

Faith as Reason: Religion in Political Violence

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Reducing Religious Conflict
Conference
University of Oxford
June 18, 2012

Central Questions for the Book

Under what conditions does religion become a central feature in politics and result in large-scale political violence?

More narrowly, under what conditions does politics become Islamized, and once Islamized, does political violence occur?

Why Islam?

- Most large-scale political violence with a religious tint involves Muslims
 - Civil Wars 1940–2005 (Toft data)
 - 9 of 10 intra-religious war between Muslims
 - 2/3 of inter-religious involve one side that is Muslim
 - Terrorism (Moghadam data)
 - Since 1981, Salafi-jihadists responsible for most number of attacks and fatalities
 - Since 2004, Salafi-jihadists responsible for majority of suicide missions

Where does this paper fit in?

- Largely an empirical exercise
- Only one of four cases I am examining for the book project on religious violence in general: (1) Caucasus region of Russian Federation; (2) Sudan; (3) Iran; and (4) Afghanistan
- Focus is largely on non-Arab Muslims
- Collaborator is Yuri Zhukov

Types of Religious Violence

- National separatist (politicos, irredentists)
- Pan-religious (jihadis, far enemy)
- Revolutionary (purists, near enemy)

Does type of religiously-motivated violence matter?

- Basis of motivation may influence strategy and priorities of actors.
 - May determine the most urgent threat and how should it be tackled
 - National separatist—local occupier
 - Pan-Islamic—western, Muslim transgressors
 - Revolutionary—fellow Muslims, local government

Questions for this paper

- Are patterns of religious violence locally or globally driven?
- Under what conditions do insurgents turn Islamist?
- How do government policies impact the incidence and spread of such violence?

Global and Local Dimensions of Islamist Violence

“Globalized” insurgency characterized by:

- Local incidence of violence toward a certain political objective is not independent of similar political violence worldwide.
- There exists a link—in leadership, personnel, materiel, finances or ideology—between participants of violence at the local and global levels.

Global and Local Dimensions of Islamist Violence

Framework 1: “All violence is local.”

- Violence arises endogenously from local dynamics.
- The course of a conflict is a function of previous interactions of rebels and the state.
- Local connections to a global struggle are subsumed by these local dynamics.
- Moore 1998, Kalyvas 2003, Pape 2005, Regan and Norton 2005.

Global and Local Dimensions of Islamist Violence

Framework 2: “Violence is more global.”

- An initially localized conflict can become a transnational one.
- Al Qaeda has evolved into a global network with the capacity to spread influence and resources
- ... facilitating the spread of Salafi-Jihadist violence—in particular suicide terrorism.
- Moghadam 2008, Sageman 2004, Kilcullen 2005, 2006, Hoffman 2006.

Our Argument: Literature Misspecifies the Global-Local Interaction

- Influence of global factors is contingent on whether local actors can be mobilized to fight for a global cause.
- The existence of local grievances and the desire for revenge can help overcome the mobilization problem.
- Two conditions are key:
 - Government repression of locals
 - Type of insurgent a government faces

Testing our Argument

- **Hypothesis 1:** Global jihad increases the risk of local violence where government repression has recently taken place.
 - **1a.** If a locality has suffered government repression, global jihad will increase the magnitude of Islamist violence.
 - **1b.** If a locality has suffered government repression, global jihad will decrease the magnitude of political violence.
- **Hypothesis 2:** In at-risk localities, global jihad has a similar impact on the probability of local violence as in places that have recently suffered government repression.
- **Hypothesis 3:** Where the history of government repression is more recent, global jihad will have a stronger effect on local violence than in places where this history is more distant.

Permissiveness and Control

Government response to “globalized” insurgency.

- Where rebel violence is seen as driven by foreign support and local emulation of transnational violence, efforts to address local grievances may have only secondary impact on the likelihood of future attacks.
- At the local level, governments may choose to repress potential local partners of global insurgents.
(Local control)
- At the global level, governments may seek to deny foreigners access to the conflict zone through border security and related measures.
(Global control)

Permissiveness and Control

Government response to “local” insurgency.

