the drone campaign in Pakistan. As discussed earlier, U.S. drone warfare in Pakistan occurs almost exclusively in the volatile FATA region bordering Afghanistan, which is typically excluded from public opinion surveys of the country. This means that standard national surveys conducted throughout the rest of the country – like those used here – need not be adjusted due to fear of U.S. drone strikes (or of the local reprisals that follow them, which also occur overwhelmingly in FATA\(^{42}\)). Moreover, the exclusion of FATA is theoretically appropriate here because we are focused again on the reactions of the non-local population (following the downstream effects of the factual misperceptions).

In terms of data, the primary source of violent event data used is the BIJ database of U.S. drone strikes in Pakistan, while the main source of public opinion data are the Pew GAP surveys of the country. The dependent variables used in our analysis are simply four-

\(^{42}\) Bauer, Reese, and Ruby (2015) find that about 95% of collaborator killings by the TTP after drone strikes occur in FATA, mostly in the North Waziristan (71%), South Waziristan (9%), and Bajaur (8%) agencies.
point favorability scales (“Please tell me if you have a very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or very unfavorable opinion...”) of a number of significant actors in the conflict, including the American public, Pakistani incumbent and opposition leaders, and militant organizations like Al Qaeda and the Taliban. They also include Pakistani threat perception of these militant groups. Meanwhile, “treatment” status refers to whether each interview was carried out — depending on the response window used — 1 to 14 days before (control) vs. 1 to 14 days after (treated) one of the strikes. The models also include a number of key demographic covariates to control for any possible imbalances between the pre vs. post-strike respondents, although the results all remain substantively similar with or without their inclusion.

To construct the sample, I first identified all GAP Pakistan survey waves during which at least one U.S. drone strike was conducted. This yielded six waves, with ten unique intersections: one each in 2005, 2007, 2012, and 2013, two in 2011, and four in 2010. With the simple rule that strikes must be more than one day apart (otherwise the “control” group would be “treated” by the previous strike), only one of the four strikes in 2010 can be used. This leaves seven strikes across six waves, which jointly contain almost 10,000 responses. While we cannot expect the remaining seven events to be fully representative of over 400, Table 5 compares the sample and universe in five key ways: their proportion conducted in the most oft-targeted area (North Waziristan), their mean number of casualties, their mean number of civilian casualties, their mean number of child casualties, and their mean number of injuries. As is clear, the sample strikes resemble the overall drone campaign remarkably well. Indeed, like the broader campaign, they were mostly conducted in North Waziristan,
and they generated strikingly similar numbers of total casualties, civilian casualties, child casualties, and injuries. Moreover, the sample includes a fairly wide range of time points throughout the program’s history, from the second drone strike ever launched in Pakistan on May 8, 2005, through 2013.43 Thus, these seven drone strikes do not appear to provide a particularly unrepresentative sample of U.S. drone warfare in Pakistan.

Table 5: Comparison of Sample and Universe of U.S. Drone Strikes in Pakistan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>% Conducted in N. Waziristan</th>
<th>Mean Number of Total Casualties</th>
<th>Mean Number of Civilians Killed</th>
<th>Mean Number of Children Killed</th>
<th>Mean Number of Reported Injuries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sample (N=7)</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>7.00</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>3.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universe (N=421)</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>7.68</td>
<td>1.65</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>3.44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: author’s calculations using the BIJ’s drone strike database through the end of 2013.

In order to assess the validity of the empirical strategy, I also check the covariate balance before vs. after the strikes. To do so, I regress a dummy for treatment status (“0” if the interview was conducted pre-strike, “1” if it was post-strike) on a number of basic demographic covariates, with 3-, 6-, 9-, and 12-day response windows on either side of the seven drone strike “intersections.” Figure 5 presents the results, with the coefficients and 95% confidence intervals from the four regressions. As can be seen, the sample is balanced on a number of important covariates, including the respondent’s age, income, internet use,

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43 Specifically, the strikes used in the study were those on (1) May 8, 2005, (2) April 27, 2007, (3) April 24, 2010, (4) April 13, 2011, (5) April 22, 2011, (6) March 30, 2012, and (7) March 21, 2013. All seven were researched extensively to ensure that there were no inconsistencies in the BIJ dates, locations, and casualties across news reports. Moreover, according to the NAF’s database, only one killed a militant leader (Al Qaeda bomb-maker Haitham Al-Yemeni on May 8, 2005). This means that the proportion of leaders killed, like the other variables, was also strikingly similar between the sample (14.3%) and universe (15.7%).
religiosity, religion (Islam vs. other), and language (Pashto vs. other). The key exceptions to this are gender, education, and number of children: post-strike respondents are more likely to be male, less likely to be educated, and more likely to have larger families than pre-strike respondents as the response window expands. However, all results remain robust to the inclusion of these three variables, plus subgroup analyses and robustness checks designed to boost confidence in the results and mitigate potential confounder concerns.

Figure 5: Pre- vs. Post-Strike Covariate Balance with Varying Response Windows

Note: The figure plots coefficients and 95% confidence intervals from logistic regressions of the treatment status on the above demographic covariates plus province and wave dummies, with 3-, 6-, 9-, and 12-day response windows.

44 These covariates are available in all six waves of the survey used in our sample. All were rescaled from 0 to 1 (and some reverse-coded) for ease of interpretation.
Primary Empirical Results:

First, I examine whether the drone strikes indeed generate opposition to their main perpetrator: the United States. Toward this end, Figure 6 plots the coefficients and 95% confidence intervals from regressions of the drone strike “treatment” on three views: (1) the perceived unfavorability of the American people,\textsuperscript{45} (2) whether the U.S. “takes into account the interests of countries like Pakistan” in international policy decisions, and (3) whether American aid to Pakistan “is mostly military aid, or mostly to help Pakistan develop economically.” The idea is that any “blowback” resulting from the strikes should surely be visible within the first two weeks, given the intensive coverage of them in the Pakistani media (Kaltenthaler, Fair, and Miller 2012). In fact, stories on the seven strikes used in the analysis are generally visible the same (or the following) day in major Pakistani media outlets like Dawn (the nation’s most-read English-language newspaper) and GEO TV (its most-watched private TV channel). The models were estimated with ordinary least squares, with all of the demographic covariates as well as province and wave fixed effects to account for any imbalances between pre- and post-strike respondents.

\textsuperscript{45} GAP also asks about perceived favorability of the U.S. government, but I use the American people question because the U.S. question is limited by powerful “ceiling effects,” given that most of the responses are already at their maximum value (very unfavorable) before the strikes. Crucially, this does not mean that the strikes do not stoke anti-U.S. sentiment (in fact, they still do in the subgroup analyses), but just that the effect is hard to detect on this limited scale, at least among the Pakistani population as a whole.
Figure 6: The Effects of Drone Strikes on Pakistani Views of the U.S.

Note: Figure plots coefficients and 95% confidence intervals from OLS regressions of each attitude on the treatment status with demographic covariates and province and wave fixed effects. Response windows range from 1-14 days before vs. after each strike. The questions about the American people and U.S. consideration of Pakistani interests were included in all six survey waves, while the U.S. aid question was asked in four of the six waves.

As can be seen, U.S. drone strikes significantly boost the perceived unfavorability of the American people as well as the perception that the U.S. is indifferent to the interests of Pakistan and the belief that U.S. aid is mostly military in nature. Indeed, the strength of all three of these effects only grows over time, especially after the first week. The lag time is probably because it takes several days for news of the strikes to proliferate through much of Pakistani society, where the primary means of political communication remains “word of mouth” (Fair, Kaltenthaler, and Miller 2015). These results provide empirical evidence
that U.S. drone strikes significantly tarnish Pakistani perceptions of the American people as well as of U.S. intentions and policies.

Additionally, these effects are also meaningful in substantive terms: the perceived unfavorability of the American public, for example, increases by around 2-3 percentage points after a drone strike. Moreover, this is only the intention-to-treat (ITT), and not the average treatment effect (ATE), as the news undoubtedly does not reach all respondents within the designated response windows (or at all). In order to “back out” an estimate of the ATE, we can divide the ITT by the proportion of the population that actually received the “treatment” (proportion of respondents exposed to news about the event). While this quantity is unknown for our specific strikes, the 2010 survey did ask people if they had heard about a particularly notable drone strike that killed TTP leader Baitullah Mehsud several months before the survey. This provides a conservative benchmark both because it is a very high-profile strike, and the respondents had several months in which to hear about it. Indeed, almost exactly 25% of the respondents reported knowledge of this strike, so I divide the ITT estimates by 25%. This conservative approach suggests that the operations boost Pakistani animosity toward Americans by roughly 10 percentage points. One should also note that this is only the effect for one single “dose” of treatment. In sum, this suggests that U.S. drone strikes do stoke substantial anti-American sentiment across Pakistan.
Do the strikes fuel a similar backlash against their key collaborator, the Pakistani regime? Figure 7 plots the coefficients with 95% confidence intervals from regressions of the American drone strike treatment status on support for (1) the Pakistani President,\(^{46}\) (2) the Pakistani opposition leader,\(^{47}\) and (3) a democratic form of government (as opposed to a strong leader) more broadly, using the full model with expanding response windows from

\(^{46}\) The incumbent president was Pervez Musharraf during our first two strikes (2005-07), and Asif Ali Zardari during the remaining ones in the sample (2010-13). I find backlash against both leaders.

\(^{47}\) The opposition leader was Nawaz Sharif during the 2010-13 strikes. Unfortunately, the 2005 and 2007 surveys did not ask about specific Pakistani political figures besides the incumbent president.
1-14 days as above. The results show that the strikes do significantly increase opposition to the president and support for the opposition leader, in other words generating an anti-incumbency effect in Pakistan. They also significantly sour the population on democracy more broadly, producing popular demand instead for a strong leader. However, this could be occurring for several reasons, including the perceived complicity of elected officials, the association of democracy with the U.S., or simply a generic “rally effect” after being attacked. Substantively, the impact of these effects is similar to the backlash against the U.S.: opposition to the incumbent President increases by around 2-3 percentage points in the aftermath of the strikes. Using the same method as above, this means that drone strikes have an anti-incumbency effect of about 10 percentage points on treated individuals. Thus, we have seen that U.S. drone strikes fuel significant opposition to the U.S. as well as the incumbent Pakistani authorities, while generating support for alternative leaders (and even regime structures) in Pakistan.
Figure 8: The Effects of Drone Strikes on Pakistani Views of Militant Groups

Note: Figure plots coefficients and 95% confidence intervals from OLS regressions of each attitude on the treatment status with demographic covariates and province and wave fixed effects. Response windows range from 1-14 days before vs. after each strike. The militant group favorability questions were included in four of the six survey waves.

Next, I explore whether this alienation also translates into increased popular support or sympathy for the militant groups targeted by the strikes. Specifically, I estimate the same models as above, but on Pakistani support for – and threat perceptions of – Al Qaeda and the Taliban. As before, the regressions include the full array of demographic covariates plus the province and wave fixed effects, with response windows from 1 to 14 days around each strike. The results show that U.S. drone strikes significantly boost support for – and

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48 The wording of the threat perception questions is: “How serious of a threat is [INSERT] to our country? Is it a very serious threat, a serious threat, a minor threat, or no threat at all?” The support questions are simply four-point favorability scales, as used elsewhere.
reduce threat perceptions of – the Taliban among Pakistanis. In contrast, they generate no such support for or tolerance of Al Qaeda.

This contrast is puzzling. Why do the operations stoke support for the Taliban but not Al Qaeda, the organization ostensibly most focused on attacking their main perpetrator (as opposed to its regional allies)? One possible clue comes from examining their effects on support for other relevant groups included in the surveys. In particular, estimating the same models on support for the Pakistani Taliban and Afghan Taliban (see Appendix A, Figure A1) shows that the strikes do not significantly boost support for these two organizations either. However, a closer analysis reveals that the Pakistani Taliban effect is positive and near-significant, while the Afghan Taliban effect (like the Al Qaeda effect above) is negative and near-significant. Given that the generic mention of “Taliban” likely makes most Pakistanis think first of the Pakistani Taliban,\(^{49}\) the strikes thus appear to be encouraging support for “domestic” as opposed to “foreign” militant organizations. This may be because Pakistanis perceive groups like the Pakistani Taliban as the primary victim of the strikes,\(^{50}\) or at least the primary provider for their civilian victims in FATA. In either case, what is clear is that drone warfare is fueling support for at least one of the targeted organizations (the Taliban), but not legitimizing other prominent militant targets such as Al Qaeda.

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\(^{49}\) This is a fairly safe assumption because the question was only asked in 2010-13, after the Pakistani Taliban had emerged as an existential threat to the country (in 2007-08, when it begin seizing major slices of Pakistani territory and unleashing waves of deadly terror attacks across the country).

\(^{50}\) According to the NAF data, the Taliban has indeed been the most common target in the drone campaign, with 31% of the strikes directed at them. However, this figure should be interpreted very cautiously, as 42% of the targets are recorded as unknown. In our sample, the NAF records three of the seven strikes as directed at the Taliban, two at unknown targets, and one each at Al Qaeda and the Haqqani network. This is a relatively representative selection of targets.
Subgroup Analyses:

Thus far, we have only examined how U.S. drone strikes shape public opinion on average across the population. Yet they may also have varying effects on different elements or subgroups within Pakistani society. To test for such a possibility, I interact the drone strike “treatment” with different covariates. First, given that not all respondents hear about each strike, I look at whether the effects vary with access to information. If the effects were stronger among those with greater information access, this would reinforce the credibility of our results.

I capture Pakistani access or exposure to information about drone strikes in several ways. One such way is internet use. Indeed, Fair, Kaltenthaler, and Miller (2014) find that internet use is a key predictor of Pakistani knowledge about drones. Figure 9 shows the effects of the strikes on the perceived unfavorability of Americans among internet users and non-internet users, using the full set of covariates and a 10-day response window. As can be seen, the strikes significantly boost anti-American sentiment among internet users, but do not do so among non-internet users. This is consistent with our expectations about the moderating effect of information access. It is also notable that the point estimate among internet users (10 percentage points) is exactly what we obtained by “backing out” the ATE informally above. Moreover, this evidence is especially compelling given that the covariate “normally” points in the opposite direction: that is, internet use significantly lowers anti-American sentiment before a drone strike ($p=0.000$ at 10 days), but significantly boosts it after a strike occurs.
Another factor that strongly influences levels of information access in Pakistan is gender. As explained by Christine Fair and her coauthors (2014: 15), “Pakistani men tend to be far better educated and better informed about political matters than Pakistani women, and as a result, they have much greater access to different channels of information.” Indeed, they find that being male is one of the three major predictors of Pakistani knowledge about the drone strikes. To this end, Figure 10 shows the effects of the drone strikes on the

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51 Specifically, they find that the three key predictors of Pakistani awareness of drone strikes are internet use, gender (higher among men), and education (higher among the educated). In addition to the interactions shown here, I also find a similar interaction effect with education, whereby the strikes only fuel anti-Americanism among the minimally educated ($p=0.008$). Results available upon request.
unfavorability of Americans among both men and women, once again with the full model and 10-day response window. As can be seen, the strikes stoke significant anti-American sentiment among men, but not among women. As above, this is particularly clear evidence that we have captured the intended effects, given that the variable “normally” points in the opposite direction: women exhibit higher levels of anti-Americanism in Pakistan before a drone strike (though the gap is not significant). This provides additional confirmation of our expectations about information access.

![Figure 10: The Effect of Drone Strikes on Anti-Americanism by Gender](image)

*Note: Figure shows the impact of the U.S. drone strike “treatment” on the unfavorability of Americans by gender. Estimates were based on OLS regression of outcome variable on treatment status, gender, and their interaction, with demographic covariates and province and wave fixed effects. Results shown with response window 10 days before vs. after each strike, and 95% confidence intervals.*
A third way to explore the informational dynamic is by measuring proximity to the particular drone strike in question. The idea is simply that exposure to information about a strike should be greater among those living closer to the affected area, as there will be more attention to the events (keeping in mind that all of the respondents are non-locals). To test this, I geo-located all of the survey responses in our sample for which the enumeration area was available. Unfortunately, GAP only recorded the enumeration area in Pakistan in two of our survey waves, those fielded in 2005 and in 2007. In these two waves, I was able to geo-locate 75.4% of the responses at the district level. I then calculated the distance of each respondent from the drone strike that took place during the survey wave in which they were interviewed. Figure 11 shows the effect of the strikes on the unfavorability of Americans by distance from the strike, once again with the full model and a 10-day response window. As can be seen, drone strikes significantly increase anti-American sentiment among those close living to the affected area, and the effect decreases as we move further away, losing significance at a distance of about 400 km. Still, drawing a circle with a radius of 400 km around the affected areas captures a key piece of Pakistani territory (including Islamabad), suggesting that the portion of the country affected is substantial. Overall, this provides more evidence that the effects are strongest where we expect them to be, lending further credence to the findings while also providing substantively important information which elements of Pakistani society are most affected by the operations.
Figure 11: The Effect of Drone Strikes on Anti-Americanism by Proximity

Note: Figure shows the impact of the U.S. drone strike “treatment” on the unfavorability of Americans by respondent’s distance from strike. Estimates from OLS regression of outcome on treatment status, distance, and their interaction, with demographic covariates and province and wave fixed effects. Results presented with response window 10 days before vs. after each strike, and 95% confidence intervals.

Robustness Checks:

While the fact that the strikes have greater effects on those with more information access (measured several ways) boosts our confidence in these results, I also conduct several additional tests to boost their credibility. One concern is that the results reflect not true preference changes, but just increased social or political sensitivity of the topics in question following a drone strike. For example, respondents may be unwilling to voice more (or less) support for militant groups after an operation because of increased fear of repercussions from the authorities (or militants). One way of addressing this issue is by
examining nonresponse rates before vs. after the strikes. Given that nonresponse increases with social or political sensitivity (Ferber 1966), if this is valid we should observe higher nonresponse rates following the strikes. To test for this, I regress the nonresponse rates for the questions about all five main actors on the treatment, using the full model with 1-14 day windows. The results (see Appendix A, Figure A2) reveal that the nonresponse rates do not shift significantly for any of these actors. This speaks against the notion of the results being driven by social or coercive pressures after the violence.

Moreover, I conduct three other robustness checks. First, I replicate the analyses without covariates in order to ensure that the results do not depend on their inclusion. Second, I replicate the primary analyses with ordered logit models instead of OLS in order to ensure that the results do not depend on a linear modelling strategy. Third, because the income question has a relatively high degree of missingness (25%), I multiply impute the income measure\textsuperscript{52} and replicate the results without discarding these data. Substantively, the results remain similar in all three cases (see Appendix A, Figures A3-8), though a couple of secondary results are significant only at the 10% level.

*Summary of Quasi-Experimental Results:*

To summarize the major takeaways from this event study analysis, then, the results show that American drone strikes do have substantial anti-American, anti-incumbent, and pro-militant effects on public opinion in mainstream Pakistan. This impact is substantial as

\textsuperscript{52} I multiply impute income using truncated regression (as it cannot be below 0) on all covariates as well as the province and wave dummies.
well: for instance anti-Americanism rises by an estimated 10% after a strike, with similar spikes in pro-opposition and pro-Taliban sentiment. Moreover, the effects are concentrated in key pockets of Pakistani society – men, internet users, and those relatively close to (but still outside of) the affected areas – that are particularly vulnerable to militant involvement. In sum, these findings validate crucial features of the “blowback narrative” about the attitudinal consequences of U.S. drone warfare in societies like Pakistan, revealing that the opposition to drones fed by factual misperceptions does in fact have important political consequences among the non-local Pakistani population.

**Conclusion:**

In sum, in this chapter we examined factual (mis)perceptions about the nature of the U.S. drone campaign in Pakistan. In the first part of the chapter, we showed that there is a widespread factual misperception about drone strikes: while they are empirically very targeted and selective, they are widely seen as inaccurate and indiscriminate among non-local Pakistanis. In the second part of the chapter, we investigated the political impact of this factual misperception. Specifically, we first showed that civilian casualty concerns are one of if not the most important elements of the strikes’ unpopularity throughout Pakistan. Moreover, we showed that this unpopularity is politically consequential – drone strikes deepen reservoirs of anti-American, anti-incumbent, and pro-militant sentiment throughout mainstream Pakistani society. These findings provide important empirical contributions to both strategic debates about “drone blowback” and broader academic literatures about how counterinsurgent violence shapes civilian “hearts and minds.”
However, the main contribution of the chapter is to examine the factual misbeliefs behind these consequences. Indeed, this chapter provided evidence about the prevalence and importance of factual misperceptions about violence in Pakistan, showing (1) that there are pervasive factual misperceptions about U.S. drone strikes in Pakistan and (2) that they have substantial strategic costs. And yet, while we focused on documenting these factual misperceptions and demonstrating their political consequences, we did not explain why and how they emerge in the first place – a task to which we next turn in Ch. 4.
Chapter 3 References:


Young, Lauren. 2015. “Preying on the Poor: The Impact of Repressive Violence on Citizen Behavior.” *Prepared for the 2015 APSA annual meeting. San Francisco, September 4-6.*
Chapter 4: Examining the Sources of Factual Misperceptions

There is no such thing as ethnic cleansing – people are fleeing the NATO bombs and the “Albanian terrorists.” – pro-Milosevic farmer in Montenegro, 1999\textsuperscript{53}

In this project, I examine the sources of factual beliefs in war, arguing that there is a crucial divide in modern armed conflict settings between civilians in the “line of fire” of a given type of violence (or other conflict event) and those based elsewhere in the conflict zone in terms of the accuracy of their beliefs. In the preceding chapter, we explored some of these issues in the case of the U.S. drone campaign in Pakistan, showing that there is a widespread factual misperception about the campaign’s indiscriminate nature throughout most of Pakistan, and that this misperception has important political consequences.

In this chapter, I turn to the task of examining the sources of these misperceptions among civilians outside the “line of fire.” To do so, I fielded an original survey experiment in Pakistan in which I manipulated the characteristics of a reported counterinsurgent airstrike in the country and measured the ensuing civilian beliefs about it. The results show that such beliefs are most heavily influenced by the perpetrator’s identity, as well as by civilians’ preexisting orientations and information channels in the dispute. While actual

casualties matter too, they are secondary to these motivational and informational variables. In this sense, the results show that factual beliefs about war among non-local civilians are quite biased in nature.

Factual Beliefs and Their Importance:

Why do civilians often develop widely divergent beliefs about what is happening in war? In our age of “mediatized war” (Maltby 2012), news about conflict events often reaches millions of people throughout wartorn societies, and these people frequently form different beliefs about what is going on. For instance, after the Khan Shaykhun chemical attack – in which the Syrian government attacked a rebel-held town in northwestern Syria with Sarin gas on April 4, 2017, killing over 80 civilians and leading to a barrage of cruise missiles in response by the Trump administration – competing factual claims about what had happened were rampant. On the one hand, Western governments and Syrian opposition forces claimed that it was an intentional and indiscriminate attack on civilians by the Assad regime, and the international press by and large reported it as such.\(^5^4\) On the other hand, the Syrian regime – as well as its Iranian and Russian patrons – suggested that the incident was either a fabrication, a selective strike on a rebel ammunition depot, or a “false flag” operation by the opposition to facilitate foreign intervention.\(^5^5\) Indeed, variation in beliefs about the event has proliferated in the West, with a number of notable political figures

\(^5^4\) Many international press outlets were appropriately cautious and initially labeled the incident a suspected attack by the Syrian government.

doubting the official Western narrative. And while reliable Syrian survey data is lacking, it is highly likely that factual beliefs about the events differ widely across the millions of Alawites, Sunnis, Christians, and Druze in the country as well.

Such variation in civilian beliefs about the “facts on the ground” is critical in war. Indeed, we know that civilian populations play crucial roles in modern armed conflict, both by providing fighters, funds, and other inputs to combatants (Sewall et al 2007), and by shaping their political judgements about whether to escalate, negotiate, or pursue other strategies in the dispute (Jaeger et al. 2012). This is why almost all combatants compete for the sympathy of civilian populations, or at least key elements thereof, within conflict settings. Moreover, civilians’ factual beliefs form the basis of their opinions and actions in conflict – civilians react not to what is happening, but to what they think is happening in war. For example, for Syrians who were persuaded (or persuaded themselves) that the Khan Shaykhun attack was the work of the West or the rebels, reconciliation with these groups likely became even more remote a possibility. Similarly, in the last chapter we explored how a widespread factual misperception about violence – the perception that U.S. drone warfare in Pakistan has been indiscriminate and destructive – has fueled broad backlash in Pakistani society and had significant strategic consequences.

However, existing literature on the micro-dynamics of armed conflict is largely silent on civilians’ beliefs about the nature of the fighting. In fact, much of the empirical literature on conflict processes has focused on combatant behaviors – such as patterns of

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56 For example, U.S. politicians expressing skepticism in the official narrative included former Presidential candidate Ron Paul and Congressmen Thomas Massie (R-KY) and Congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard (D-HI).
violence, governance, and resistance (e.g., Kalyvas 2006, Kalyvas and Kocher 2007) – with relatively few studies of civilian attitudes. Recently, a few studies have departed from this trend, examining how civilians react to violence using local public opinion data (Jaeger et al. 2012, Lyall, Blair, and Imai 2013, García-Ponce and Pasquale 2013). However, like the literature on combatant behaviors, the focus of such studies is extremely localized in nature, on how civilians react to violence in the specific village or district in which it occurs. While this work is valuable, it ignores the broader variation in civilian beliefs about the fighting that arises across war-torn societies. In fact, violent events frequently reach mass audiences of millions throughout their respective societies and beyond via the mass media and other channels of information (Nacos 2007). In addition, combatants expend substantial effort trying to “spin” and frame them to their advantage, so they clearly believe that these beliefs are significant. For instance, the media strategies of the belligerents in Syria’s civil war have been described as attempts to “assign blame and, through images and rhetoric, present a distribution of pain and suffering that warrants their actions” (Powers and O’Loughlin 2015). Why waste resources doing this unless you think civilian beliefs about violence are important, as well as malleable?

Hypothesizing Non-Local Factual Beliefs:

In this chapter, I examine these factual beliefs among civilians not directly exposed to the conflict events. As with local civilians, I argue in this dissertation that these non-local beliefs can be attributed largely to two key factors: (1) the information that civilians have about the violence, and (2) their psychological motivation when they interpret that
information. However, in the case of non-local civilians, these factors both work to produce factual biases. Moreover, I also sketch out an “objective” baseline hypothesis that acts as an alternative against which to test the impact of motivational and informational factors. As in the previous chapter, the empirical context in which I test these ideas is the distinction between selective vs. indiscriminate violence – that is, how much the user of force tries to avoid harming innocent civilians (Kalyvas 2006).

*The Role of Motivation:*

As explained in the theory chapter, the first crucial factor that shapes how civilians develop factual beliefs about conflict events is their motivation when they interpret them. Specifically, there is a vast body of research from social and political psychology showing how people frequently engage in “motivated reasoning” – that is, reasoning directed toward reaching the conclusions that preserve their own emotional and psychological goals instead of getting the right answer (Kunda 1990). When citizens hold such “directional biases,” or desires to defend an attitude or attachment, they not only reach self-serving conclusions, but they actually access and process information differently in doing so. These dynamics are clear in a range of social settings, from elections (Taber and Lodge 2006) to markets (Bénabou 2012) to law and order (Campbell and Kay 2014).

These dynamics apply quite strongly in war as well. Indeed, civilians in warzones inevitably hold diverse attitudes and loyalties toward the warring parties in the conflict, which they will aim to defend or maintain when exposed to new information about their behavior. For instance, if a civilian holds strong resentments toward one of the combatants
or communities in a violent conflict, he will “want to believe” that it was indifferent to any civilian casualties that occurred during its military operations – or even that they were intentional. While civilians living in the direct “line of fire” of the attacks may not fit this pattern (more on this in the next chapter), the vast majority of civilians living elsewhere in the conflict setting will be free to indulge in this kind of directional reasoning about the dynamics of war.

Indeed, examples of these tendencies in war abound. For instance, one of the most notorious pieces of anti-Germany atrocity propaganda in WWI was the “German corpse factory” – a fake story that the German army was rendering trainloads of its own casualties in a factory in order to extract their fats for the war. Although probably the most “appalling atrocity story of the war” (Knightley 2004: 114), it grew quite popular in Allied societies because “many people wanted to believe it…to think that the enemy was the incarnation of evil helped the war effort” (Marlin 2002: 72). Similar dynamics are clear in more recent conflicts. During the bloody wars that ravaged the Balkans in the 1990s, for instance, there was often a sincere “denial” or refusal to believe among civilians of an ethnic group that one’s own forces were committing massacres or “ethnic cleaning” toward the civilians of other groups (di Giovanni 2007).

These ideas lead to a pair of closely related empirical predictions about perceived selectivity. First, they suggest that, among non-local civilians, we should witness different beliefs about the nature of conflict events based on the identity of the combatants involved in them – for example, if an attack is conducted by an unpopular, external perpetrator such as the U.S. in Pakistan, it will tend to be viewed as indiscriminate by civilians, as compared
to an otherwise equivalent attack by a more popular perpetrator such as the Pakistani army. This can be stated as follows:

**Hypothesis 1a:** If a combatant is unpopular (popular) among the non-local population, its violence will tend to be perceived as more (less) indiscriminate in nature.

Second, we should observe non-local civilians’ beliefs about the nature of conflict events diverge not only based on the identity of the combatants involved in them, but also based on the attitudes of the civilians that observe them and their prior orientations toward those combatants. In particular, we should thus observe a greater tendency toward negative factual belief formation among those who harbor unfavorable preexisting orientations towards the perpetrator. This leads to the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 1b:** If a non-local civilian holds a negative (positive) prior orientation toward one of the combatants, he will be likely to perceive its violence as more (less) indiscriminate in nature.

Ultimately, these hypotheses tap into the same underlying mechanism – individual-level motivated bias toward different actors in the conflict – but they analyze it at different levels and are thus usefully distinguished here to fully set up for the empirical analysis.
The Role of Information:

In addition to motivation, the other critical factor shaping how civilians perceive the nature of wartime violence is the information that they absorb about it. In fact, we know that the information “diet” people consume profoundly shapes their attitudes and beliefs in a wide range of areas, from foreign policy opinions to economic perceptions. Different sources of information influence what people see in two crucial ways: (1) selection bias, or what events they report, and (2) description bias, or how they report them (McCarthy, McPhail, and Smith 1996). Indeed, empirical analyses show that there is considerable variation in which events attract attention in different newspapers (e.g., Danzger 1975, McCarthy, McPhail, and Smith 1996), and of course, there is a sizable body of work on the divergent framing of such events across different news outlets, as in the infamous case of Fox, CNN, and MSNBC in the U.S.

These dynamics apply in conflicts as well. Indeed, after most major encounters that occur in an armed conflict, there is an inevitable contest between the two “sides” to shape how they are represented in the news (Tugwell 1986). In the words of one scholar, “each violent event creates an ‘opportunity space’ into which both insurgent and state seek to inject their narrative” (Stevens 2013: 93). Additionally, this sets aside the issue of selection bias – that the event might not even be reported at all in many sources, and that “atrocities propaganda” can be concocted to smear the enemy (Marlin 2002). While some of these issues have been explored as coding challenges in conflict datasets (Gerner et al. 1994, Otto 2013, Weidmann 2014), their implications have not yet been considered for ordinary civilians in conflict zones. In fact, these issues are particularly acute in warzones, where
much of the media is either stated owned (Djankov et al 2003), naturally split along the
lines of the warring factions, or vulnerable to combatant coercion or influence. In short, the
media in conflict is not an impartial observer, but a weapon of war (Kalb and Saivetz 2007).

Given these conditions, there is unsurprisingly a long and deep legacy of biased
reporting of wartime violence. As documented by Phillip Knightley (2004) in *The First
Casualty: The War Correspondent as Hero and Myth-Maker from the Crimea to Iraq*, these
dynamics were common from even the dawn of professional war coverage in the 19th
century. During the U.S. Civil War, for example, Knightley notes that “accuracy became a
minor consideration” as casualty figures were manipulated, battles misreported, and entire
reports faked by journalists on both sides (2004: 26). Nor have these biases abated in more
contemporary violent conflicts. From the Kuwaiti atrocity propaganda that helped foster
the 1st Gulf War (Marlin 2002) to the infamous radio programs of the Rwandan Genocide
(Yanagizawa-Drott 2014) to the nationalist propaganda machines of the Balkan Wars
(Thompson 1999), tactics like the invention of atrocity stories, suppression of one’s own
massacres, and manipulation of casualty counts have featured prominently in recent cases.
And they persist in numerous disputes worldwide today. In fact, one quantitative analysis
of the Iraqi media found that it contained “approximately 10-15 references to erroneous
reporting on casualty numbers” per month (Cioppa 2009: 38). Likewise, studies of local
news coverage in the Ukraine conflict reveal widely divergent reporting about patterns of
violence by government and rebel forces (Zhukov and Baum 2016). While local civilians
living in the “line of fire” have more direct ways of getting information, non-local civilians
are dependent on these biased information streams. Thus:
**Hypothesis 2:** If a non-local civilian consumes unfavorable (favorable) information about the violence, he will be likely to think that it is more (less) indiscriminate in nature.

*The Objective Baseline:*

Of course, the idea against which these hypotheses are framed is that the objective results and characteristics of violent events will do most of the “work” in shaping civilian factual beliefs about them. In other words, factors like the level of civilian casualties, the tactics or technologies employed, and the precautions taken by the user of force (including distributing warning leaflets, creating escape corridors, or avoiding crowded public areas) will be the key drivers of whether civilians view an operation as selective or indiscriminate. In fact, this idea that civilians typically “get it right” is the implicit working assumption behind analyses examining the extent to which “objective” differences in political violence – such as its tactics, targets, or results – elicit different responses from civilian populations (e.g., Condra and Shapiro 2012, Jaeger et al. 2012, Benmelech, Berrebi, and Klor 2015). This expectation can be stated in terms of the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 3:** Non-local civilians will perceive violence as selective or indiscriminate in nature based on its objective characteristics or consequences, such as its levels of militant and civilian casualties.
Empirical Approach:

In order to examine these processes, I conducted a survey experiment in a wartorn society in which I exposed the respondents to mock news stories about a violent event and manipulated its key attributes. This stands in stark contrast to existing studies of civilian reactions to violence, which utilize either observed (Jaeger et al. 2012, García-Ponce and Pasquale 2013) or self-reported (Lyall, Blair, and Imai 2013) violence as the key stimulus. While such an observational approach may offer certain advantages, it comes at the cost of control over the “treatments” – the violence to which the civilians are exposed. In practice, this means that analysts either treat all violence as equal (García-Ponce and Pasquale 2013), or that they compare different types of events – such as all violence by state vs. rebel groups – without accounting for their many potential differences besides their perpetrator (Lyall, Blair, and Imai 2013). In contrast, an experimental approach gives the researcher more leverage to isolate theoretically informed differences in violence, such as its perpetrators, tactics, and casualties.

In this survey experiment, I employed a 2X2 factorial design with variation in the perpetrators (local or foreign) and consequences (civilian casualties or not) of the incident. While varying the civilian casualties helps us gauge the sensitivity of civilian perceptions to the event’s “objective” results, varying its perpetrators helps us examine whether civilian perceptions are conditioned by preexisting loyalties toward the combatants. I also included a number of pre-treatment questions about the subjects’ identities and ideologies and their patterns of news consumption that provide additional leverage in getting at the hypotheses.

Building on the preceding chapter, the empirical context for this approach is the
ongoing U.S. and Pakistani campaigns against militant groups in Pakistan, particularly in the country’s northwest. The case is useful for us because it contains a range of different sources and forms of violence, including operations by both domestic as well as foreign counterinsurgent forces against many of the same militant organizations. This enables us to credibly manipulate the perpetrator conducting a given operation in a news report (i.e., the U.S. or Pakistan) without necessarily changing its other core features. In other words, all four grid cells outlined above happen in the real world: both the U.S. and Pakistan routinely carry out operations against militant groups in the tribal areas of the country that vary widely in their results.

**Fielding the Survey:**

The survey analyzed in this chapter was fielded throughout Pakistan in December 2014 by the Institute for Public Opinion Research (IPOR), an experienced survey firm in Islamabad. The data were collected with a multistage stratified random sample of 1,000 respondents from the entire adult (18+) population of Pakistan “proper,” including the four provinces of Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkwha (KP), and Balochistan. We first stratified our sample by province and then by urban/rural distribution in order to obtain sufficient variation on these crucial dimensions, and then randomly picked rural villages or urban

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57 While Pakistani and U.S. airstrikes in FATA are not equivalent, there is often significant overlap as well, or at least sufficient overlap in the basic features portrayed in a short news report — that is, their generic tactics (e.g., airstrikes), targets (e.g., alleged militants), locations (e.g., North Waziristan), and results (e.g., variable civilian casualties) — to credibly hold these features constant while changing who conducted a specific strike. In fact, the Pakistani army even initially tried to take credit for drone strikes in 2004-05, before being exposed by a local reporter (Fair and Hamza 2016). Moreover, to the extent that there is divergence, U.S. strikes have killed and displaced much fewer civilians than Pakistani airstrikes, contrary to the beliefs elicited here. Thus, if prior results matter, we are underestimating the effect of informational and motivational factors.
blocks/circles as our primary sampling units (PSUs). Within each PSU, we used the random walk method to select households and the Kish grid to pick respondents. Overall, we achieved a 70% participation rate, a figure comparable to recent rounds of the General Social Survey (69% in 2014) and the American National Election Survey (49% in 2012). Figure B1 in Appendix B shows the geographic distribution of survey respondents across Pakistan. The survey was done with IRB approval and used mixed-gender teams fluent in local languages in addition to Urdu.

The survey was not fielded in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), the war torn area of Pakistan in which the counterinsurgent operation is carried out in the story. Yet, this is unproblematic for us because, as noted throughout the chapter, our focus is on the factual beliefs of non-local civilians – those who live outside of the “line of fire.” Indeed, it is worth noting that FATA includes only a tiny slice of the Pakistani population (under 2%), so we can still explore how the violence is perceived across the vast majority of the 200-million person nation. Moreover, Pakistan’s conflict with Islamist militancy is far from confined to FATA, as much of the country has seen violence and contestation, from Karachi to Lahore to Peshawar and Quetta. Moreover, this wider audience feeds into the conflict as potential recruitment pools, resource bases, and sanctuaries for the militants, and impacts Pakistani (and, indirectly, U.S.) security policy through elections, protests, and various other forms of mobilization.

The survey questionnaire started with a “warm-up” question about respondents’

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58 In addition to strict quality control checks in the field, we used the program Percentmatch (Kuriakose and Robbins 2015) to check for data falsification and found no evidence of it. See Figure B2 in Appendix B.
satisfaction with the overall direction of their country, followed by an initial battery of pre-
treatment items about their general political orientations and media consumption patterns
for potential use as moderators of the treatment. The political pre-treatment questions were
kept relatively generic in nature so as not to artificially elicit views of particular combatants
and thus constrain reactions to the treatment vignette via a consistency bias mechanism.
For the media consumption questions, respondents were asked how much they utilize each
of 15 common types of information sources in Pakistan, such as Pakistani public television,
radio, and the internet.