- Where foreign support and emulation are seen as being insignificant drivers, governments may opt for a restrained approach more sensitive to local grievances.
- At the local level, governments may choose to not repress local actors potentially affiliated with a global insurgency. (**Local permissiveness**)
- At the “global level”, governments may choose to tolerate foreign presence. (**Global permissiveness**)

Four Strategic Scenarios

	Local Permissiveness	Local Control
Global Permissiveness	No repression Foreign jihadis present	Repression Foreign jihadis present
Global Control	No repression Foreign jihadis absent	Repression Foreign jihadis absent

Four Strategic Scenarios

	Local Permissiveness	Local Control
Global Permissiveness	Low-moderate risk of violence	High risk of violence
Global Control	Low risk of violence	Moderate-high risk of violence

Caucasus Location Map



Case: Russia's North Caucasus

Why the North Caucasus?

- Region offers a rich diversity of cases: extremely violent and historically peaceful; villages exposed to and isolated from foreign influence; repressive and permissive local policies.
- Region is also host to variety of geographic, demographic, socioeconomic conditions.
- The narrative of the Caucasus as a battlefield of global jihad has been adopted by both the government and its adversaries
- ... while the primacy of local grievances has been emphasized by rights groups and opposition sources.

Data

- Includes all episodes of violence as reported in the media from 2000-2009 (we are updating to 2012 now)
- Aggregated to monthly observations for 7,584 villages, towns and cities in the Caucasus
 - 176 villages suffered Islamist violence
- Over 28,000 reported episodes of violence
- Event-level data extracted from Memorial Group's *Hronika nasiliya* event reports, with automated text mining
- Events geocoded against National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency GEOnet names server

Definition of Islamist Violence

Islamist violence. At least one from each category:

Actors described (or self-described) with terms such as Muslim, Salafist, “modzhahed,” or Wahhabi

Actions: terrorist attack, hostage-taking, kidnapping, firefight, ambush or hit and run attack

Targets: violent actions directed against targets perceived as violating some of the tenets of Islam, such as liquor stores, bars and shops which sell pornographic material

If one or more such events is observed in a month, village is coded as having experienced Islamist violence.

Example of Reported Islamist Violence

Several hours ago, unidentified armed men carried out an attack on a sauna near the Malsagov market in Nazran. Several armed men entered the banya, laid all patrons and attendants on the ground, set off several indiscriminate bursts of automatic gunfire and demanded that people live according to the laws of Islam, instead of [indulging in] drinking and entertainment. *“If we once again learn that drunkenness and debauchery take place here, we won't leave anyone alive and will set the banya on fire. This is a first warning,”* declared one of the attackers. After that, the armed group left the sauna. (31 Oct. 2007, ID: 27423)

Example of Reported Political Violence

On 6 November in Chechnya the positions of federal troops came under fire 21 times by armed formations of ChRI [Chechen Republic of Ichkeria]. In the village of Tsa-Vedeno three unidentified assailants in a Zhiguli automobile opened automatic fire on Interior Ministry personnel. All three were neutralized when the troops returned fire. (6 Nov. 2001, ID: 2452)

Definition of Government Repression

Government repression. At least one of each:

Actors: Russian Armed Forces, Federal Security Services, Special Forces, Ministry of Internal Affairs, local police, local administration, federal administration

Actions: interrogation, firefight, curfew, mop-up, arrest, weapons seizure, prosecution, artillery strike, air strike, use of heavy armor

Targets: religious places of worship, religious organizations, or religious leadership.

If one or more such events is observed in a month, village is coded as having experienced government repression.

Examples of Government Repression

Mop-up: Military forces entered the village of Sagopshi. All entries and exits have been blocked, door-to-door searches are under way. (19 July 2008, ID: 34799)

Religious repression: One hour ago, in the village of Sagopshi, Malgobek district, personnel from a temporary task group of the Ministry of Interior (MVD) City Defense Forces and a mobile unit of MVD Ingushetia surrounded a mosque in which worshippers had congregated for Friday prayers. Upon exiting, all participants of Friday prayers were stopped to have their documents checked. ... Several young people were detained and are currently being interrogated in the Malgobek Regional Department of Internal Affairs (ROVD). (6 July 2007, ID: 24486)

Definition of Global Jihad

Global jihad is operationalized as:

The local presence of *foreign fighters*; and

Episodes of *global suicide terrorism* by Salafi-Jihadist groups outside of the Russian Federation.