The respondents were then assigned randomly to one of the four mock news reports
about a counterinsurgent airstrike conducted in the tribal areas of the country. As noted,
the experiment used a 2X2 factorial design, varying the perpetrator (the U.S. or Pakistan)
and outcomes (civilian casualties or not) of the incident. The text for Group 4 – the U.S.
airstrike with civilian casualties – is shown in Figure 12 to illustrate the design (group-
specific text in bold).59 The format is loosely modeled on the brief news updates about U.S.
and Pakistani military operations that appear in popular news sources such as Dawn (the
country’s top English-language newspaper) or Geo News (its top private TV channel).

59 In the treatment conditions without civilian casualties, this phrase was replaced with the phrase “but did
not harm any civilians in the surrounding area” in order to emphasize the treatment.
To measure perceptions of the operation, I asked two major questions. First, I asked them about their overall approval of the airstrike, on a scale from 0 to 10. Then, to capture their perceptions of its selectivity, they were asked how hard they think the perpetrator tried to avoid killing civilians in the operation, on a five-point scale from “not at all” (1) to “a great deal” (5). This question conveys the definition of perceived selectivity nicely, and is used as the principal dependent variable in our analyses. Finally, I asked respondents about their attitudes toward a variety of different political actors, strategies, and goals, plus a battery of demographic questions for use as covariates. Respondents were then debriefed and given a small gift as a token of appreciation for their participation in the study.

During the administration of the survey experiment, each of the 1,000 respondents was randomly assigned to one of the four treatment conditions or to a control group which received no story. This yielded almost precisely 200 respondents per group (201, 200, 198, 200, 201). Table B1 in Appendix B shows the demographic balance across groups. Overall,
the sample is well balanced across the different conditions and parametric ANOVA tests reveal no evidence of significant differences between them.

Empirical Results:

![Perceived Selectivity of the Airstrike by Treatment Condition](image)

**Figure 13: Perceived Selectivity of the Airstrike by Treatment Condition**

*Notes: the figure contains the distribution of responses within each treatment group. The specific question wording was “How much do you think those who conducted this strike tried to avoid civilian casualties?” The options were not at all, a little, somewhat, a lot, a great deal, or don’t know. CivCas is civilian casualties.*

To examine the results, we first inspect the outcome visually. Figure 13 plots the perceived selectivity of the counterinsurgent airstrike by treatment condition. Two primary points emerge. First, there is wide variation in the perceived selectivity of the operation both between – as well as within – conditions. In other words, respondents are perceiving
the selectivity of the event in different ways independent of any experimental manipulation (i.e., of its reported perpetrator or casualties). This underscores the basic point that factual beliefs about violent incidents often vary widely in a given conflict. Second, there appear to be large differences by perpetrator, with the U.S. strike seen as far more indiscriminate than its Pakistani counterpart. In fact, over half the respondents perceived the perpetrator as not trying to avoid civilian casualties at all when the operation was done by the U.S. and it hit civilians, by far the highest level of any group. Meanwhile, there are also noticeable differences based on the reported level of civilian casualties, although they appear much more modest than those attributable to the perpetrator identity.

To explore more deeply, we next compare the mean levels of the dependent variable and their differences across the different treatment groups. Specifically, Table 6 shows the average levels of perceived selectivity broken down by perpetrator identity, by civilian casualties, and finally by both treatments in interaction. It also shows the differences in means between conditions and the statistical significance of those differences. In all of the results, the five-point ordinal measure of perceived selectivity spans from 0 to 4.
Table 6: Mean Perceptions of Selectivity by Perpetrator, Results, and Both

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perpetrator Identity</th>
<th>Perceived Selectivity (0 to 4)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>1.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>2.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diff-in-means</td>
<td>0.96***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Operation Results</th>
<th>Perceived Selectivity (0 to 4)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Civilian casualties</td>
<td>1.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No civilian casualties</td>
<td>2.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diff-in-means</td>
<td>0.40***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perpetrator*Results</th>
<th>Perceived Selectivity (0 to 4)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U.S. with civcas</td>
<td>1.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. without civcas</td>
<td>1.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diff-in-means</td>
<td>0.48**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan with civcas</td>
<td>2.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan without civcas</td>
<td>2.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diff-in-means</td>
<td>0.32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Table displays the airstrike’s mean level of perceived selectivity across the treatment conditions, as well as the differences between those means and their statistical significance. Perceived selectivity is a five-point scale ranging from 0 to 4. CivCas is short for civilian casualties.

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

As is clear, perpetrator identity has by far the largest effect on perceived selectivity – the operation is perceived as a full 24 percentage points (0.96 points on a scale from 0 to 4) more indiscriminate when it is conducted by American than Pakistani forces, and this difference is highly significant. Civilian casualties have a significant effect as well, with the strike seen as 10 percentage points (0.40/4) more indiscriminate if it kills civilians. Yet, as seen in the bottom half of the table, this effect is somewhat dependent on the perpetrator carrying it out. Indeed, if the airstrike is carried out by the U.S., the effect of hitting civilians is 12 percentage points (0.48/4), and the difference is solidly significant. However, if the strike is conducted by Pakistan, the difference is only eight percentage points (0.32/4) and
is not significant at conventional levels. In other words we cannot confidently say that the Pakistani army is significantly penalized for inflicting civilian casualties, while we can say that the U.S. suffers a statistically significant penalty for doing so. Overall, these findings provide support for Hypothesis 1a, suggesting that the perceived selectivity of violence depends first and foremost on the preexisting popularity of the perpetrator. In addition, they suggest that while the attack’s objective results do matter (H3), their effect is substantively weaker than and statistically dependent on the identity of the perpetrator.

**Moderating Effects:**

In order to investigate further, I also examine how these treatments interact with respondents’ prior attitudes and attachments (H1b). One attitude that might moderate these effects is support for Islam in politics. As in many Muslim-majority countries, the Islamist vs. secular-nationalist divide is salient in Pakistan, and those with an Islamist worldview tend to hold more unfavorable views of the U.S. and West more broadly. Indeed, while Islamist groups are diverse, they function as “a key source of identity to peoples intent on strengthening their social cohesion against Western cultural assault” (Fuller and Fuller 2002, p. 55), and empirical studies show that Islamists tend to harbor more unfavorable views toward the United States and its allies (Blaydes and Linzer 2012, Ciftci and Tezcür 2016). More country-specific work also highlights these tendencies at work in Pakistan in particular (Reetz 2006). Following the motivational bias logic laid out above, Islamists

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60 The difference-in-difference between these effects is not statistically significant (p=0.40). Thus, we cannot say that the effects are significantly different from each other, although we can say that one is significantly different from zero while the other is not.
should thus interpret the selectivity of the U.S. strike with stronger directional bias against the U.S. to satisfy these attitudes. In other words, the effect of perpetrator identity should be even greater among them. To capture Islamist ideology, I use a question about whether respondents support the Caliphate as a political model in Pakistan. While the Caliphate can be understood in many different ways, it is widely used as a symbol and banner by Islamist parties and movements (Pankhurst 2013). This is particularly true in South Asia, where the concept is deeply linked to Islamist movements like the Jamaat-e-Islami, Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan, and Taliban (Zaman 2015).

Another key attachment that might moderate the treatments is respondents’ ethnic identities. Along with the role of Islam in politics, ethnicity remains one of the most salient characteristics of Pakistani politics, with one’s ethnic identity as Punjabi, Sindhi, Mohajir, Balochi, or Pashtun often heavily informing one’s political worldview. In particular, the Pashtun community is one of the most conscious of its identity and tends to be among the most unfavorable in its orientations toward the U.S. due to the impact of the conflict in Afghanistan and broader “War on Terror” on the Pashtun communities on both sides of the Durand line. Indeed, Pashtun-majority parts of both countries serve as the key strongholds for their respective Taliban movements, and have seen the heaviest fighting in the conflicts (Kaltenthaler and Miller 2015). Accordingly, like those who harbor Islamist orientations, Pashtuns should interpret the selectivity of the U.S. airstrike in a more biased fashion in
order to satisfy their prior negative beliefs about the U.S.\textsuperscript{61,62}

![Figure 14: Effect of U.S. as Perpetrator by Pashtun Ethnicity and Islamist Ideology](image)

Notes: figure presents the effect of the U.S. conducting the airstrike on its perceived selectivity by Pashtun ethnicity (left) and Islamist ideology (right). Results from ordinary least squares regressions, with 95\% confidence intervals. Perceived selectivity is a five-point scale ranging from 0 to 4.

To test these expectations, I simply run a pair of models, each of which regresses the outcome variable on the treatment indicators as well as their interactions with one of the two moderating variables (a variety of additional robustness checks are reported later).

\textsuperscript{61}This is not to overgeneralize or overemphasize Pashtun anti-Americanism. Pashtun views are diverse, and they are not the only ethnic group in Pakistan that tends to hold a more critical outlook toward the U.S. (e.g., Punjabis tend to do so as well). In contrast, the result is simply meant to be illustrative of the moderating role of group identity factors in shaping civilian beliefs about violent events.

\textsuperscript{62}The wording for respondents’ ethnicity was simply “What is your ethnicity?” The possible choices were Punjabi, Pashtun, Sindhi, Sariaki, Muhajir, Balochi, Kashmiri, and Other.
This yields Figure 14, which shows us how the impact of the U.S. as perpetrator varies by Pashtun ethnicity (left) and by Islamist ideology (right). Looking first at the figure on the left, we can see that the effect of the perpetrator identity treatment is strongly moderated by Pashtun ethnicity. In fact, the U.S. strike is viewed as only around 20 percentage points (0.75/4) more indiscriminate than its Pakistani equivalent among non-Pashtuns, while that difference is roughly 40 percentage points (1.5/4) – over twice as large – among Pashtuns. Looking next at the figure on the right, we can see that the effect of perpetrator identity is also heavily moderated by Islamist ideology (as proxied by support for the Caliphate). In particular, whether the U.S. conducts the operation or not has no discernible effect on those who view the Caliphate negatively, but only among those with neutral or positive views. In addition, the effect grows substantially as Caliphate support increases, from around 10 percentage points (0.4/4) to approximately 30 percentage points (1.2/4) among those with the strongest support. In sum, both the Islamist and Pashtun results provide more evidence – in addition to the perpetrator treatment effect itself – that whether civilians see violence as selective or indiscriminate is heavily shaped by their prior attitudes and attachments in the dispute. The main point here is not just that Islamists or Pashtuns tend to disapprove of the U.S., or even of U.S. military operations on their territory, but that they tend to interpret the empirical nature of such events in different ways as a result.63

Finally, I also test how these effects are influenced by exposure to different sources of information (H2). In particular, I asked respondents before the treatments how much

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63 It is also noteworthy that the correlation between Pashtun ethnicity and Islamist ideology is low (r=0.15), suggesting that the two interaction effects are indeed capturing something distinct. Including both in the same model produces no substantive change in results (results available upon request).
they rely on each of 15 types of popular news sources in Pakistan: public TV, private TV, international TV, English-language newspapers, Urdu or regional-language newspapers, international newspapers, radio, magazines, internet, email, texts, family, tribal gatherings (e.g. jirgas), word of mouth, and religious leaders and gatherings. This list was developed by Fair, Kaltenthaler, and Miller (2014) to assess Pakistani political communication.

Of course, there is considerable overlap among some of these sources, and many of the measures are likely to be highly correlated. As such, I conducted an exploratory factor analysis with varimax rotation to isolate a more parsimonious set of underlying dimensions of Pakistani news consumption. This process yielded three non-overlapping factors. The first is what I label “broadcast and print media,” as it contains many conventional mass media sources (particularly those with a more international or elite audience). The second can be called “digital media” as it centers around the internet, email, and SMS. The third closely tracks “informal sources,” including family, word of mouth, and tribal and religious gatherings. Table B2 in Appendix B shows the loadings for these three main factors.

In terms of the expected effects of these three factors, although the Pakistani news environment is diverse, the state still retains wide control over its contents, particularly on core security issues. Journalists cannot report critically on the army’s actions in FATA, Balochistan, or other sensitive areas, or investigate its alleged ties to the Afghan Taliban, Lashkar-e-Taiba, and other groups (Fair and Hamza 2016). In contrast, news coverage of U.S. actions in the country (including drone strikes) is overwhelmingly negative, although its level of negativity varies by source and medium (Fair, Kaltenthaler, and Miller 2014). Thus, we should expect reliance on all three types of news to boost the negative effect of
the perpetrator treatment. While existing research does not yield a clear prediction about which will have the strongest amplifying effect, it does highlight informal news as among the strongest sources of Pakistani drone opposition (Fair, Kaltenthaler, and Miller 2014).

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 15: Effect of U.S. as Perpetrator by Reliance on Distinct Information Streams**

*Notes: figure shows the effect of the U.S. conducting the airstrike on its perceived selectivity by respondent reliance on distinct types of information channels. The types are from an exploratory factor analysis of 15 popular sources. Results from ordinary least squares regression, with 95% confidence intervals. Perceived selectivity is a five-point scale ranging from 0 to 4.*

To explore these effects, I regress perceived selectivity on the treatment indicators as well as interactions of the perpetrator treatment with each of the three informational variables. For ease of interpretation, the factors are coded dichotomously, with “low” or “high” reliance on each type of source (using median values as the cutpoints). Figure 15
plots the marginal effects of the perpetrator identity treatment – that is, the U.S. carrying out the attack – across low and high reliance on each type of news. The figure shows that all three types amplify the treatment effect, though the only significant amplifier is informal news. In fact, the U.S. operation is perceived as around 30 percentage points (1.2/4) more indiscriminate among civilians who depend heavily on informal sources than among those who do not.

One explanation for this result is that informal news in developing countries like Pakistan is generally organized hierarchically, with information flowing down from the local tribal leader, religious leader, or other elites to citizens (Rawan 2002). Many of these local maliks or mullahs, in the areas reliant on them for news, may be circulating highly critical news about U.S. military operations in the country. Moreover, informal information sources in these settings may function as a sort of “echo chamber” for gossip, rumors, and conspiracy theories about unpopular actors like the U.S., thus spreading the critical news in a more horizontal fashion as well (Silverstein 2000). Overall, while further research is needed to more deeply understand the nature of informal news in conflict environments, the results do underscore the divergent impact of different information streams in shaping civilian beliefs about the empirical nature of violence.

64 Another potential explanation for this is that, while U.S. military action is represented very unfavorably in all three types of media, informal and interpersonal sources are trusted more than the mass media in Pakistan. There is some empirical evidence for this in Fair, Kaltenthaler, and Miller (2015). In this interpretation, all three information streams are biased, but some are more influential in spreading that bias.
Robustness Checks:

In order to boost our confidence in these results, I conduct two primary sets of robustness tests. This is important because, while the two treatment effects are the result of randomization, the interactive effects show how the effects of these treatments vary across individual covariates which are not experimentally manipulated. To help assuage concerns that they may be correlated with other respondent attributes, I add an extensive range of covariates to each of the regressions used to produce the figures displayed above. To start with, I include (1) province fixed effects as well as (2) basic demographic characteristics (age, gender, education, income, and urbanity) (see Appendix B, Table B3). Then, for a more rigorous test I add (3) additional social and political covariates that may be linked to the moderating factors (Muslim sect, religiosity, national pride, support for democracy, and news attention) (see Appendix B, Table B4). Across all three analyses, the models yield virtually identical results, with the moderating variables maintaining their substantively and statistically significant impact.

Second, I replicate the regressions using two additional models – ordered logistic regression and analysis of variance (ANOVA) – in order to ensure that our findings were not influenced by model selection choices (see Appendix B, Tables B5-6). In both cases, the key results are substantively unchanged, with the ideological, ethnic, and informational moderators still heavily conditioning the impact of the U.S. as perpetrator. Overall, the results are quite robust to model selection and specification.
Discussion and Conclusion:

In this chapter, we investigated the sources of factual beliefs about conflict events among *non-local civilians*, those living outside the direct “line of fire.” While the fast-growing literature on the micro-dynamics of armed conflict has produced a number of key insights into individuals’ behavior and attitudes in war, it has not explored variation in their factual beliefs. Yet, as in other arenas of political life, people in armed conflict – especially those who do not experience an event directly – often hold quite divergent beliefs about the “facts on the ground.” In fact, this issue may be especially severe in conflict environments, where the flow of information is largely influenced by combatants and their supporters (who have powerful incentives to politicize it), and civilians often harbor strong preexisting orientations toward combatants (which influence how they interpret new information about their actions). We studied this in the context of beliefs about the “selectivity” of violence. Using a survey experiment in Pakistan in which we manipulated the features of a reported counterinsurgent airstrike, we showed that non-local civilians *did* have widely differential beliefs about the strike’s selectivity, and that these beliefs were largely due to their prior attitudes and information streams as opposed to actual observed level of casualties. In this sense, the results show that the factual beliefs of non-local civilians are deeply biased by informational and motivational factors in the dispute.

These results have some significant implications for our understanding of armed conflict. Most notably, behavioral models of conflict should consider that populations – particularly those outside of a highly localized area – can hold widely varying beliefs about the empirical nature of combatant actions. Thus, studies that analyze the impact of different
combatant behaviors – such as selective vs. indiscriminate violence – should be careful to “ground truth” the differences in a given case and ensure that civilians can actually discern them. Otherwise, how can we expect them to act and react in the ways that our theories predict? Indeed, these dynamics may help us better understand cases in which high levels of restraint generate fierce counter-mobilization, or when excess and brutality provoke surprisingly little. Additionally, findings that variation in the types or results of military operations have little discernible effect on civilian reactions (Zhukov and Baum 2016) may be due in part to failures to even recognize these factual differences. In the case of U.S. drone warfare in Pakistan, these results show how the key factual misperceptions shown in the preceding chapter are fueled by the widespread latent anti-Americanism (*motivation*) and nationalistic and sensationalistic news coverage of the drone campaign (*information*) that flourish in mainstream Pakistani society.

At the same time, it is crucial to keep in mind that, in this chapter, we only analyzed the factual beliefs of non-local civilian populations. As argued throughout the dissertation, these dynamics differ markedly among civilians living in the “line of fire” of the conflict events or dynamics in question – that is, who witness them or their aftermath directly – and this gap has substantial academic and strategic implications. Accordingly, we next turn in the following chapter to the task of investigating how these dynamics play out among local civilian communities.
Chapter 4 References:


Taber, Charles S., and Milton Lodge. 2006. “Motivated Skepticism in the Evaluation of


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Chapter 5: Local Civilians and Rational Updating

--I was in Chechnya once, in a time of peace, and an old man looked at me and said, have you ever been where they are bombing from planes? And I said, yes. He said, then you know. That was all we said; it was everything – war correspondent Megan K. Stack (2010: 224)

The essential argument of this dissertation is that there is wide variation in civilian beliefs about what is happening in armed conflicts, with a particularly large gap between those who do – and do not – live in the areas directly exposed to a specific type of violent event. In the preceding chapters we explored these issues among non-local civilians in the case of Pakistan. In particular, we showed in Chapter 3 that factual misperceptions among such populations are prevalent and important in the case of the drone campaign in Pakistan, and in Chapter 4 that these types of misperceptions arise primarily from informational and motivational biases around the violence.

In this chapter, we examine these issues in the case of local civilian communities directly exposed to the violence in question. Unlike non-locals, I argue that local civilians form accurate perceptions of violent events due to their superior local information about the violence and their motivation to interpret it carefully. Because reliable surveys of these
communities are largely lacking, I opt for a more indirect behavioral approach to studying these beliefs. In particular, I analyze the effects of 4,046 Coalition “condolence payments” given to Iraqi civilians after collateral damage incidents during the Iraq War from 2004-08 – actions intended to shift their perceptions of the selectivity of violence in the wake of battlefield mistakes. Overall, I find that these payments did diminish subsequent insurgent attacks in the affected areas, and that they did so regardless of the community’s existing trust in Coalition forces. Ultimately, these results can be best explained by the notion that the civilians in such areas successfully “received” these signals of selectivity and updated their beliefs about the nature of the events accordingly.

Why Local Civilians Form Accurate Beliefs:

Do civilians living in the “line of fire” of conflict events form biased beliefs about them? In the preceding two chapters, we analyzed these issues among non-local civilians, showing that they often form false beliefs about conflict events due to their informational and motivational biases in the dispute. Yet, while the reactions of non-local civilians are important in determining the impact of combatant behaviors, so too are the reactions of local civilians. Indeed, these local reactions are the primary focus of micro-level studies of conflict, which tend to explore whether combatant actions reduce or increase violence in a particular village, district, or geographic area (i.e., Kalyvas 2006, Lyall 2009, Condra and Shapiro 2012, Schutte 2015). If local civilians form biased factual beliefs about combatant behaviors as well – in other words, if no one accurately interprets events in war – this would have substantial political consequences.
As elaborated in the theory chapter, however, I argue that local civilians – that is, those in the immediate “line of fire” of a specific form of violence or other conflict event – will form relatively accurate beliefs about what is taking place. These civilians, I argue, do not fall prey to the misperceptions of non-local civilians, for both motivational as well as informational reasons. In this section, I briefly review why this is the case.

Local Motivation:

While bias is common in social life, research from social psychology shows that it is far from ubiquitous. People do often harbor “directional biases” that generate motivated reasoning, but they can also have “accuracy motives” that push them to get the right answer (Kunda 1990). Specifically, when the stakes are high enough, people tend to process new information carefully and accurately in order to reach the right answer. Indeed, scholars have induced such motives in subjects by raising the payoff or stated importance of tasks (McAllister et al 1979) or making people publicly explain their conclusions (Tetlock 1983). In these contexts, people tend to take longer, use fewer cognitive shortcuts and heuristics like out-group stereotypes, and reach more accurate and unbiased conclusions about the issues or questions at hand.

While these experiments use small amounts of cash or shame to motivate their subjects, there is no greater accuracy motive than one’s physical survival. When people feel that they (or their families) might be killed – that their lives are “on the line” – they will allocate much more effort than they would otherwise to carefully process the situation, altering (or abandoning) their prior beliefs as needed. While this may be cognitively costly,
the cost is vastly overshadowed by their desire to survive. Indeed, studies show that this process of learning, updating, or modifying existing beliefs is often triggered by anxiety (Redlawsk et al 2010), which is in ample supply in such life-threatening situations.

Examples of these types of tendencies in war are clear. Indeed, Middle East war correspondent Megan Stack describes the intensity of her focus on survival while covering Israel’s bombing of southern Lebanon in 2006:

_A few days under bombardment teach you everything about your nerves – where they live in your body, how they can vibrate and ache and make you shake, make you want to bite right through your finger or peel your skin off your body just to get free of them. All around you is the crashing sound of the bombs, the smell of the bombs, the bodies and buildings that have been hit by the bombs. And still you stand, for now. You think all the time about shelter._

As is apparent, Stack was overwhelmingly focused on the Israeli bombing, her physical survival, and the concrete goal of finding shelter. Accordingly, she readily absorbed any potentially useful factual information about the nature of the threats facing her – such as the fact that “roads [were] death” (2010: 237), as the Israeli air strikes were targeting the southern Lebanese road network – as this might help boost her odds of survival. Similarly, a Pakistani journalist who has spent time in the tribal parts of Pakistan notes that the factual nature of U.S. drone strikes is well recognized there because “for those who live the closest to the strike zones, drones are not just some abstract talking point. Just getting through the day has become a high-stakes game.”65 This illustrates well the point that civilians living in the line of fire have an “accuracy motive” about the nature of the violence around them; they must “get it right” in order to survive.

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Local Information:

The role of information in producing factual beliefs in war also differs between local and non-local civilians. While non-locals are heavily influenced by biased media reporting, the same cannot be said for local civilians. Indeed, civilians living in the areas directly affected by a given type of violence have an informational advantage in identifying its perpetrators, targets, results, and other features. Specifically, local civilians can rely on their own lived experiences as well as the accounts of their families, friends, and peers who have often actually witnessed the attacks or their aftermath first-hand. Accordingly, locals will not typically be unconvinced by elite- and media-driven narratives that clash with their community’s accumulated personal experiences.

The ability of local information to pierce through these broader media narratives of conflict is often quite clear. One area in which this is evident is in the observations of war correspondents. Consider the case of Herbert Matthews, a veteran war reporter with The New York Times, during the Spanish Civil War. In 1937, Matthews visited the locale of a failed attack by the Nationalists near Madrid and found that the attacking force was clearly Italian. Matthews – who knew Italian – spoke with the soldiers and examined their gear. This news was significant because it was the first evidence of Mussolini offering not just arms or advisors, but soldiers to the Nationalists. Yet Matthews’s editor back home, who disliked the story, changed every appearance of “Italian” to “Insurgent.” Matthews was livid, stating that “when an accredited correspondent tells his newspaper that he has seen something with his own eyes, the paper must believe [and] trust him more than it trusts his competitors – or his editors 3,000 miles away” (Knightley 1975: 200). Indeed, this story
mirrors the recent propaganda by Russia to conceal its involvement in Ukraine, which was exposed by local reporters who noticed the soldiers’ uniforms and accents first-hand. In both of these cases, local information gleaned by observers on the ground refuted a broader narrative about what was happening in war.

Similar dynamics occur with local civilians as well. Indeed, Davenport and Ball (2002) compared the quality of three different streams of information on Guatemalan state terror from 1977-95: newspaper coverage, human rights reports, and eyewitness accounts. While they find that all three have value, they conclude that civilians are the best informed on the events inside their localities. In particular, they write that civilians “are useful for identifying what happened and who did it within particular locales” [emphasis added] (447). Likewise, in the case of U.S. drone attacks in Pakistan, residents of the tribal areas have always known the most about them. As recounted by one local reporter, when the first drone attack took place against local Taliban leader Nek Mohammed on June 18, 2004: “no one in the Pakistani public or media knew that it was a drone…the villagers, however, supplied the explanation: They collected the fragments of the missile, on which was printed in black, ‘Made in USA.’” Likewise, another strike in 2005 generated similar uncertainty until a local reporter from an adjacent village saw the debris and found a Hellfire missile. These revelations countered the Pervez Musharraf regime’s narrative that Pakistani forces conducted the attacks. In this sense, the first- and-second hand knowledge of local civilians produces accurate perceptions of what is happening in war.

68 Ibid.
**Summary of Factual Beliefs of Local Civilians:**

The discussion above suggests that local populations, for both informational and motivational reasons, will not share the factual misbeliefs of their non-local counterparts in warzones. In contrast, civilians in the areas directly exposed to a specific type of violence possess superior local information about the events and strong incentives to process that information carefully due to its relevance for their physical survival. Ultimately, this means that local civilian communities will form fairly accurate beliefs about what is happening in war, and that they will readily modify and update those beliefs in order to incorporate new and relevant battlefield information.

**Condolence Payments as an Empirical Window:**

While the previous two chapters relied heavily on public opinion surveys to analyze these dynamics among non-local civilians, this approach is far more problematic among local civilians. Indeed, asking civilians in the direct “line of fire” about combatant actions present not only significant ethical but also methodological challenges for researchers, as civilians may face retribution if they respond honestly. For instance, the few polls fielded in the tribal parts of Pakistan that ask about U.S. drone strikes are heavily contested and should be viewed with extreme caution.69 Moreover, for a mix of financial, logistical, and political reasons there are inevitably very few such surveys conducted, making it hard to

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69 The Community Appraisal and Motivation Programme (CAMP), a Pakistani NGO, is the key organization that fields public opinion surveys in the tribal parts of Pakistan. Unfortunately, CAMP does not release their data or fine-grained results. For the topline results of these surveys, see the “Understanding FATA” series of reports on its website. Available at: [http://www.understandingfata.org/en/](http://www.understandingfata.org/en/)
be confident in their results. This is not to discount local attitudinal data about violence; ultimately, it is an important part of the picture and is referenced repeatedly throughout the project. Yet, for these reasons, I opt in this chapter to pursue a more behavioral strategy, supplemented with qualitative evidence.

Specifically, I argue that “condolence payments” – payments made to civilian victims or their families after incidents of collateral damage – give us a valuable window into these dynamics. Indeed, mistakes are unavoidable in wars; even the best-intentioned and best-organized militaries will invariably harm civilians, whether via tense checkpoint encounters or errant artillery shells. From the vantage point of the literature on selective and indiscriminate violence, these mistakes will foster perceptions that the perpetrator is using force indiscriminately – perceptions that can have costly behavioral consequences. Condolence payments represent efforts by the perpetrator to counter such effects and shift civilian beliefs about the violence in a more selective direction. Thus, condolence payments are a useful tool for us because they function as a “costly signal” to civilians to update their beliefs about a violent incident.

Moreover, such payments are a common tactic by combatants that merit attention in their own right. In the case of the U.S., for example, the practice of compensating civilian victims has long roots, dating back to WWI (Witt 2008). Since then, U.S. forces have compensated civilians in each dispute in which they have participated, from Vietnam to Grenada to Haiti (Borch 2001). Today, the scale of these efforts is substantial: a report by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) shows that the U.S. army spent over $20 million on condolence payments in Iraq in 2005 alone (GAO 2007). Meanwhile, states like
Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan also have programs to compensate victims of their military actions, while others like Colombia and Israel have awarded compensation on an ad-hoc basis (CIVIC 2013). Militant groups, too, have compensated victims. Indeed, the Afghan Taliban is known to provide monthly food rations as well as a funeral oration to civilians unintentionally harmed by its activities (Lyall, Blair, and Imai 2013). Even Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) promised to compensate the families of 50 civilians killed in a hospital attack in Sana’a in 2013.70 In sum, the distribution of condolence payments to victims is a tactic used by many combatants in modern war.

Despite its prevalence in conflict today, civilian compensation has garnered little to no attention in empirical conflict research. In fact, I found only one analysis that explores its behavioral impact: Lyall, Blair, and Imai (2013) [henceforth LBI]. In particular, LBI investigate civilian support for the NATO-led Coalition and the Taliban in Afghanistan based on whether civilians reported that they were harmed – and whether they were then compensated – by either party. Overall, the authors found that harm (asymmetrically) fuels alienation, but that this effect was eliminated among civilians who were later approached with post-harm compensation. While this analysis provides a useful data point, it has three key limitations. First, LBI rely on civilians’ own self-reports of the harm they suffered and compensation they received, but these may be endogenous to their preexisting attachments. That is, civilians might simply claim they were approached with compensation by parties they support, or that they were not approached by those they oppose. Second, this problem is compounded by the fact that the question asks about an ongoing program with significant

material incentives at stake for communities, so they might answer strategically in order to continue receiving these benefits. In other words, civilians might say that they were more supportive of combatants who paid them to increase their chances of payment in the future. Finally, the study asks about whether civilians were “approached” about compensation, but most civilian compensation in Iraq and Afghanistan occurs at the initiation of the victims or their relatives. There is thus a considerable selection bias in terms of the payments being analyzed in the study, although the size of this bias is not precisely known. Overall, while LBI provides a useful reference point, further research on the behavioral consequences of condolence payments is essential in order to understand their impact.

Empirical Context:

I examine these dynamics during the heart of the Iraq War from 2004-08. After the initial invasion of Iraq in 2003, the country quickly devolved into a protracted conflict in which foreign Coalition forces as well as the Iraqi government battled Sunni insurgents seeking to gain control. Moreover, the situation was further complicated by Shi’a militias struggling for power as well as rampant sectarian cleansing and violence on both sides. The Iraqi case is particularly useful for us because of the unique availability of fine-grained, disaggregated event data on 4,046 condolence payments by one of the major combatants in the conflict – the Coalition – across space and time, as well as data on collateral damage incidents and insurgent attacks with which they can be combined. Moreover, while Iraq has some distinguishing features, in many ways it represents a prototypical case of modern asymmetric conflict in which the state forces use their superior firepower against a weaker
insurgent opponent attempting to blend in to the local population and terrain to conduct waves of guerrilla and terrorist attacks.

The dependent variable used in the analysis is the number of insurgent attacks as captured by the U.S. army’s “Significant activity” (SIGACT) database. SIGACT includes information on the location, date, time, and type of incident for 193,264 insurgent attacks against Coalition forces, the Iraqi national government, Iraqi Security Forces (ISF), and Iraqi civilians from February 2004 through December 2009. Yet it is worth noting that the data do not contain Coalition raids and operations during which no insurgents returned fire, so they measure insurgent-initiated attacks or firefights with insurgent forces. In addition, they most likely undercount attacks against civilians and other kinds of “soft targets” when Coalition forces are not present (Berman, Shapiro, and Felter 2011). However, since our primary interest is in insurgent activity directed against Coalition troops, these are second-order concerns for the purposes of this paper.

The primary independent variable in the analysis is Coalition condolence payments. The data for these payments are originally from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Gulf Region Division’s Iraq Reconstruction Management System (IRMS). These data contain the start and end dates, project type, funding organization, and dollars spent for a variety of reconstruction projects and payments from March 2003 through December 2008 by the Coalition in Iraq. Reconstruction spending was initially dominated by the $18.4 billion Iraq Relief and Reconstruction Fund (IRRIF), an all-purpose fund which focused on large-scale infrastructure and security projects in the early years of the post-war occupation. As these funds diminished, however, they were increasingly replaced by smaller community-level
programs run by the State Department or the Department of Defense. Chief among these are USAID’s Economic Support Fund (ESF), which concentrates on social and economic welfare efforts, and DoD’s Commander’s Emergency Response Program (CERP), which allows local military officers to allocate funds to a wide range of small-scale initiatives in their jurisdiction, from building schools to paying local militias.

Of particular interest for our purposes, these data contain information on different kinds of post-harm compensation by the U.S.-led Coalition. First, they include data on 2,066 condolence payments, or payments for personal harm by Coalition forces, and 879 battle damage payments, or payments for property damage by Coalition forces. Both types of payment were dispensed by brigade-level military officers as part of CERP. However, since internal government accounting suggests that the two types of payments were not reported consistently across units (GAO 2007) – that is, some units reported battle damage payments as such while other units reported them as condolence payments – I combine these two into a single variable that I henceforth simply refer to as *condolence payments*. Moreover, the data also include records of 1,101 Marla Ruzicka Iraq War Victims Fund payments. Named after the American activist Marla Ruzicka – a fierce advocate of civilian compensation in Iraq until her 2005 death in a Baghdad car bomb – and administered by USAID, *Ruzicka payments* offer vocational training and livelihood assistance as opposed to cash transfers to civilians harmed by Coalition forces. This follows a line of thought by some military practitioners and civilian activists that such livelihood assistance programs produce a greater beneficial impact on civilian communities than simple cash transfers to victims or their families (Tracy 2007, CIVIC 2009).
Of course, in order to examine the effect of post-harm compensation on insurgent attacks, we will also have to include information on the civilian harm that precipitated it in the first place. To that end, I use data on collateral damage incidents collected by the Iraq Body Count (IBC), an Iraqi NGO dedicated to tracking Iraqi civilian casualties during the war through international and local media reporting as well as hospital records, morgue figures, and sources of data (Sloboda et al 2013). The data include the date, location, actors, and tactics of 19,961 collateral damage incidents, accounting for 59,245 total Iraqi civilians killed from March 2003 through June 2009. The data were cleaned by Condra and Shapiro (2012) and attributed based on event descriptions as either due to Coalition, insurgent, sectarian, or unknown forces. Like the insurgent violence and civilian compensation data, events are geo-located at the district level. Validity checks suggest that unknown killings and imprecise locations (about 10% of the sample) are not merely a function of reporting biases driven by insurgent violence levels (Condra and Shapiro 2012).
Descriptive Analysis:

![Graphs of Insurgent Violence, Collateral Damage, Condolence Payments, Ruzicka Payments](image)

**Figure 16: Insurgent Violence, Coalition Collateral Damage, and Civilian Compensation Over Time in Iraq, 2004-08**

*Note: Figure shows the weekly number of insurgent attacks and Coalition caused collateral damage incidents – as well as weekly spending on condolence payments and Marla Ruzicka payments – in Iraq from 2004-08. The insurgent attack data are from the Significant Activity (SIGACT) database, while collateral damage data are from the Iraq Body Count (IBC) and condolence and Ruzicka spending are from the Iraq Reconstruction Management System (IRMS). The top spike in both condolence and Ruzicka spending was truncated to make the other variation visible. Results are robust to the inclusion or exclusion of such outliers.*

Figure 16 plots the weekly numbers of insurgent attacks (as captured by SIGACT), collateral damage incidents caused by Coalition forces, condolence payments made by Coalition forces, and Marla Ruzicka payments made by Coalition forces in Iraq from 2004 through 2008. As can be seen, the level of insurgent attacks trended steadily upward as the
conflict grew from 2004 through 2007, spiking particularly after the bombing of the Golden Mosque in Samarra in early 2006 by Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI). Finally, this peak amount of insurgent violence began to fall off in mid-2007 as the mix of the “Surge” (the deployment of 30,000 more Coalition forces and change in their use) and the “Anbar Awakening” (the realignment of Sunni Arab tribes and nationalist insurgents against AQI) kicked in and began to pacify the security situation (Biddle, Friedman, and Shapiro 2011). Thus, the figure effectively highlights the broad ebb and flow of the conflict during this period. In spatial terms, the violence is largely concentrated in Baghdad, as well as other Sunni Arab-dominated governorates in the western and northern portions of the country such as Al-Anbar, Nineveh, and Salah al-Din.

Meanwhile, the top-right quadrant shows the weekly level of collateral damage incidents by Coalition forces from 2004-08. As can be seen, the level of Coalition collateral damage does not mirror the overall trend in insurgent violence. Rather, this plot is relatively stable over time, with small peaks in late 2004 (during the battles for Fallujah) and early 2008 (during the middle of the Surge). This is consistent with the observation by Condra and Shapiro (2012) that there is a substantial level of randomness surrounding the number of collateral damage incidents over time due to “weapons effects,” civilian locations and actions during Coalition battles with insurgent forces, and other sources of unpredictable variation. It is this random variation that Condra and Shapiro (2012) leverage in their study of the effect of Coalition collateral damage on insurgent violence. Comparing the levels of violence across space reveals that, while this collateral damage is elevated in Baghdad and
contested Sunni Arab dominated governorates, it is much more evenly distributed than insurgent violence across different parts of the country.

Finally, the bottom two quadrants show the amount spent per week (thousands of dollars) on condolence payments and Marla Ruzicka payments by the Coalition to Iraqi civilians over time. Looking first at the conventional condolence payments, we can see that there were no payments made until mid-2004, as the program was not even set up until September of 2003 (Tracy 2007). We can then see a substantial spike in early 2005, most likely as the buildup of civilian demands against the Coalition forces begins to clear, after which the time series smooths out and becomes reasonably constant during the remainder of the period. Turning to the Marla Ruzicka payments, the time series is somewhat lumpier, with sharp peaks in early 2005, 2006, and particularly 2007 after which there are no additional spikes. This suggests that the USAID-funded Marla Ruzicka payments and DoD-funded condolence payments were indeed quite independent, drawing from different budgets and constraints. Spatially, condolence payments are concentrated in Al-Anbar and to a lesser extent in Baghdad and Karbala, while the Marla Ruzicka payments are primarily clustered in Baghdad and secondarily in other Sunni Arab areas. Overall, both series show little apparent relationship with the macro-level trends in insurgent violence.