Definition of Arab Presence

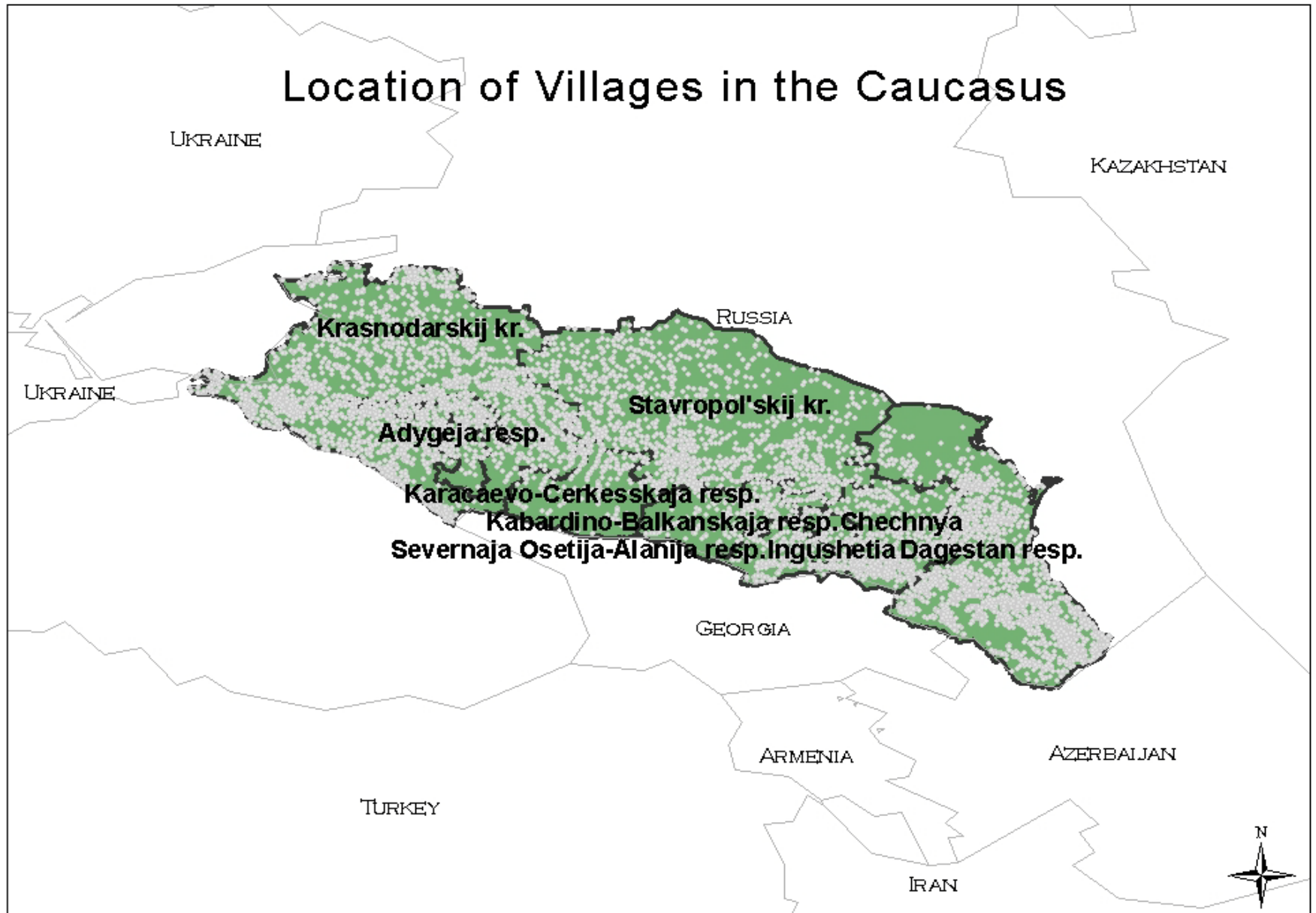
Arab presence

If there is at least one report in a month, indicating the local involvement of ethnic Arabs or citizens of Arab states like Saudi Arabia and Iraq, that village is coded as having an Arab presence.