Empirical Strategy:

In this section, I turn to the task of evaluating how Coalition condolence payments impact insurgent violence. The study spans from the start of 2004 through the end of 2008 and covers all of the 104 districts in Iraq. The unit of analysis is the district-half year, which
yields 1040 (10*104) total observations. Using half years affords ample time to encompass
the entire civilian claims process in most cases and measure the subsequent impact of the
compensation, while retaining a significant number of observations for empirical analysis.
Both insurgent attacks and civilian compensation are weighted by district population so
that they measure the number of incidents or amount of spending per capita. The rationale
for this is that the population of each district is likely linked to the levels of violence (and
compensation) within it in ways unrelated to the study, such as due to sheer scale (Condra

Below, I first describe the identification strategy used in the study. Then, I consider
some potential inferential challenges to this strategy, and present the main empirical model
that is used in the analysis. Broadly, the identification strategy relies on the fact that the
mechanisms through which Coalition condolence payments are processed and made after
collateral damage incidents – as well as the specific amount that is paid – are shaped by a
number of budgetary, bureaucratic, and geographic factors that are relatively arbitrary and
apolitical in nature.

First, the distribution of condolence payments by military officers (or USAID
personnel) is influenced by fiscal pressures or constraints that arise for other reasons. For
example, in the case of condolence payments distributed under CERP, the availability of
funds is shaped by not only annual CERP appropriations and by their distribution across
different units, but also by the relative salience at any given moment of the different ways
in which each unit can spend those funds. Indeed, CERP funds can be spent in dozens of
areas, from building hospitals to paving roads to hiring temporary security. In addition, a
survey of “reconstruction leaders” in Iraq found that while condolence payments are viewed as an effective use of CERP funds, others such as agriculture, water and sanitation, rule of law, and temporary security are valued more highly (SIGIR 2012). Accordingly, the distribution of condolence payments at any given time is shaped by the degree to which resources are “left over” from other higher CERP priorities. In this vein, one ex-claims officer based in Baghdad in 2003-04 recalls claims cases such that of a former Iraqi soldier who “did not receive compensation after his daughter died from a cluster munition because funds for condolence payments were unavailable when he visited the convention center” (Tracy 2007: 18). In this way, decisions about whether to make a payment in a given case often “turn on little more than the availability of funds” (Witt 2008: 1475) at the time of its adjudication, as opposed to broader political or strategic considerations.

Second, the provision of condolence payments is heavily affected by bureaucratic factors, such as the particular claims personnel reviewing the case in question (Tracy 2007). For instance, CERP-based condolence payments are typically made under the authority of a brigade-level (or higher) military commander, but in practice are approved by a Judge Advocate (JAG) – a military lawyer – who has vast discretion to accept or to reject them. Indeed, a review of hundreds of declassified civilian claims obtained through an ACLU Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request found that the process is plagued with legal inconsistencies, discrepancies, and ambiguities that “invest massive discretionary authority in U.S. claims personnel” (Witt 2008: 1475). In other words, differences between lawyers are a major factor in whether the cases are paid at a given place and time. In the words of Jonathan E. Tracy, an ex-military lawyer and claims adjudicator himself:
I know plenty of lawyers who did not pay any condolence payments at all... There was no reason for it. It was clearly not combat, and the victim was clearly innocent, all the facts are there, witness statements, but they wouldn’t pay them.71

In this way, the preferences and predilections of the specific legal personnel evaluating the case – as distinct from the severity of the incident itself, or the strategic context in which it takes place – play a key role in determining whether a payment is provided. This is another source of relatively apolitical and arbitrary variation in compensation.

Third, the disbursement of compensation also depends on the geographic location of the collateral damage incident with respect to the nearest Coalition center that processes civilian claims. In fact, most claims are initiated by civilians or their relatives who bring them to the attention of Coalition forces at Civil Military Operation Centers (CMOCs), but these can be miles away depending on where the incident happened geographically inside a given area of operation. For example, in Fallujah, the major CMOC after the invasion was a center run by the Marines near Camp Fallujah known as the Fallujah Liaison Team (FLT). Iraqis seeking compensation in Fallujah needed to visit the FLT to submit claims, regardless of whether the incident occurred ten blocks or ten miles away. This is important because studies have shown that the proximity of local institutions such as police stations to citizens can impact their willingness to come forward, report offenses, and seek help (Aiko 2015). Thus, the provision of civilian compensation is likely to be impacted by the geographic location of an incident relative to a Coalition claims center, independent of its other political or strategic characteristics.

In sum, the identification strategy used leverages the fact that there are a number of plausibly exogenous financial, bureaucratic, and geographic constraints that shape civilian compensation in Iraq apart from strategic incentives. Yet, one could still worry that there may be potential selection bias in where payments are made. Perhaps the most problematic scenario would be if compensation were funneled to regions of Iraq that were relatively supportive of Coalition forces, either due to a strategic rationale of rewarding supporters (*supply side*) or due to the relative safety of coming forward in these areas (*demand side*). If this were the case, it might mean that any findings of condolence payments reducing insurgent attacks were potentially spurious, with causality running in the other direction.

However, analysis of the data indicate that condolence payments are not funneled to relatively peaceful or supportive areas. In fact, the correlations between insurgent attacks and condolence payments, and between insurgent attacks and Ruzicka payments, are both positive (*r*=0.14 and *r*=0.07, respectively). Additionally, both types of compensation also have positive correlations with Coalition troop levels, Coalition-caused collateral damage incidents, and insurgent-caused collateral damage incidents (see Appendix C, Table C1). This means that, on average, payments are funneled to districts with *more* Coalition forces, *more* civilian casualties, and *more* insurgent attacks – in other words, that compensation is not spent on the “easy cases.”

In order to estimate the effect of Coalition civilian compensation on insurgent violence, I use a panel regression strategy with a combination of first differencing and fixed effects. Indeed, the use of first differences allows us to focus only on *changes* in insurgent activity from one half year to the next within each district, and ensures that the results are
not driven by cross-sectional differences between districts in the country. Moreover, the use of fixed effects serves as a set of district-specific time trends that allows us to account for the divergent trajectory of each district throughout the course of the dispute. Finally, I include a number of key covariates related to conflict dynamics that vary over time. Thus, the model is:

\[ Y_{i,t} - Y_{i,t-1} = \alpha(c_{i,t} - c_{i,t-1}) + \beta(d_{i,t} - d_{i,t-1}) + \gamma(e_{i,t} - e_{i,t-1}) + G_{y} + H_{i} + I_{g,y} + u_{i,t} \]

where \( Y_{i,t} \) is the level of insurgent attacks in district i at time t, \( c_{i,t} \) is the spending on condolence payments in district i at time t and \( d_{i,t} \) is the spending on Ruzicka payments in district i at time t. Meanwhile, \( e_{i,t} \) is a vector of additional time-varying conflict dynamics, including the number of Coalition-caused incidents of collateral damage, insurgent-caused incidents of collateral damage, Coalition troop battalions, and small CERP expenditures besides condolence payments in district i at time t. Finally, \( G_{y} \) is a set of year dummies, \( H_{i} \) is a set of district dummies, and \( I_{g,y} \) is a set of interactions between the governorate-level vote-shares for Sunni political parties during the 2005 parliamentary elections and years meant to capture broad sectarian shifts such as the Awakening. Models are estimated with OLS unless otherwise specified.
Empirical Results:

Table 7: The Effect of Civilian Compensation on SIGACTs per Half Year

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>M1</th>
<th>M2</th>
<th>M3</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Civilian Compensation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condolence spending</td>
<td>-0.01 (0.11)</td>
<td>-0.35*** (0.09)</td>
<td>-0.47*** (0.17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marla Ruzicka spending</td>
<td>-0.49 (0.36)</td>
<td>-0.94** (0.40)</td>
<td>-0.88** (0.39)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conflict Dynamics</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coalition collateral damage</td>
<td>0.03*** (0.01)</td>
<td>0.03*** (0.01)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insurgent collateral damage</td>
<td>-0.00 (0.01)</td>
<td>-0.00 (0.01)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other small CERP spending</td>
<td>-0.12 (0.21)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coalition troop strength</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.06** (0.03)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fixed Effects</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year fixed effects</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District fixed effects</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunni*year effects</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.11*** (0.03)</td>
<td>0.11*** (0.03)</td>
<td>0.11*** (0.03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>927</td>
<td>927</td>
<td>927</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results from OLS regression. Standard errors in parentheses
* p < 0.10, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01

Table 7 presents the main empirical results of our analysis. The first model includes only Coalition civilian compensation, the second adds Coalition and insurgent collateral damage, and the third adds other small CERP spending as well as troop strength. As is evident, a naïve model with only the two types of Coalition civilian compensation suggests that they have no impact on rates of insurgent violence. Once we add in Coalition and insurgent collateral damage, however, a different picture emerges. Indeed, with collateral damage incidents included (M2 and M3), we see that both of the types of compensation...
significantly diminish insurgent violence. The shift occurs because, as explained above, civilian compensation is dispensed after collateral damage, and collateral damage is known to increase insurgent violence (e.g., Condra and Shapiro 2012). When we do not control for this fact, it looks like condolence payments boost insurgent attacks. However, once we do so, we can see that this is no longer the case – they have a violence-reducing effect. This reveals that, in order to identify the effects of condolence payments on insurgent attacks, it is key to control for the mistakes that necessitated the payments in the first place.

Looking at the other variables in the model, we can see that Coalition collateral damage substantially increases insurgent attacks (replicating a core result of Condra and Shapiro 2012), although insurgent collateral damage does not have the opposite effect here. Meanwhile, other small CERP spending does not a significant negative effect on insurgent violence in the model. And finally, Coalition troop strength predicts significantly higher numbers of insurgent attacks, which may be due to the heavier troop concentrations being allocated toward more violent areas, providing insurgents with more targets to attack, or simply observing and reporting more of the incidents (especially against Iraqis) that occur within their areas of operation.

To boost confidence in the results, I conduct a series of robustness checks. First, I add a number of additional kinds of Coalition reconstruction spending, including spending on large-scale (more than $50,000) CERP projects, USAID’s Community Action Program (CAP) and Community Stabilization Program (CSP), all USAID projects, and other non-CERP reconstruction projects. This ensures that the effect of condolence payments is not proxying for other kinds of projects. Second, I include a measure of the number of U.S.
Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) in each district. PRTs are joint civil-military units tasked with facilitating reconstruction and help account for the amount of civilian expertise allocated to each district, which might affect levels of insurgent violence in various ways. Lastly, I add in lagged differences of insurgent violence, collateral damage by both sides, and Coalition force levels to account for short-term trends that may influence patterns of violence for other reasons. Across all three of these tests, the core results that the two types of post-harm civilian compensation significantly reduce insurgent attacks are substantively unchanged (see Appendix C, Table C2). This raises our confidence that compensation is in fact reducing insurgent violence.

*Interaction Effects:*

Next, I examine how the impact of civilian compensation varies based on how and where it is provided. Specifically, I focus on two key ways in which it might vary. One expectation that is widely held by military practitioners and civilian activists is that the impact of any condolence payments hinges on their speed. As stated by General Petraeus, “the solatia payment for death or for injury, payments for damage, you have to have a very rapid response capability…the quicker you can do it, the more responsive you can seem to be.”72 Similarly, former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates has highlighted the fact that “the key for us is, on those rare occasions when we do make a mistake, when there is an error, to apologize quickly, to compensate the victims quickly, and then carry out the

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investigation.” Long time gaps between harm suffered and compensation received may fail to change the population’s perceptions about the perpetrator and its intentions, or even add another grievance to its list. For example, during the Vietnam War, delays in paying Vietnamese civilian claims against U.S. forces became so severe that a claims riot broke out at a base in Da Nang in 1970 (Borch 2001).

In order to assess this expectation, I created a variable measuring how quickly (or slowly) the civilian compensation is distributed. To do so, I took the start and end dates of all condolence payments in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers reconstruction spending database and constructed a measure of the time needed to pay each one. Then, I transformed this into the panel format and calculated the average processing time for the condolence payments in each district during each half year period. This gives us a measure of the speed of payment in each district-half year period that can be interacted with the level of payment variables used above. I created two separate measures – one for each type of compensation – and dichotomized them at their median non-zero values (so that the faster half were ones and the slower half zeroes) for an intuitive interpretation.

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Table 8: The Effect of Civilian Compensation on SIGACTs by Speed of Payment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>M1 SIGACT/capita</th>
<th>M2 SIGACT/capita</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Civilian Compensation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condolence spending</td>
<td>-0.51***</td>
<td>-0.45***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.19)</td>
<td>(0.17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marla Ruzicka spending</td>
<td>-0.81**</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.40)</td>
<td>(0.57)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condolence payment speed</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.05)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condolence speed*spending</td>
<td>-0.68**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.31)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruzicka payment speed</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.05)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruzicka speed*spending</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(1.32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conflict Dynamics</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coalition collateral damage</td>
<td>0.03***</td>
<td>0.03***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.01)</td>
<td>(0.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insurgent collateral damage</td>
<td>-0.00</td>
<td>-0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.01)</td>
<td>(0.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other small CERP spending</td>
<td>-0.15</td>
<td>-0.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.23)</td>
<td>(0.21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coalition troop strength</td>
<td>0.06***</td>
<td>0.06***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.03)</td>
<td>(0.03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fixed Effects</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year fixed effects</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District fixed effects</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunni*year effects</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.13***</td>
<td>0.11***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.04)</td>
<td>(0.03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>927</td>
<td>927</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( R^2 )</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>0.20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results from OLS regression. Standard errors in parentheses
* \( p < 0.10 \), ** \( p < 0.05 \), *** \( p < 0.01 \)

Table 8 shows the results of this analysis. The first model shows the interaction between condolence payment spending and speed of payment, while the second model displays the same interaction for Ruzicka payments. Overall, the results indicate that speedy delivery significantly boosts the violence reducing effect of condolence payments. However, speed does not appear to amplify the effect of Ruzicka payments. This is likely
because slower Ruzicka payments may be more intensive in nature (vocational training), as Ruzicka payments come in many different forms, while quicker condolence payments simply means a faster response for the cash transfers to civilian victims.

Another expectation is that the influence of condolence payments will vary based on the prior attitudes of the community receiving them. This builds on literature on civilian populations suggesting that their reactions to conflict events are heavily driven by their existing attitudes and attachments toward the different parties in the dispute (Lyall 2010, Lyall, Imai, and Blair 2013). While reliable panel survey data measuring political loyalties during the Iraq War is unavailable (at least publicly), we can use cross-sectional survey data with such information and analyze the impact of the compensation in districts with differing aggregate attitudes.

Specifically, I use survey data from the 2004 ILCS “Iraq Multiple Indicator Rapid Assessment” survey conducted by the Central Organization for Statistics and Information Technology of Iraq (COSIT, available in the ESOC-I database). The COSIT data contains a number of questions on socioeconomic characteristics as well as experiences with government services throughout Iraq. While data are not available at the individual level, aggregate values are available at the district level across Iraq. Of particular interest to us, the data asked the respondents whether they would turn to each of the following actors if they were the victim of a crime: their relatives, the Coalition, the Iraqi police, their local community, local militias, or nobody. While this question does not ask individuals directly about their support for and confidence in different institutions, the indirect strategy may provide a more accurate gauge of such attitudes than a direct method in a fraught security
situation such as contemporary Iraq. I focus on the interaction between the percentage of respondents in each district indicating that they would turn to the Coalition for help with the effect of post-harm civilian compensation by Coalition forces in Iraq.

Table 9: The Effect of Civilian Compensation on SIGACTs by Trust in the Coalition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>M1 SIGACT/capita</th>
<th>M2 SIGACT/capita</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Civilian Compensation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condolence spending</td>
<td>-0.45**</td>
<td>-0.48***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.18)</td>
<td>(0.17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marla Ruzicka spending</td>
<td>-0.84**</td>
<td>-1.22**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.36)</td>
<td>(0.52)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust in the Coalition</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.02)</td>
<td>(0.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coalition trust*Condolence</td>
<td>-0.35</td>
<td>0.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.48)</td>
<td>(0.66)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coalition trust*Ruzicka</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.66)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conflict Dynamics</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coalition collateral damage</td>
<td>0.03***</td>
<td>0.03***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.01)</td>
<td>(0.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insurgent collateral damage</td>
<td>-0.00</td>
<td>-0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.01)</td>
<td>(0.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other small CERP spending</td>
<td>-0.16</td>
<td>-0.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.20)</td>
<td>(0.19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coalition troop strength</td>
<td>0.07**</td>
<td>0.07**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.03)</td>
<td>(0.03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fixed Effects</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year fixed effects</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunni*year effects</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.14***</td>
<td>0.14***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.04)</td>
<td>(0.05)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>891</td>
<td>891</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>0.18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results from OLS regression. Standard errors in parentheses
* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

The results of this analysis are presented in Table 9. Once again, the first model presents the interaction with conventional condolence payments whereas the second model shows the same with the Marla Ruzicka payments. Because the Coalition trust variable is
a cross-sectional measure, we exclude the district fixed effects from the model as they are multicollinear. As can be seen in the table, respondents’ existing trust in the Coalition does not significantly affect the influence of either type of civilian compensation. This implies that the impact of civilian compensation is not being moderated meaningfully by civilians’ preexisting attitudes or attachments toward the actor providing it. In other words, civilian compensation is diminishing insurgent violence irrespective of the communities’ baseline willingness to work with Coalition forces.

To boost our confidence in these results, I conduct the same set of robustness checks used on the base analysis. Indeed, I add the five other types of reconstruction spending, PRT presence, and lagged differences of insurgent violence, collateral damage events, and Coalition force levels (Appendix C, Tables C3-4). Across all three tests, the findings are substantively similar, although the effect of speed of payment drops in significance to just outside the 10% level in the full model. Overall, these tests increase our confidence that impact of post-harm civilian compensation is moderated by the speed of payment but not by prior communal trust in the perpetrator.

Identifying the Mechanism:

There are at least three key mechanisms one might invoke to explain these patterns. One mechanism emphasizes civilians’ emotional desire for justice after being harmed and suggests that post-harm compensation can effectively fulfill it. This draws on research from policing and criminology which stresses the role of *procedural justice* – whether the way in which authorities wield their power is viewed as just, fair, or legitimate – in determining
citizens’ perceptions of their behavior (Tyler 1996). Research has shown that perceptions of procedural justice hinge on at least four primary principles – the perceived neutrality of authorities, their respectfulness toward citizens, the trustworthiness of their intentions, and the chances for citizen participation (or “voice”) in the interaction or process (Mazerolle et al 2013). Additionally, this literature has shown that procedural justice is fundamental to perceptions of authorities in settings as distinct as prisons (Jackson et al 2010) and airports (Langley 2014) and in societies as distinct as Jamaica (Reisig and Lloyd 2008) and Israel (Jonathon-Zamir and Weisburd 2011). In this perspective, if the processes through which the Coalition distributes civilian compensation are seen as just – that is, neutral, respectful, trustworthy, and participatory – they will successfully promote civilian cooperation.

However, two points cast doubt upon the validity of this mechanism, one general and the other particular to the context of Coalition post-harm compensation in Iraq. First, research from the policing legitimacy and procedural justice literatures suggests that the influence of procedural justice diminishes in more insecure environments (Tankebe 2009). In other words, as the immediate and material demand for the provision of security among citizens increases, people care less about whether the process through which that security is delivered are accountable, legitimate, or just. Second, and maybe more importantly, the system by which Coalition troops compensate civilians in Iraq for collateral damages is widely seen as unjust or unfair both by Iraqis as well as by many of the Americans involved in its administration. In fact, there are numerous critiques of the quality and accountability of the compensation system, focusing on issues such as its arbitrary, inequitable, and inflexible decision-making, higher valuations on property damage than civilian life, lack
of interpersonal contact and genuine reconciliation between the parties, and lack of appeals process for victims (Tracy 2007, Witt 2008, Keenan and Tracy 2010).

In practice, the process of distributing civilian compensation often amounts to little more than a U.S. military officer counting out the number of $100 bills, handing them to the claimant, and saying “I’m sorry for your loss” after the civilian signs a statement that the payment is not a legal acknowledgement of guilt but only an expression of sympathy, and that he will not pursue legal action against the Coalition.\textsuperscript{74} Unsurprisingly then, even compensation advocates recognize that beneficiaries “did not often view the assistance as a source of atonement or condolence for their losses and did not report a sense of redress or reconciliation.”\textsuperscript{75} Indeed, in order to meet civilian demands for justice, advocates have proposed drastically reforming the compensation system to mirror indigenous Iraqi tribal mediation methods in which there is a sincere, public apology as well as a genuine process of reconciliation led by a local community leader (Joseph 2007). In summary, a look at the civilian compensation process as it currently stands suggests that it does not satisfy the emotional demand for justice among the aggrieved parties.

Another potential mechanism suggests that it is civilians’ prior attitudes toward the perpetrator that shape their reactions toward its behavior, and that offering compensation may be effective due to the prior popularity or credibility of the combatant. This draws on research on the behavior of civilian populations in armed conflicts which holds that they generally behave like “ethnic partisans,” with group identities and loyalties heavily shaping

\textsuperscript{75} “Testimony Before the U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on State and Foreign Relations.” \textit{Statement of Jonathan Tracy}, April 1, 2009.
their behavior (Lyall 2010). Indeed, this view notes that mobilization and action in conflict is often based on group solidarities, and that how civilians react to actions on the ground hinges on which group is undertaking them. There is a “home team discount” awarded to in-group combatants whose wartime actions and intentions are seen more favorably, and a penalty on out-group combatants whose battlefield behavior is perceived in a more hostile light (LBI 2013). By this logic, compensation will be effective at eliciting cooperation to the extent that civilian populations throughout Iraq are favorably predisposed toward the Coalition forces as an actor.

Again, two key points challenge the validity of this account. First, the Coalition is a relatively unpopular and external actor – a foreign occupier – in Iraq. In other words, the Coalition is not receiving the “home team discount” that Lyall, Imai, and Blair (2013) argues facilitates forgiveness of its battlefield mistakes (that is likely given to Sunni Arab, Shi’a Arab, or Kurdish militias depending on the sectarian and political composition of the community in question). Second, the interaction analysis conducted above indicates that the civilian compensation distributed by Coalition forces does not have a stronger effect in areas of Iraq with higher existing levels of trust or confidence in the Coalition. Thus, the fact that civilian compensation is diminishing violence despite the fact that it is provided by an out-group actor, and regardless of whether civilians have any preexisting trust in that actor, belies the validity of this predispositional mechanism.

Indeed, the average percentage of respondents per district saying that they would go to the Coalition if they were the victim of a crime was 1.1%.
Finally, a third explanation posits that the efficacy of civilian compensation is due not to emotional demands for justice or preexisting civilian attitudes, but rather to rational updating by civilians in the face of new information about incidents of collateral damage. Indeed, this builds on our earlier discussion in which I explained that condolence payments can function as a “costly signal” to civilians about the selectivity of violence. In other words, after a mistake, civilians may be more likely to conclude that the perpetrator is using force indiscriminately, but condolence payments help to counter this conclusion with new information about the perpetrator’s intentions that shifts civilian beliefs back in a more selective direction. In so doing, the payments reinforce the core logic of selectivity and its cooperation-inducing effects.

This mechanism fits the available evidence best for several key reasons. First, it accounts best for the major results of the empirical analysis above – particularly the fact that both types of civilian compensation do indeed reduce insurgent violence, and that they do so even though they are provided by an out-group actor and regardless of preexisting trust or confidence in that actor. Moreover, this account is consistent with other secondary findings such as the increased potency of Marla Ruzicka payments and the enhanced effect of quicker payments, as these can simply be interpreted as clearer or “costlier” signals of perpetrator intentions than slower reactions or simpler cash transfers.

Second, the mechanism is well supported by the available qualitative evidence about how civilians see compensation. Indeed, victims often discuss condolence payments in terms of the perceived selectivity of the incident and the intentions of the perpetrators. For example, as one Afghan civilian who lost a relative in an incident in Kandahar in 2008
but ultimately received USAID compensation explained, “In the first few weeks, we were frustrated that he got killed, but after a few months we received assistance, then we thought ‘This shows that they care – that they didn’t do it intentionally.’ Now we don’t hold anything personal against the international community or international forces” (CIVIC 2009: 72). This civilian seems to have received the “signal” that the international troops did not intend to target his relative, and updated his rational beliefs about the selectivity of the incident as a result. In contrast, another civilian whose village was destroyed by NATO led bombing in Shindand, Afghanistan, in 2008 but who was not given any compensation lamented that (CIVIC 2009: 73):

> Last year also our house was bombarded. Completely destroyed in the bombing. Still I don’t receive any help for that. Why should they help me this time? In my mind, I thought that international forces were not using force on civilians. Now I see that it has changed – they are killing all people. They don’t care if it is civilians or the bad guys. They think all the people are the same. They see it all from the same lens.

Here, we see the impact of this rational updating mechanism by its absence. Because this civilian was not awarded any compensation signaling that the damage was unintentional and the violence was selective, he did not modify his belief about the attack. Rather, he was left to believe that the attack was indiscriminate – and that he will continue facing physical security threats from NATO regardless of his behavior, giving him no rational incentive to cooperate with them. In sum, these cases show how local civilians do – or do not – update their beliefs about violent events based on whether they receive new signals or information (that is, condolence payments) about their nature. Ultimately, this rational belief-updating mechanism can best account for both the quantitative results of the analysis presented above as well as the anecdotal record about how civilian populations perceive post-harm compensation efforts.
Discussion and Conclusion:

In sum, in this chapter we explored perceptions of and reactions to conflict events among local civilian communities. Owing to their local informational advantages and their “accuracy motives” to process that information carefully, I argued that local civilians will form fairly accurate beliefs about violent events and will update them rationally in the face of new information. In order to gain an empirical window into these dynamics, I studied the behavioral consequences of 4,406 Coalition “condolence payments” given to Iraqi civilians during the Iraq War – actions meant to shift their perceptions of the selectivity of violence after battlefield mistakes. Ultimately, I found that these payments did substantially reduce subsequent insurgent attacks in the affected areas, particularly when they were made swiftly and sustainably. Moreover, the results were present regardless of the community’s preexisting levels of trust in the Coalition. These patterns can be best explained by a process of rational updating whereby local civilians successfully received these “costly signals” of selectivity and updated their beliefs about events accordingly.

These findings have two critical sets of implications. A key secondary contribution of the chapter is to show that condolence payments are strategically effective. Indeed, while it is widely recognized that combatants have a moral obligation to compensate the civilians they harm in conflict (Crawford 2013), they often neglect to do so due to other strategic priorities or just biases toward out-group civilians. This chapter reveals that such neglect is strategically myopic. In fact, there is a compelling strategic rationale for combatants to compensate the civilians they harm in war, as doing so can substantially undercut enemy attacks and attempts to exploit their mistakes. The programs that have proven to be the
most effective – like the Marla Ruzicka Iraq War Victims Fund in Iraq (and its close cousin in Afghanistan, the Afghan Civilian Assistance Program) – should be expanded in their respective contexts and serve as compensation models in the future.

Yet the primary contribution of the chapter was to use these payments to illuminate how local civilians process new information about wartime violence. Specifically, this is because the payments represent new signals or pieces of information from the battlefield about the nature of violent events that have occurred. The effectiveness of these signals regardless of prior attitudes suggests that local civilians are rationally updating in response to new and relevant information. This is important in terms of understanding what makes civilians “tick” – and is quite distinct from the dynamics documented in the two chapters before this, in which non-local populations formed deeply biased beliefs about violence based on their prior attitudes and information streams surrounding the conflict. Ultimately, this speaks well to the profoundly different ways in which local and non-local populations perceive what is happening in war.

That said, one potential limitation of this chapter is that we did not directly examine the beliefs of local civilians due to the difficulty of obtaining reliable survey data from these areas. Instead, we studied these issues by analyzing behavioral reactions to combatant signals about the violence, supplemented by qualitative evidence about their perceptions. Indeed, the healthy dose of qualitative evidence about local (and non-local) factual beliefs scattered throughout the dissertation project helps amplify our confidence in the dynamics at work. Still, future research should build on this chapter and study these dynamics more
directly using local attitudinal data in order to confirm the accuracy and the updatability of local factual beliefs.  

There is, however, some local attitudinal data that provides evidence suggestive of these dynamics in the context of the U.S. drone campaign in Pakistan. Indeed, one survey of the tribal regions by the Community Appraisal and Motivation Programme (CAMP), a Pakistani NGO, found that 63% of FATA disapproved of drone strikes. However, when the survey was disaggregated, support was greatest in North Waziristan – the FATA agency which has witnessed the vast majority of the operations (nearly 80%) to date. Unfortunately, CAMP does not make its survey data publicly available for closer analysis. For more on this, see Aqil Shah, “Drone Blowback in Pakistan is a Myth. Here’s Why.” *The Washington Post*, May 16, 2016.

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77 There is, however, some local attitudinal data that provides evidence suggestive of these dynamics in the context of the U.S. drone campaign in Pakistan. Indeed, one survey of the tribal regions by the Community Appraisal and Motivation Programme (CAMP), a Pakistani NGO, found that 63% of FATA disapproved of drone strikes. However, when the survey was disaggregated, support was greatest in North Waziristan – the FATA agency which has witnessed the vast majority of the operations (nearly 80%) to date. Unfortunately, CAMP does not make its survey data publicly available for closer analysis. For more on this, see Aqil Shah, “Drone Blowback in Pakistan is a Myth. Here’s Why.” *The Washington Post*, May 16, 2016.
Chapter 5 References:


Chapter 6: Conclusion

One ought to be sensitive to how difficult it is to know with certainty, in real time, what happened in any given situation in Afghanistan, where we lack access and we’re dealing with world class liars – U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, 2001

“You can’t cover up the sun with a finger” – Pashtun saying

The central aims of this project were twofold. First, I showed that, even within warzones, people’s factual beliefs about conflict events and dynamics – that is, what they genuinely think is going on in the fighting – often vary widely, with important political and strategic consequences. Second, I argued that there is a particularly powerful gap between civilians immediately exposed to a given type of violence or other conflict event – who will typically form accurate beliefs about it – and those who experience it only indirectly and form quite biased beliefs about what is taking place. I advanced these arguments by building a theory of how people form factual beliefs in war (Ch. 2) and by examining its

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implications empirically among non-local (Chs. 3-4) and local (Ch. 5) civilian populations. For detailed summaries of each chapter, see the overall summary of chapters (Ch. 1) or the individual introductions at the outset of each one.

In this final chapter, I focus on three main tasks. First, I evaluate the generalizability of the project’s empirical findings. While the theory chapter draws from a wide variety of conflicts, the empirical chapters focused primarily on the cases of contemporary Pakistan and Iraq. Accordingly, I survey the anecdotal empirical record from other armed conflicts to illustrate the breadth of the dynamics I outlined here, both across different types of wars and across different types of issues. Second, I reflect on what we have learned from this research. Specifically, the project provides key implications for scholars – both of conflict and of behavior more broadly – as well as policymakers, journalists, activists, and others. Third, I consider the project’s main limitations and the openings that these offer for future inquiry. In fact, the project suggests several promising avenues for additional research, and it is my hope that at the very least it promotes more serious and sustained attention to issues of factual manipulation and misperception in war.

Generalizability of the Findings:

How well do the dynamics identified in this dissertation project extend to different types of conflict settings and issue areas? While the theory chapter (Ch. 2) drew on anecdotal material from several major conflicts, from WWI to the Spanish Civil War to the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, a wider survey of these issues in other wars could prove valuable to gauge their generalizability. As such, I complement the cases examined in the project
thus far using anecdotal evidence from WWII, Israeli-occupied Gaza, the 1990s Yugoslav Wars, the 2008 Russian invasion of Georgia, the Syrian civil war, and other conflicts. These cases both illustrate the range of the dynamics in question across space and time and different types of armed conflict (e.g., interstate vs. intrastate, short vs. protracted, etc.) and illuminate the different types of issues that can be factually manipulated and misperceived in war. Indeed, I conclude this survey with a tentative typology of the core areas of factual contestation in wars as a basis for additional research.

*World War II:*

One important conflict which provides suggestive evidence of these dynamics is WWII. Indeed, not only was WWII one of the most devastating and far-reaching wars in world history, it was also one of the best studied afterwards. In particular, one key post-war study was the *U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey*, a comprehensive U.S. government effort to evaluate the impact of Anglo-American strategic bombing on Nazi Germany as well as Imperial Japan during the war. While the study includes hundreds of reports, of particular interest to us are those on the impact of bombing on civilian morale. These reports were based on both quantitative surveys as well as qualitative interviews conducted in Germany and Japan during the war.

Crucially, one of the major findings of this research was that there was a stark difference between people who had directly experienced bombing and those who had not. In particular, the report on morale in Germany concluded that: “War weariness, willingness to surrender, loss of hope for German victory, distrust of leaders, feelings of disunity and
demoralizing fear were all more common among bombed than unbombed people” (1947: 1). In this sense, the actual exposure to bombing made civilians more aware of key facts on the ground – that is, Allied air superiority – in the conflict. Indeed, such differences were clear quantitatively as well, given that “62 percent of the people in unbombed towns expressed trust in their national leaders, as against 48 percent in heavily bombed towns” (Pape 1996: 25). Even more important for our purposes, exposure to the violence not only changed civilians’ factual beliefs, but made them resist the propaganda of the Nazi regime about those beliefs (USSBS 1947: 1):

'Black' radio listening and disbelief in official propaganda increased steadily during the last 2 years of the war...Bombing had much to do with the final discrediting of propaganda and of the Nazis because it brought home to millions the tangible proof of almost unopposed Allied air power, indisputable proof completely at variance with the familiar Nazi propaganda.

Thus, German civilians who had not directly experienced Allied bombing could indulge in their own personal biases – as well as the biased information streams put forth by their government – about their side’s military and especially air power superiority. However, actual exposure to the violence pierced this narrative, making German civilians more aware of their vulnerability from the air (informational advantage) and more likely to search for unbiased streams of information about that vulnerability (accuracy motive).

Meanwhile, similar dynamics were unfolding in Britain. Indeed, a recent study of British responses to German bombing raids in WWII found that British authorities were very concerned about the “circulation of wild rumours” following the attacks and their destructive impact (Jones et al 2004: 473). However, while there were strategic incentives for circulating reassuring propaganda to counter these rumors, British intelligence noted that (Jones et al 2004: 473):
People in target areas, and elsewhere, are critical of official and press accounts which appear to tone down the raids and the damage they cause. People ask for ‘less secrecy and more true information’.

Strikingly, this is the mirror image of the situation in Germany. Authorities in both states spread a biased and reassuring narrative of their side’s military superiority and security that ignored the destructive impact of the bombing on their population centers. While this was believed by many of their civilians, those who experienced that bombing first-hand rejected these biased narratives and sought out more accurate channels of information.

**Israeli-Palestinian Conflict:**

These dynamics are also apparent in various ways within the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Of course, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is rife with factual bias or misperception on both sides, including in perceptions of media bias in reporting on the fighting (Vallone, Ross, and Lepper 1985) and perceptions of whether the violence by each party is terrorism (Shamir and Shikaki 2002). In fact, the proximate triggers for much of the Palestinian refugee flight in 1948 included rumors about Israeli rapes and brutalities committed at the massacre of Deir Yessin, which have since been discredited by local Palestinian civilians (Morris 2005; see Ch. 2), and the proximate trigger for the 1st Intifada was a rumor that a car accident in which an IDF vehicle killed several Palestinians in Gaza was an intentional Israeli act of violence (Berman 2011: 41). Clearly, there is substantial (and consequential) motivated bias in factual perceptions of the fighting in the dispute.

Yet, at the same time, one can also see evidence that this bias has boundaries among local civilians who actually observe these events. In particular, one surprising case of local accuracy in the dispute surrounds Palestinian perceptions of Israeli house demolitions.
Indeed, the IDF policy of demolishing the homes allegedly used by Palestinian militants in the West Bank and Gaza as a deterrent or punitive measure has been widely criticized both internationally and within the Palestinian territories as a brutal and indiscriminate form of “collective punishment” (Darcy 2002, Shnayderman 2004). However, in some of the areas that experience the demolitions most directly, such as the Gazan town of Rafah on the Egyptian border, they are often understood quite distinctly. Indeed, war reporter Joe Sacco relates after visiting Rafah that (2012: 24):

*The Israelis have succeeded in driving a wedge between the people living near the border and the gunmen. Though Palestinians here support the resistance in general, I've heard the gunmen called “useless,” even “collaborators,” because their ineffective attacks often invite a crushing Israeli response. I've seen armed men chased off by a man who didn't want them lurking near his house.*

At least in the case of Rafah, then, it appears that the local Palestinians understand that the Israeli demolitions are not indiscriminate, but directly linked to the presence of militants within their home. Indeed, Sacco goes on to discuss the reasoning of particular civilians in the town (2012: 24):

*Keeping the gunmen out is the ‘main reason’ Fuad stays in his family home near the border despite the entreaties of his parents. The Israelis, he says don’t need an excuse to demolish your house. But they can use the gunmen as a reason. While his watchful presence in his home would seem to satisfy the interests of the I.D.F., he says Israeli bullets still hit the house randomly. (I was present during one incident.) Palestinians typically interpret that message as an injunction to flee.*

In other words, local civilians like Fuad perceive the violence as selective as opposed to indiscriminate in nature, unlike how it is largely portrayed and perceived in the rest of the Palestinian territories (and beyond). Their first-hand knowledge from observing the events (and other kinds of attacks) directly and their motive to understand the threats they do – and do not – represent leads them to draw these conclusions. In fact, it may well be these local perceptions of selectivity that underlie the key finding from Benmelech, Berrebi, and
Klor (2012) that Israeli home demolitions – or at least those linked to militant activity – are tactically effective as a counter-terrorism measure.

1990s Yugoslav Wars:

Important elements of the dissertation are also evident in the ethnic conflicts that ravaged the Balkans in the 1990s. While these conflicts were marked by brutal ethnic cleansing and other atrocities between Serbs, Bosnians, and Croats, many of the civilians of each group were deeply skeptical of or unwilling to believe these accounts of their own group’s offenses. As described by war reporter Janine di Giovanni (2007: 143):

> Sometimes this collective denial was due to a lack of information. Many Serbs genuinely did not know. Because of the state of emergency, most of the newspapers – including DANAS, the most progressive daily – were heavily censored and published nothing, or very little, about the “so-called massacres.” And every night at 7:30 p.m., Serbian State Television (RTS) aired its nightly news program, jokingly referred to as “The Holy News,” without mentioning the refugee crisis or investigations into war crimes…

Propaganda was thus a crucial driver of Serbian unawareness of the violence. But it was not the only driver; di Giovanni continues by noting that (2007: 144):

> And if they did [have more information], would they believe it? “It’s very painful for people to hear about war crimes,” said [editor Braca] Grubacic. Even the liberals – the ones who got on the blocked Web sites on the Internet and who listened to Voice of America or Radio Free Europe on shortwave – still had grave doubts about the extent of the killings…

This illuminates quite nicely the two different sources of factual bias among non-local civilians: on the one hand, there is biased reporting of the violence by partisan news outlets (information), but on the other hand, it is buttressed by a lack of desire to find alternative information sources due to civilians’ existing directional biases in the dispute (motivation).
This also shows how these biases can lead to factual misperceptions not only in the form of the invention or inflation of enemy atrocities, but the denial of one’s own.

Other Contemporary Cases:

A number of other contemporary conflicts are also suggestive of these dynamics, including the conflicts that have emerged in the former Soviet states. Indeed, one recent analysis of Georgian attitudes before and after the 2008 Russian invasion found a “Fog of War effect,” in which “many respondents earnestly reported believing different things about the events they had just lived through” (Driscoll and Maliniak 2015: 266). Moreover, the study also found evidence of a gap between the perceptions of local vs. non-local civilians, wherein “respondents close to the disputed territories – who could more easily imagine the costs of an actual war – responded differently than safe subsamples in both survey exercises” (266). While Driscoll and Maliniak’s study stops short of offering a full theoretical exploration and empirical investigation of these issues (as its focus is primarily on foreign policy attitudes during the conflict), it does offer corroborating evidence of their existence in another prominent case.