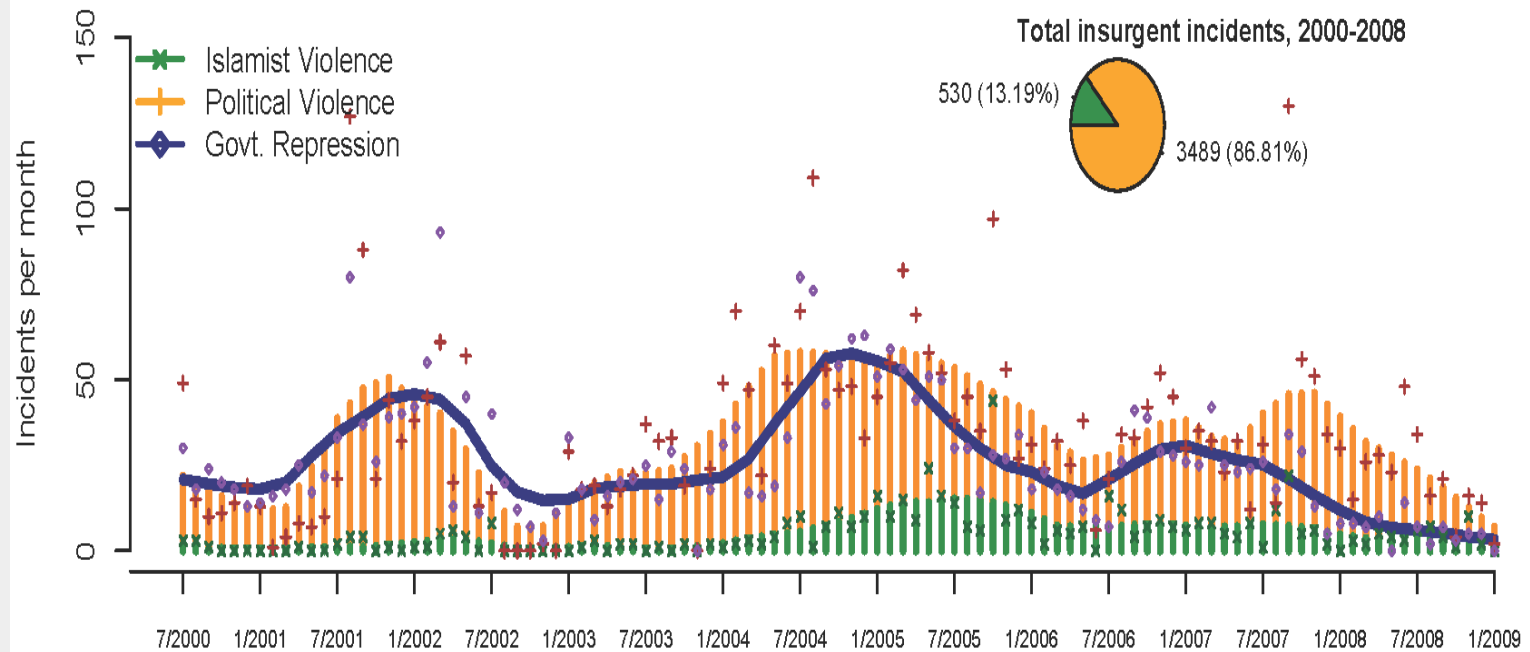
An example of a reported event:

In Karachaevo-Cherkessiya, in the settlement of Adyge-Habl, a local resident was detained. According to operational intelligence, [he] is a member of a band led by an Arab mercenary. (18 Aug. 2007, ID: 25340)

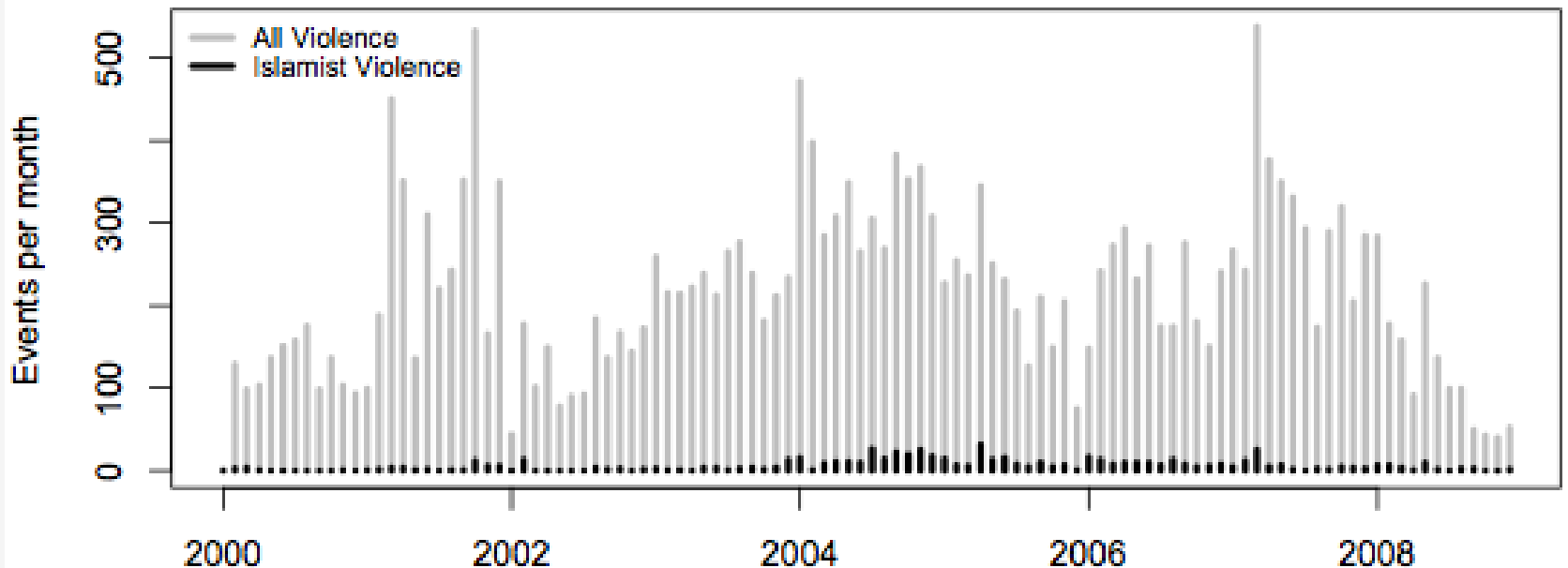
Location of Villages in the Caucasus



Political Violence in the North Caucasus (incidents per village), 2000-2008

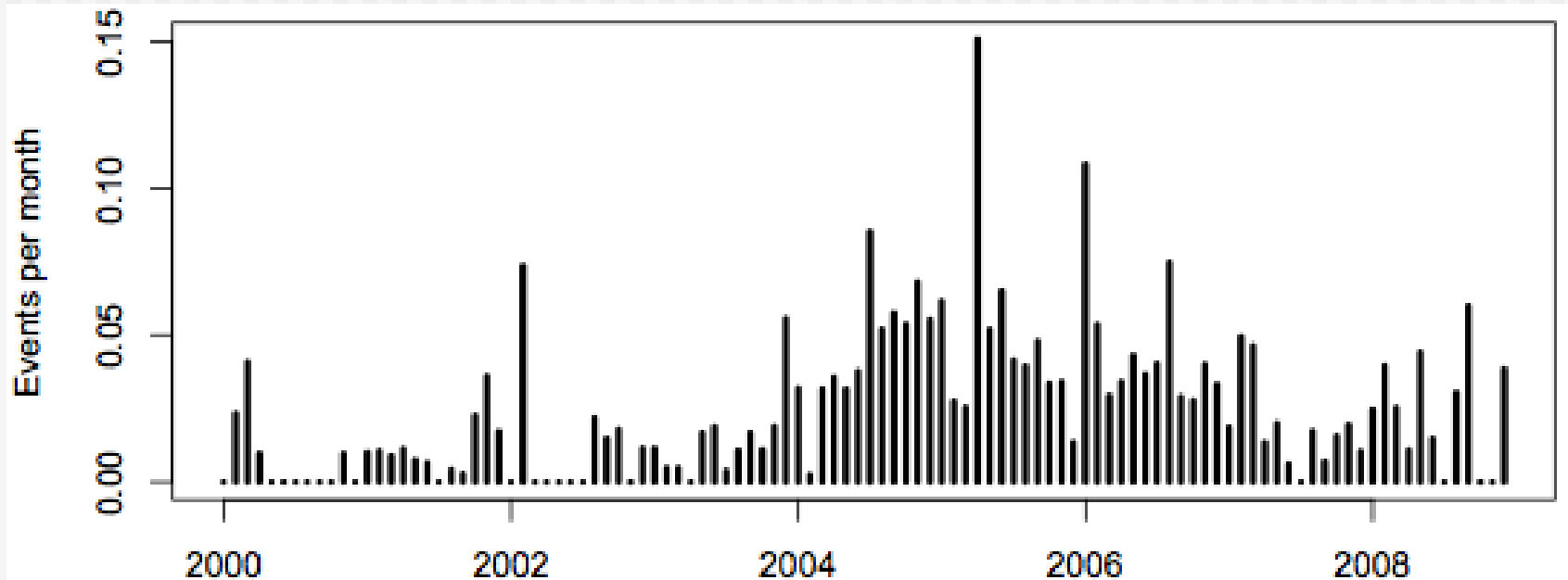


Trends: Islamist Violence in the North Caucasus



- As a share of overall violence in the region, the role of Islamist violence has been relatively small (0 to 15% of total)

Trends: Islamist Violence in the North Caucasus



- But this share has increased over the past decade

Trends: Islamist Violence in the North Caucasus

	Religious	Non-religious	Total
Fatal	423 (35.76%)	7,195 (25.83%)	7,618 (26.24%)
Non-fatal	760 (64.24%)	20,659 (74.17%)	21,419 (73.76%)
Total	1,183 (4.07%)	27,854 (95.93%)	29,037 (100%)