Similarly, recent research from Ukraine points toward related dynamics. Indeed, a study by Bausch, Pechenkina, and Skinner (2016) examines civilian attributions of blame for attacks in wartorn Ukraine. While the focus of this study is only partially related to this project (as blame is a moral and not a purely factual question), the authors do find evidence of substantial differences based on whether respondents had personal experience with the conflict events of interest, noting that “individuals exposed to violence attribute blame for
provoked state indiscriminate violence differently compared to individuals who did not experience warfare” (22). This speaks to the gap between local and non-local communities.

There are also key shreds of evidence visible in other parts of the world. Indeed, a recent analysis of the influence of radio in South Sudan found that radio broadcasts about the movements of the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) – the brutal Ugandan rebel group which has penetrated the country’s southwest – incited higher fear of the LRA and greater support for the “Arrow Boys,” a local militia that has arisen to counter them (Rigterink and Schomerus 2016). Crucially, the study found that the broadcasts “spur fear in citizens, leading them to feel they’re still under imminent threat – even while acknowledging there had hardly been any LRA attacks for a long time.” The case thus highlights the influence of information access in fueling factual beliefs (and, it appears, misbeliefs) about conflict dynamics among non-local civilians.80

Finally, many of the processes highlighted in the project are also apparent in the ongoing war in Syria. Indeed, Janine di Giovanni documents the fierce propaganda battles over the events in Daraya, Tremseh, Homs, and elsewhere, in which rebel forces allege indiscriminate massacres by the Assad regime and its brutal Shabiha militia, and the regime portrays them as targeted operations against foreign terrorists. Additionally, she notes that civilians of different persuasions gravitate toward different accounts; while many have seen the government’s atrocities with their own eyes, pro-regime civilians – particularly those

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80 Moreover, it is highly likely that this information mixes with prior civilian attitudes in these communities to produce the observed effects, although the authors do not investigate this possibility in their study.
in the relative security and comfort of the Damascus “bubble” – often doubt their existence. For example, di Giovanni recounts a conversation with an aspiring pro-regime politician named Maria Saadeh (2016: 58):

*She also refused to believe that the government had tortured, maimed, and killed civilians. When I listed the atrocities one by one she stopped me, putting down her cup of tea. There was an angelic smile on her face. ‘Do you think our president could put down his own people?’ she asked me incredulously. ‘Gas his own people? Kill his own people? This is the work of foreign fighters. They want to change our culture.’*

This motivated denial of the massacres taking place is reminiscent of Serbian perceptions of ethnic cleaning in the Balkans during the 1990s. In both cases, non-local civilians – fed by the regime’s propaganda sources as well as their own biases about the righteous and nefarious actors in the dispute – are too easily able to deny the existence of uncomfortable “facts on the ground” in war.

In sum, this review of the anecdotal empirical record strongly suggests that the dynamics identified in the dissertation project occur in a wide variety of armed conflicts, including across both historical as well as contemporary contexts (e.g., WWII vs. Syria), different regions of the world (e.g., Europe vs. Asia vs. sub-Saharan Africa), and different types of disputes (e.g., interstate vs. intrastate, brief vs. protracted). While some of these conflicts only provide anecdotal evidence of factual misperceptions among the non-local populations (e.g., Serbia or Syria), others offer evidence suggestive of local accuracy or crucial gaps between local and non-local perceptions (e.g., Germany or Gaza). Thus, while different cases highlight different elements of the project, the sum total speaks well to its general applicability in war.
A Typology of Factual Manipulation in War:

While this survey illustrates the project’s range across different types of conflicts, it also has another virtue: it allows us to build on the cases investigated in the project and outline a tentative typology of the different areas – or domains – of factual manipulation and misperception in war. Indeed, drawing on the cases explored in the preceding chapters as well as those sampled above, we can see four such areas. This typology both illuminates the breadth of the dissertation across different issues – as there is at least anecdotal evidence of its findings at work in each one – and serves as a basis for future work on the topic.

1) The identities of the belligerents (who is fighting?):

One important arena of factual manipulation in war surrounds the identities of the warring parties. On the one hand, this includes external interveners’ efforts to mask their interventions by passing as local soldiers. We have seen a number of key examples of such efforts in the cases examined in this project, including Italian efforts to pass as Nationalist troops during the Spanish Civil War, American efforts to conceal drone attacks in Pakistan (and Yemen) as local operations, and Russian efforts to disguise their intervention in the Ukrainian conflict as local insurgents. On the other hand, this category also includes false allegations by actors that their opponents are hiding their out-group identity, such as Syrian regime allegations that all of the rebels fighting against them are actually “foreign fighters” (di Giovanni 2016).
2) Their strength and performance (who is winning?):

Another key theme of factual contestation revolves around combatants’ relative strength, success, and performance in the conflict. Regardless of the actual conditions on the ground, most combatants portray themselves as winning (or at least outperforming expectations) in the dispute in order to galvanize their supporters and demoralize their opponents. In fact, we have examined a number of cases in which these issues were grossly manipulated, such as Nazi Germany’s (and Imperial Japan’s) censorship of news about the destructiveness of Allied strategic bombing raids during WWII in order to maintain its popular morale, or the Georgian government’s false claims that its troops had “prevailed” or out-performed Russian forces in the 2008 Russo-Georgian War (Driscoll and Maliniak 2015). In a similar vein, the propaganda campaigns of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) today are largely predicated on promoting what has been aptly described as a “winner’s message” which aims to manipulate many of these perceptions of its power and control (Gartenstein-Ross, Barr, and Moreng 2016).

3) The nature of the violence (how are they fighting?):

Perhaps the most important arena of factual manipulation in war, however, has to do with the nature of the violence that is used by the combatants. As seen throughout the dissertation, the issue of whether violence is selective or indiscriminate in nature – that is, the extent to which the perpetrator avoided or, conversely, targeted civilians – is often manipulated by both sides in war. In fact, such manipulation occurs in both directions, with false claims of civilian targeting (as in the U.S. drone program in Pakistan) and false claims
of selectivity (as in the Russian indiscriminate bombing campaign in Syria). Additionally, other aspects of the quality of violence are also often contested in war, including whether combatants use “taboo” weapons and tactics such as chemical weapons, barrel bombs, cluster munitions, torture, or rape. Indeed, accusations of rape have been manufactured for strategic reasons in war (as in the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, discussed in Ch. 2) and the use of chemical weapons has of course been heavily contested in many cases as well (including, most recently, in Syria). Lastly, this category includes contestation of not only the quality but also the quantity of violence – casualty figures – a common tactic both for specific battles and for the entire dispute.

4) Their cooperative efforts (are they trying to stop?):

A final key area of factual contestation that has been less investigated in this project are combatant efforts to undertake conciliatory or cooperative measures in armed conflict. In contrast to their use of force, these include actions such as participation in ceasefires, negotiations, amnesty deals, and disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) measures. These behaviors, too, have often been the subject of factual manipulation in war. In fact, beliefs about who rejected or sabotaged peace talks have often been contested in conflict, from the talks to end the Korean War in the 1950s (Knightley 2004, Ch. 14) to the collapse of the Oslo Peace Process in the 1990s (Pressman 2000). Likewise, allegations and denials that one party violated a ceasefire are a pervasive feature of modern civil wars, from Syria to Colombia to Ukraine. Even amnesty deals have been subject to manipulation; for instance, when the Ugandan government offered amnesty to members of the Lord’s
Resistance Army (LRA) if they defected from the organization, the LRA leadership began spreading rumors that defectors would be killed after they returned to their communities.\textsuperscript{81} Thus, beliefs about whether one side is violating or “cheating” in conflict mitigation efforts are frequently factually manipulated as well.

In sum, the dissertation project suggests that there are at least four different major areas – the identities of the belligerents, their power and performance on the battlefield, the nature of the violence they employ, and the cooperative and non-violent efforts they undertake – that are often factually manipulated in war. In other words, combatants and their supporters frequently attempt to manipulate perceptions of the “facts on the ground” in each one of these areas. While the empirical analyses in the project focused principally on the third area, the dissertation includes at least anecdotal evidence of the hypothesized dynamics at work in each one. Overall, then, this discussion suggests that the dissertation’s core findings extend not only across different various types of disputes, but across various different types of issue areas as well.

Key Contributions and Implications:

What are the key contributions or implications of these findings? Ultimately, this project offers several important scholarly contributions. First, and most fundamentally, it introduces the idea of factual beliefs to the empirical study of war. In fact, the growing

\textsuperscript{81} See, for example, Kevin Maurer, “Joseph Kony’s Former Bodyguards are Now Helping U.S. Troops Hunt Him,” \textit{The Daily Beast}, May 14, 2016. \url{http://www.thedailybeast.com/joseph-konys-former-bodyguards-are-now-helping-us-troops-hunt-him}
body of research on the micro-level dynamics of conflict in recent years has centered primarily on combatant behavior – especially patterns of political violence (Kalyvas 2006, Weinstein 2007, Lyall 2009, Condra and Shapiro 2012, Schutte 2015, Johnston and Sarbahi 2016) – in war, with increasing attention also to civilian attitudes (Fair and Shapiro 2010, Jaeger et al 2012, Garcia-Ponce and Pasquale 2013, Lyall, Blair, and Imai 2013, Driscoll and Maliniak 2015). In contrast, this is the first study to my knowledge that focuses primarily on factual beliefs in war and systematically investigates their causes and their consequences. As elsewhere, factual beliefs are important in armed conflicts – what people think is happening around them shapes who they support and what they do. Indeed, we showed in Chapter 3 that factual misbeliefs can be costly, as misperceptions surrounding the indiscriminate nature of drone strikes in Pakistan have fueled widespread opposition to the strikes and generated broad alienation across Pakistani society. In addition, we also showed that factual beliefs have a life of their own in war: while they are shaped partially by prior attitudes, they can also differ from those attitudes, as they often do among local civilians who experience conflict events directly (Chapter 5). Accordingly, scholars of conflict processes should consider factual beliefs in war as an important issue deserving serious academic attention and investigation.

Second, the dissertation helps to deepen our understanding of civilian populations in war. In fact, research and writing on civilian populations in war has largely become split between two perspectives. In one perspective, civilians are seen as “rational peasants” who respond to combatant rewards and punishments in ways their increase their odds of survival (Popkin 1979, Kalyvas 2006). In the other, they are treated as “ethnic partisans,” whose
views and behavior are deeply driven by their group identities and heavily biased against out-group actors in the dispute (Lyall 2010, Lyall, Blair, and Imai 2013). The results of this project suggest that both views are partly right and partly wrong. Specifically, it suggests that there are two layers or levels of populations in warzones surrounding any use of force: local civilians near the conflict events who react hyper-rationally, and non-local civilians removed from them who react in a more biased and motivated way. In this sense, the project has deeply unifying implications, showing that both rationalist and motivational models of behavior are operating at different levels of removal from the event. Indeed, understanding the distinction is particularly important given that the distribution and relative influence of these two layers may be shifting over time – with the non-local audience growing larger than ever before in our age of “mediatized war” (Maltby 2012), and gaining more means of influence with the spread of elections to many countries engulfed in civil conflict, such as Afghanistan, Ukraine, and Colombia. Thus, the relative size and power of the non-local (biased) population has likely expanded in war over time.

These results also have some special implications for International Relations (IR), as they are particularly troubling in cases of foreign intervention and occupation. Indeed, foreign perpetrators are likely to suffer particularly from these dynamics for two reasons. First, external interveners and occupiers are likely to be especially unpopular throughout the target society – a clear “away team” (Lyall, Blair, and Imai 2013) – which will facilitate directional bias against them. Second, they will likely have little to no informational control in the target country, whose media channels will be owned or dominated by the target state or rebel group (their adversary in the conflict). While such dynamics should not impact the
beliefs of local civilians, they will exacerbate the factual biases of non-local civilians in the target society. Thus, we are likely to see especially severe factual misperceptions in foreign interventions and occupations – dynamics that should give pause to potential interveners. Indeed, such dynamics may help to partly account for the fact that foreign intervention and occupation is particularly likely to fail in counterinsurgencies and other types of conflicts (e.g., Pape 2005, Lyall and Wilson 2009).82

Moreover, the project also provides some more specific implications for the study of war. On the one hand, it contains firm empirical evidence that cross-border targeted killing campaigns such as the U.S. drone campaign in Pakistan can be deeply alienating inside the targeted country. This provides an important data point in debates about how counterinsurgent and counterterrorist violence impacts civilian “hearts and minds” (de Figueiredo and Weingast 2001, Rosendorff and Sandler 2004) – debates in which firm causal evidence has often proven elusive. Targeted killing across borders is an increasingly important category of violence in modern warfare, as states like the U.S., Israel, Russia, Iran, and Turkey among others seek ways to attack transnational militant organizations beyond their borders without the risk of “boots on the ground.” While these operations may have locally pacifying effects (Johnston and Sarbahi 2016) they may also have non-locally alienating and inciting ones. Indeed, this gap may stem partially from the distinct factual beliefs about them among local and non-local civilians in places like Pakistan.

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82 Additionally, this implication may interact with the prior one to help account for the increasing difficulty of foreign intervention and occupation across time (for evidence of this, see Lyall and Wilson 2009, Tables 2-4). In particular, if external violence is seen by non-local populations in particularly biased ways, and the non-local population is growing more substantial and influential within warzones over time, this means that external interveners will face more opposition from target societies than they used to.
On the other hand, the findings provide evidence that other tactics are effective in armed conflict. Indeed, they offer empirical evidence that “condolence payments” and other forms of post-harm civilian compensation are effective ways to diminish opponent attacks after battlefield mistakes. While mistakes can be minimized, they are an inevitable element of modern war, and post-harm compensation efforts thus represent an important tool to mitigate their impact. Moreover, the findings illuminate how this compensation can be designed to maximize its strategic effect, revealing that speed enhances its effectiveness and that the programs that provide sustainable skills and resources for civilians – such as USAID’s Marla Ruzicka Iraq War Victims Fund – are more effective at reducing enemy attacks than those that simply provide unconditional cash hand-outs. This means that there is not only a moral but strategic rationale for civilian compensation in war, and shows that how combatants respond to wartime mistakes – such as collateral damage incidents – are important determinants of their consequences.

This dissertation should interest scholars outside the study of conflict processes as well. Indeed, the project’s findings also have something to offer literatures in political psychology and political behavior more broadly. In recent years, there has been a surge of behavioral research focusing on the causes of political rumors, conspiracy theories, factual misperceptions, or “fake news” in democratic political life (e.g., Taber and Lodge 2007, Nyhan and Reifler 2010, Oliver and Wood 2014, Miller, Saunders, and Farhart 2016). This research coincides with a general image that we are mired in a “post-truth era,” in which the facts no longer matter in how people form opinions and leaders make decisions. This project shows that, while rumors and lies are pervasive in war, there are boundaries to them
as well. Indeed, it suggests that exposure is the antidote to lies and misinformation: local civilians who directly witness events and who have to make good choices to survive will seek out the facts and cut through the lies. In this sense, the project offers a note of qualified optimism in the gloom-and-doom debates about whether we are beyond truth – when people have enough “skin in the game” and can directly observe the threats that they face, they will typically get it right. Unfortunately, they may have the luxury of getting it wrong when these conditions are not fully met, and the “tipping points” with relatively diffuse global threats such as international terrorism or climate change remain unclear.

The project also contains some key implications for policymakers. For those who wish to mitigate or resolve armed conflicts, it suggests that encouraging combatants to exercise restraint, aid civilian communities, participate in peace negotiations, or undertake any number of other suggested actions inside a warzone is necessary but not sufficient for de-escalation. For instance, do ordinary Colombians believe that the FARC is actually demobilizing as part of the society’s peace agreement or not? Without challenging broader motivational and informational biases that flourish in the dispute, such deeds may fall on deaf ears – or even have an exacerbating impact – on the vast majority of the population which does not witness them directly. In this sense, actors such as the UN who wish to mitigate disputes must consider not only which actions are taken by combatants, but also – or perhaps even especially – which actions civilians think are being taken by them. Waging information campaigns to counter key rumors or lies should thus be a standard part of the peace-making toolkit. For instance, in the face of extensive propaganda by the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) that fighters who defect from its ranks will be killed by state
forces, the Ugandan government and U.S. army have employed “defection messaging” via radio and leaflet to successfully rebut these rumors and boost LRA defections.⁸³

Meanwhile, such ideas are also of critical strategic significance for America and its allies. Indeed, for U.S. foreign policy and military strategy, the project suggests three key lessons. First, as a foreign intervener, the U.S. should understand that it is “swimming upstream,” and that even great selectivity (or generosity) may not be factually recognized broadly within conflict settings. In this sense, it should consider the tradeoffs involved in using force very carefully, and whether the expected local gains outweigh the expected non-local costs of military actions. Second, when U.S. policymakers do deem using force to be essential, they should make every effort to shift the burden of doing so onto their local partners, whose operations may not be factually misperceived nearly as much as their own (see perceptions of Pakistani airstrikes in Chapter 4). Of course, this assumes they have fairly willing and capable local proxies in the dispute. Third, when it must act and it cannot delegate, the U.S. should “get into the information game” more assertively; the veil of secrecy around drone strikes and other ostensibly covert operations in countries like Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia, and Libya cedes the informational high ground to its opponents, who can push their factual narratives freely throughout the conflict zone (as well as beyond). In other words, if Al Qaeda’s Ayman Al-Zawahiri is correct when he states that “we are in a battle, and more than half of this battle is taking place in the battlefield of the

media,“84 the U.S. all too often concedes half the war, allowing misbeliefs to flourish about its battlefield behavior.

One potential remedy to these issues is to increase the supply of truth in warzones by amplifying the voices of local civilian communities. Indeed, this approach would exploit the fact that the gap between local and non-local civilians may be not only a problem but also a solution, and that local civilian population in places like Mir Ali, Pakistan, or Mosul, Iraq, may be able to educate their non-local counterparts about what is happening on the front lines. Of course, such a strategy would only benefit those who want more “sunlight” shined on their battlefield behavior. In some ways, then, this suggestion helps clarify the battle lines over the degree of truth in war – while states that attempt to use force carefully such as the U.S. and UK would (typically) benefit from more accurate information coming from warzones, those that use brutal and indiscriminate tactics like Russia and Syria would stand to lose from greater transparency about their behavior. The strategic implications of the aggregate undersupply of truth thus differ based on the actor in question and its wartime behavior: it generally disadvantages the U.S. and its Western allies and helps America’s authoritarian and non-state militant opponents.

Finally, these findings also contain some significant implications for journalists, activists, and ordinary citizens interested in what is happening in war. In fact, for producers of information from warzones such as journalists, the project suggests that accurate war reporting requires being “on the ground” in the directly affected areas and talking to local

civilians about what took place, as opposed to reporting from the safety of capital cities or even neighboring states. Indeed, this is a key criticism of much of the war reporting in disputes like the Soviet-Afghan War in the 1980s, which were often “reported from across the border in Pakistan, from brief visits to Kabul, or from furtive interviews with guerrilla fighters who soon developed a reputation for being willing to tell the correspondent whatever he wanted to hear” (Knightley 2004: 476). Likewise, scholars who generate descriptive data about war also should take heed of these results. Indeed, databases of violent event data – such as the Global Terrorism Database (GTD) or the Uppsala/Prio Armed Conflict Dataset – should prioritize news reports that use local civilian sources, or at least collect meta-data on the stories they rely on that allow users to apply such a filter. Moreover, scholarly research that evaluates different ways of collecting civilian casualty data from conflicts – such as surveys, interviews, and violent event data (Seybolt, Aronson, and Fischhoff 2013) – should note that the accuracy of all of these sources will differ based on their actual proximity to the violence. Lastly, for consumers of information about wars such as peace activists as well as ordinary citizens, they should be discerning customers about the factual narratives they consume from conflict settings. Scenes such as American “Code Pink” activists marching with non-local Pakistanis against U.S. drone strikes – while local voices are systematically suppressed – risk making these activists into tools of

85 In contrast, intrepid war reporters such as Megan K. Stack, Joe Sacco, and Janine di Giovanni among others have assumed great personal risk to visit the front lines of a number of wars and speak to local eyewitnesses, providing a valuable public good without which research like this would be impossible. This project is deeply indebted to them.
militant groups or intelligence agencies in the conflict. Overall, the project suggests that all of us need to reckon with the extent of truth and lies in war.