$\chi^2 = 57.27, p = 3.83e^{-14}$

- On average, Islamist incidents are more likely to be lethal.

Model: Islamist Insurgency

Dependent variable

- Incidence of Islamist violence in a village/month (dichotomous)

Village-level conflict dynamics

- Government repression against local Islamic leaders and institutions (local grievance)
- Arab presence (global jihad)

Spillover effects

- Level of Islamist violence in neighboring villages (local)
- Level of Islamist violence worldwide (global)

Village-level structural and environmental factors

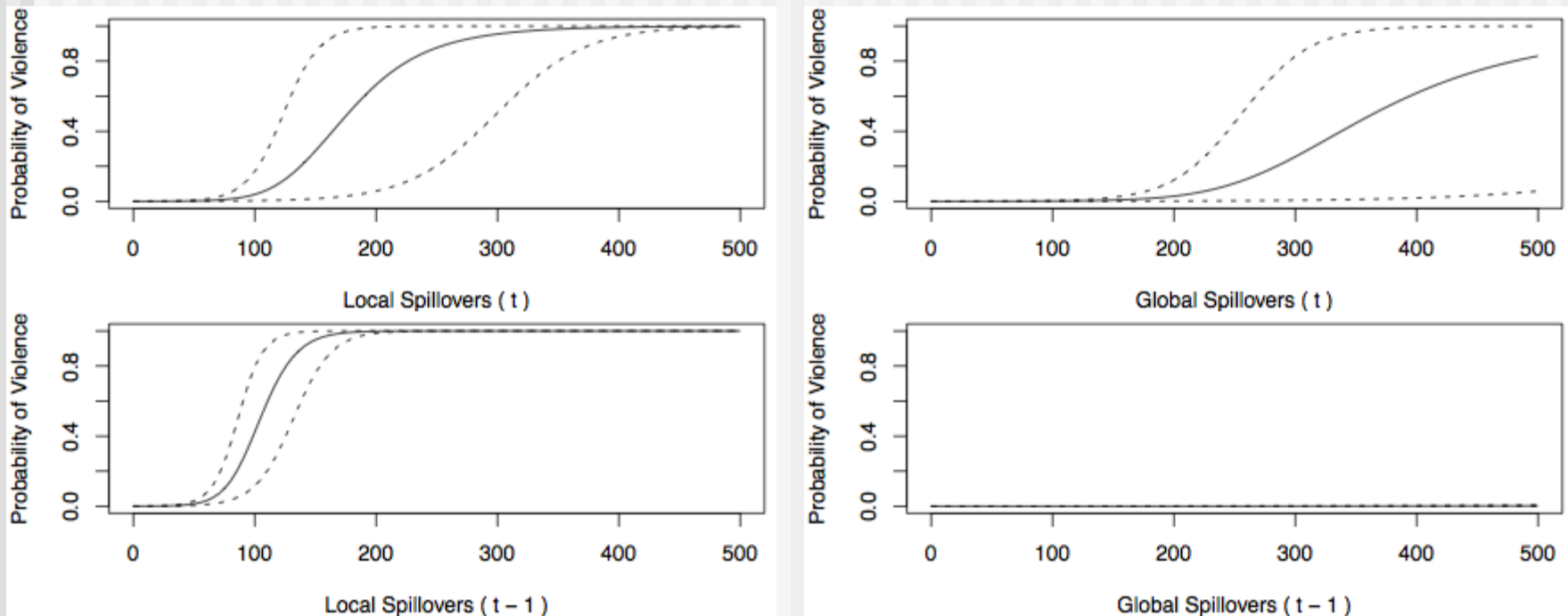
- Population density, elevation, oil, proximity to roads, regional capitals, ethnic make-up, unemployment