Avenues for Future Research:

All projects leave some stones un-turned, and this is no exception. In this section, I outline three key remaining questions that the dissertation does not fully resolve and that offer promising avenues for further research. In each case, I consider the tentative answers suggested by the project and how future studies could investigate more deeply.

1) Who Exactly is a “Local” Civilian?

First, the dissertation does not identify with great precision who counts as a “local” vs. “non-local” civilian. Indeed, the project provides systematic evidence in Chapters 3, 4, and 5 (as well as anecdotal evidence elsewhere) that there is often a substantial gap between the factual perceptions of these two types of populations. While this may be true, the nature and boundaries of this split are not entirely clear. For example, is this gap generally a sharp distinction, whereby civilian populations are biased until a sudden exposure to the violence induces accuracy? Or is this a more continuous process in which bias fades gradually with proximity or exposure to the fighting? When is one truly in the “line of fire”?

Overall, the dissertation project suggests that this distinction is indeed quite sudden and sharp – a “structural break” – leaving behind a stark gap between two wholly different types of populations. For one thing, psychological research on motivated reasoning reveals

that people typically cling to their entrenched beliefs in the face of counter-evidence for as long as possible, until they finally reach a “tipping point” when those beliefs can no longer be maintained and are ultimately abandoned (Redlawsk et al. 2010). This shift appears to be like a switch being flipped. Indeed, we can see this stark gap in war, between civilians who have (even minimal) exposure to the violence in question and those who have none.

For example, consider the results of the United States Strategic Bombing Survey on shifts in German morale due to Allied bombing in WWII (Morale Division 1947: 1):

*The biggest drop in morale was apparent in a comparison between unbombed towns and the only lighted bombed. The morale in towns subjected to the heaviest bombing was no worse than that in towns of the same size receiving much lighted bombing loads.*

This suggests a sharp distinction in civilian beliefs between those who had (any level of) exposure to the bombing, and those who did not. Similarly, such a hard-edged distinction is also clear in the extent to which prior beliefs are preserved in war, even when they clash with what is happening next door. Indeed, this is evident in Janine Di Giovanni’s reporting about the “bubble” of beliefs in contemporary Syria, in which many civilians in places like Damascus remain in denial about the severity of the fighting even while towns like Daraya six miles away are being visibly destroyed (2016). These pieces of evidence point toward a sharp divide into two types of populations in war, although this could be examined more rigorously moving forward.

Yet even if this view is correct and the gap is stark, it still leaves unanswered some key questions about its boundaries. One important issue is the role of refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and the social networks around them in potentially transmitting local information to the wider wartorn society. Indeed, wars often push significant streams of refugees and IDPs from the front lines to more secure parts of the conflict setting. Do
these civilians not spread first-hand information on the violence to their families, friends, and social networks in a horizontal fashion, blurring the boundaries between local and non-local? While the dissertation does not explore this question explicitly, two points are worth keeping in mind here. First, the beliefs of refugees depend on their wartime experiences. Indeed, many waves of refugees flee “preemptively” – that is, before fighting reaches them – due to the fear of being victimized or simply because others are doing so (Laughlin 2017). Since they have not witnessed the actual fighting, these kinds of refugees may have factual beliefs that are as biased as non-refugees. For example, Belgians fleeing the advance of the German army during WWI seem to have been as vulnerable to rumors of German atrocities like the infamous “Belgian baby” story as their British counterparts (Knightley 2004, Ch. 5). Similarly, many of the Palestinian refugees who fled during the 1948 Arab-Israeli War were influenced by atrocity propaganda about violent events elsewhere in the conflict, such as those at Deir Yassin (Morris 2005, see Ch. 2). Thus, the capability of refugees or IDPs to counter lies is likely to depend on what they actually saw in the war. Second, this is also likely shaped by the settlement patterns of IDP and refugee communities. Indeed, IDPs and refugees are often massed into camps controlled by the combatants, as in the case of Syrian refugees in Jordan; this leaves them isolated from the wider civilian populace and unlikely to spread local wartime information. However, in other settings, refugees settle with family members or host families within the broader population, as in the case of Ivorian refugees in Liberia (Hartman and Morse 2015). Future research should investigate whether these differences in refugees’ wartime experiences and settlement patterns influence their ability to serve as conduits for accurate wartime information.
Another key issue related to the boundary between local vs. non-local civilians is urbanization and settlement size. This gets at the issue of what counts as a local community. Do residents of Baghdad or Damascus perceive all of the conflict in their city accurately, or does it have to occur in their particular neighborhood? This issue is especially significant because – despite the ingrained image of the rural guerrilla – a large portion of insurgencies and other disputes today are fought in urban settings, from Karachi to Baghdad to Belfast (Staniland 2010). The tentative answer that can be gleaned from the cases in the dissertation is that the settlement size does matter. Indeed, Tom Harrisson, a British anthropologist who authored the book Living Through the Blitz about the German bombing of Britain during WWII, wrote that (1941: 832):

I know from personal experience that it is ten times more unpleasant to be blitzed in a place like Coventry or Bristol, where every bomb is personal and every piece of damage is a disaster to one’s own town, instead of the great agglomeration of town which is called London.

This suggests that modern “mega-cities” are much too large a unit of observation to trigger an accuracy motive in all of their inhabitants, and that differences in how “real” fighting feels to civilians may be quite dependent on things like settlement size. Ultimately, these hypotheses provide ripe areas for further research; scholars should more investigate deeply the boundaries between the local vs. non-local populations in warzones, and how accurate information about the fighting is – or is not – spread in refugee camps, contested cities, and other areas where these two types of populations coexist and interact. Doing so could help us better understand and map out the distribution of accuracy vs. bias in war.
2) What About Cognitive Psychology?

A second issue that receives little attention in the dissertation is the possible role of cognitive psychological factors in the formation of these beliefs. In fact, existing research on public belief in political rumors, conspiracy theories, and other factual misperceptions in mainstream politics is split into motivational and cognitive perspectives. On one hand, motivational explanations focus on factors like political ideology and ideologically-driven motivated reasoning in encouraging public endorsement of conspiracist beliefs (Nyhan and Reifler 2010, Uscinski and Parent 2014, Miller, Saunders, and Farhart 2016). In this view, people accept false narratives because they “want” to believe that their political opponents are illegitimate, hostile, and even evil. On the other, cognitive explanations emphasize the general psychological predispositions such as mistrust, authoritarianism, superstitiousness, and powerlessness that incline people toward belief in conspiratorial narratives (Swami et al. 2010, 2011, Oliver and Wood 2014). This line of thinking suggests that individuals accept these types of ideas because of a “need” to maintain order, certainty, and closure in the face of uncertain, unknown, or precarious environments.

This distinction is important because, while motivational variables were a key part of our story, we did not examine the potential influence of psychological “need” factors. Yet it is likely that these, too, shape factual beliefs in war – and they may do so in different ways than in peace. In particular, one factor that may be crucial in this regard is a desire for normalcy, predictability, and certainty in life. As noted, the ability of people to deny or ignore the existence of conflict on their doorstep can be striking. This is clear, for instance, in accounts of villages in conflict zones like Sierra Leone which ignored warning signs of
the fighting approaching them, such as attacks against neighboring villages or streams of refugees telling them about what happened (Beah 2007: 1). While this may reflect a sort of motivated reasoning, it may also simply be a product of peoples’ need for normalcy and their inability to even cognitively process the idea of war, conflict, and violence touching or reaching their communities. Given that people vary in terms of their cognitive need for things like normalcy and certainty, these traits may play important roles in shaping peoples’ perceptions of what is occurring in war.

Additionally, another cognitive factor that may be important for factual beliefs in warzones is a perceived lack of power or control. In fact, psychological studies have shown that perceived lack of control is a powerful source of beliefs in conspiracy theories, illusory patterns, and other kinds of related phenomena (Whitson and Galinsky 2008). Such a loss of personal control is likely to be acute among civilians in war, as captured in the African proverb “when elephants fight, it is the grass that suffers” – which is often applied to the plight of civilian populations within warzones (Deng et al. 2005). Indeed, this is likely to be especially true among local civilian populations – those in the direct line of fire – and may help to explain some of the factual misbeliefs that we do see among local communities. In this way, cognitive psychological factors such as needs for normalcy or control may be important drivers of wartime beliefs. Moreover, these cognitive needs might also interact with situational variables such as the objective complexity, uncertainty, or severity of the fighting in ways that affect civilian communities’ ability to process it. Thus, future studies should build on this dissertation project by illuminating the effects of cognitive – and not just motivational – psychology in the formation of factual beliefs in war.
3) Can These Patterns be Changed?

A final issue that is not deeply grappled with in the dissertation project is the extent to which the dynamics illuminated here can be altered or changed. If it is indeed true that there is substantial variation in factual beliefs in war – with particularly large biases and misperceptions among non-local populations – can these misperceptions be ameliorated? In other words, can more truth be injected into war? Of course, these issues were considered briefly above in our discussion of the project’s policy implications, and some suggestions were made for those who wish to navigate or mitigate them. But the key point here is that more research on these issues is key so that we can understand whether different proposed interventions and solutions would actually work to achieve these goals.

One helpful starting point in this endeavor would be to borrow from the existing literature on belief correction. Indeed, as scholars’ attention to the sources of false beliefs has increased, so has their attention to how these beliefs can be assuaged (Kuklinski et al. 2000, Nyhan and Reifler 2010, Wood and Porter 2016). Specifically, the growing literature on these issues has shown that, while corrections sometimes “backfire” on controversial and highly politicized issues, they often succeed in getting people to learn and update their beliefs. This is particularly true when they are made by credible in-group sources (Nyhan and Reifler 2010), presented clearly (using “weight of evidence” statements, visual aids, and comparative benchmarks) (Sandman 1998), and done in ways that do not challenge or threaten peoples’ sense of self-esteem (Nyhan and Reifler 2017). Scholars should examine
whether these lessons travel to conflict zones and corrective efforts can mitigate factual misperceptions in war as well as peace.

In particular, one wrinkle that may distinguish these dynamics in warzones is the local vs. non-local gap emphasized throughout the project. As noted above, one promising behavioral intervention might be to use locals to educate their non-local counterparts about what is going on in the fighting. From a research standpoint, the key question is the degree to which people judge source credibility based on issue-specific knowledge or experience (which local civilians have in spades), or on common in-group identities (which they may or may not, depending on the individual). This could be tested with an experiment in which both the direct experience and in-group status of the “messenger” of information from the front lines were both varied. Additionally, a third treatment arm might also vary whether the messenger’s wartime experiences clashed with his previous attitudes and expectations, which could serve as a particularly effective “signal” of credibility. Ultimately, examining whether existing (or new) strategies of belief correction work in armed conflicts provides a promising pathway to extend the findings of this project. Doing so could not only enhance our scholarly understanding of belief correction but, hopefully, provide a roadmap for those seeking to mitigate factual biases and amplify the supply of truth in war.
Chapter 6 References:


Gartenstein-Ross, Daveed, Nathaniel Barr, and Bridget Moreng. 2016. “The Islamic State’s


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Appendix A

Event Study (Ch. 3) Additional Results:

Additional Militant Groups:

Figure A1: The Effects of Drone Strikes on Support for the Two Talibans

Note: OLS regressions, with demographic covariates plus province and wave dummies. 1-14 day response windows. 95% confidence intervals. Questions asked in four of six waves.
Nonresponse Tests:

Figure A2: The Effects of Drone Strikes on Nonresponse Rates about Key Actors

Note: OLS regressions, with demographic covariates plus province and wave dummies. 1-14 day response windows. 95% confidence intervals. Americans question asked in all six waves, incumbent in five, and others in four.
Without Covariates:

Figure A3: The Effects of Drone Strikes on Views of U.S. and Pakistani Authorities, without Covariates

Note: OLS regressions, with province and wave dummies. 1-14 day response windows. 95% confidence intervals. Americans and Pakistani interests questions asked in all six waves, incumbent in five, and others in four.
Figure A4: The Effects of Drone Strikes on Views of Militants, without Covariates

Note: OLS regressions, with province and wave dummies. 1-14 day response windows. 95% confidence intervals. Questions asked in four of six waves.
Ordered Logit:

Figure A5: The Effects of Drone Strikes on Views of U.S. and Pakistani Authorities, with Ordered Logit

Note: Ordered logit regressions, with demographic covariates plus province and wave dummies. 1-14 day response windows. 95% confidence intervals. Americans and Pakistani interests questions asked in all six waves, incumbent in five, and others in four.
Figure A6: The Effects of Drone Strikes on Views of Militants, with Ordered Logit

Note: Ordered logit regressions, with demographic covariates plus province and wave dummies. 1-14 day response windows. 95% confidence intervals. Questions asked in four of six waves.
Multiple Imputation:

Figure A7: The Effects of Drone Strikes on Views of U.S. and Pakistani Authorities, with Imputed Income

Note: OLS regressions, with demographic covariates and multiply imputed income measure plus province and wave dummies. 1-14 day response windows. 95% confidence intervals. Americans and Pakistani interests questions asked in all six waves, incumbent in five, and others in four.
Figure A8: The Effects of Drone Strikes on Views of Militants, with Imputed Income

Note: OLS regressions, with demographic covariates and multiply imputed income measure plus province and wave dummies. 1-14 day response windows. 95% confidence intervals. Items asked in four of six waves.
Appendix B

Survey Experiment (Ch. 4) Additional Results:

Figure B1: Number of Experimental Respondents per District Across Pakistan

Note: the survey achieved broad coverage across the four regions of “Pakistan proper,” excluding FATA.
Figure B2: Percentmatch Plot to Check for Data Falsification

Note: plot shows healthy normal distribution centered at 0.7, with no suspicious outlier clusters close to 1.
Table B1: Sample Demographics Across Experimental Treatment Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Group 1</th>
<th>Group 2</th>
<th>Group 3</th>
<th>Group 4</th>
<th>Control</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Province (F: p=0.98)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjab</td>
<td>53.7%</td>
<td>53.5%</td>
<td>53.5%</td>
<td>53.5%</td>
<td>53.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sindh</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>24.0</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>22.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KPK</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>13.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balochistan</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Urbanity (F: p=0.56)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>38.8%</td>
<td>38.5%</td>
<td>45.0%</td>
<td>41.0%</td>
<td>40.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>61.2</td>
<td>61.5</td>
<td>55.1</td>
<td>59.0</td>
<td>59.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender (F: p=0.72)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>55.2%</td>
<td>54.0%</td>
<td>49.5%</td>
<td>52.0%</td>
<td>54.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>44.8</td>
<td>46.0</td>
<td>50.5</td>
<td>48.0</td>
<td>45.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age (F: p=0.80)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mean age (18+)</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>35.8</td>
<td>34.3</td>
<td>35.8</td>
<td>34.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education (F: p=0.67)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>29.1%</td>
<td>20.6%</td>
<td>27.0%</td>
<td>26.5%</td>
<td>27.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;5 years</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-9 years</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>26.1</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>21.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matriculant</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>24.5</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>25.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>13.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Monthly Income (F: p=0.33)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4,000 PKR or less</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4,001-10,000 PKR</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>27.7</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>23.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10,001-15,000 PKR</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>26.9</td>
<td>23.9</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>27.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15,001-20,000 PKR</td>
<td>25.1</td>
<td>22.3</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>17.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20,000-25,000 PKR</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>13.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25,001 PKR or more</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>11.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Islamic Sect (F: p=0.70)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sunni</td>
<td>93.8%</td>
<td>90.7%</td>
<td>90.7%</td>
<td>93.8%</td>
<td>92.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shi‘a</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>5.6</td>
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</table>

Note: F-statistics from one-way ANOVA regressions of treatment group distribution on each covariate.
Table B2: Exploratory Factor Loadings of Pakistani News Consumption

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor 1 (Traditional)</th>
<th>Factor 2 (Digital)</th>
<th>Factor 3 (Informal)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public TV</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private TV</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International TV</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>0.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English newspapers</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>0.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urdu or local newspapers</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>0.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International newspapers</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>0.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>0.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magazines</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>0.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>0.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMS</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.53</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tribal gatherings</td>
<td>0.08</td>
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<td>Word of mouth</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>0.10</td>
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<td>Religious gatherings</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.25</td>
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</table>

Observations 620
LR test 3462.00***

Note: Results from exploratory factor analysis with one varimax rotation.
Table B3: Replication of Interactive Models with Basic Covariates

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Perceived Selectivity</th>
<th>Perceived Selectivity</th>
<th>Perceived Selectivity</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Treatments</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>U.S. as Perpetrator</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>-0.60***</td>
<td>0.17</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.39)</td>
<td>(0.17)</td>
<td>(0.29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civilian Casualties</td>
<td>-0.30</td>
<td>-0.25</td>
<td>-0.22</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.16)</td>
<td>(0.16)</td>
<td>(0.19)</td>
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<td>U.S.*Civilian Casualties</td>
<td>-0.13</td>
<td>-0.21</td>
<td>-0.32</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.22)</td>
<td>(0.22)</td>
<td>(0.27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interactions</strong></td>
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<td>Pro-Caliphate</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.08)</td>
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Results from OLS regressions. Standard errors in parentheses. * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001
Table B4: Replication of Interactive Models with Full Covariates

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<td></td>
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<td>-0.07*</td>
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Results from OLS regressions. Standard errors in parentheses * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001
Table B5: Replication of Interactive Models with Ordered Logit Regression

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<td>-0.34*</td>
<td>-0.28</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(0.20)</td>
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<td>(0.28)</td>
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Interactions

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<td>(0.09)</td>
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<td>-0.49***</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(0.14)</td>
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<td>Pashtun</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.57*</td>
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<td>(0.26)</td>
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<td>-0.69</td>
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<td>(0.36)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>0.54*</td>
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Cut Points

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Observations: 708 708 462
Pseudo-$R^2$: 0.06 0.05 0.07

Results from ordered logit regressions. Standard errors in parentheses. * $p<0.05$, ** $p<0.01$, *** $p<0.001$
Table B6: Replication of Interactive Models with Analysis of Variance

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Results from ANOVA regressions: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$
Appendix C

Condolence Payments (Ch. 4) Additional Results

Table C1: Correlations between Compensation and Conflict Dynamics

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<td>Coalition collateral damage</td>
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<td>( r=0.11 )</td>
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<td>( r=0.22 )</td>
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<td>Coalition troop levels</td>
<td>( r=0.32 )</td>
<td>( r=0.09 )</td>
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*Note: figure shows correlations between spending on civilian compensation and relevant conflict dynamics. The unit of observation for all of the variables is the district*half year.*
Table C2: Base Compensation Results with Additional Covariates

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Results from OLS regression. Standard errors in parentheses
*p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001
Table C3: Speed of Compensation Results with Additional Covariates

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Results from OLS regression. Standard errors in parentheses
* $p < 0.05$,  ** $p < 0.01$,  *** $p < 0.001$
## Table C4: Trust in Compensation Results with Additional Covariates

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Results from OLS regression. Standard errors in parentheses.

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$