Functional form: two-stage spatio-temporal autologistic model

Questions: Local and Global Spillovers

- What is the probability that a village will experience at least one incident of Islamist violence, given the level of Islamist violence in nearby villages?
- What is the probability that a village will experience at least one incident of Islamist violence, given the level of Islamist violence worldwide (excluding Russia)?

Findings: Local and Global Spillovers



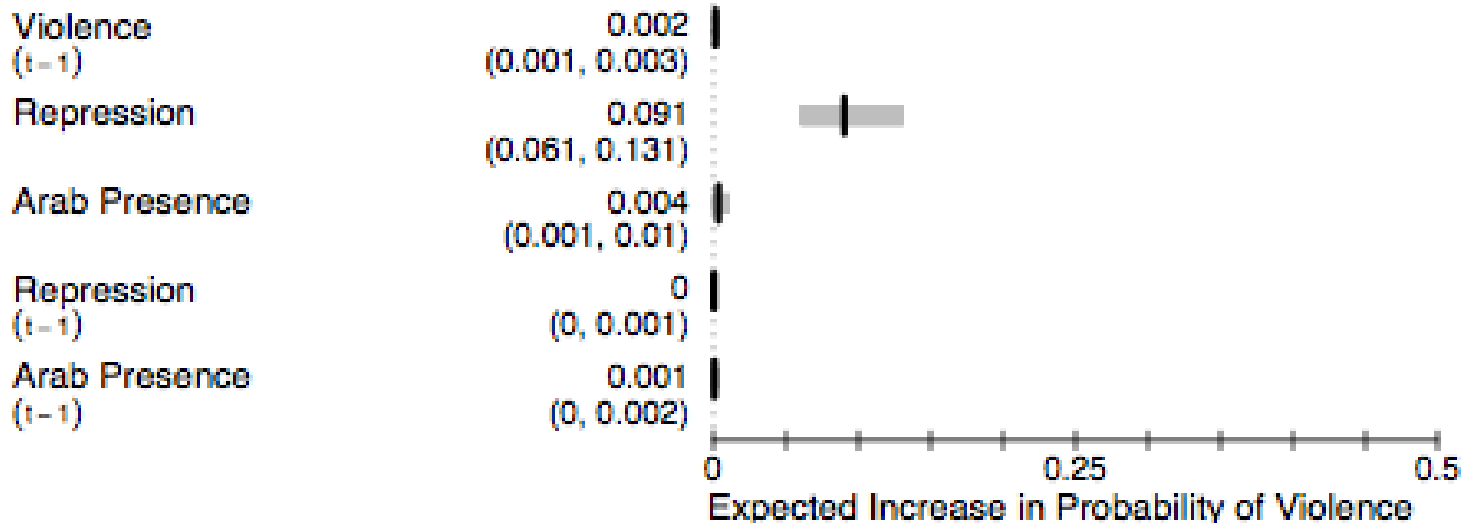
- A village's risk of violence is more sensitive to local levels of Islamist violence than to the number of Islamist attacks worldwide.

Questions: Repression and foreign presence

- How much more likely is a village to experience an incident of Islamist violence, if it was the location of at least one recent act of government repression against Islamic elites, organizations or places of worship?
- How much more likely is a village to experience an incident of Islamist violence, if it was recently reported to have a presence of Arab fighters, financiers or missionaries?

Findings: Repression and foreign presence

MODEL 2



- The strongest village-level predictor of Islamist violence is the use of government repression
- Impact of Arab presence is relatively small

Simulation: Strategic Scenarios

- What is the probability that a village will experience at least one incident of Islamist violence, under each of the four strategic scenarios?
 - Local permissiveness and global control
 - Local and global permissiveness
 - Local and global control
 - Local control and global permissiveness

Simulation: Four Strategic Scenarios



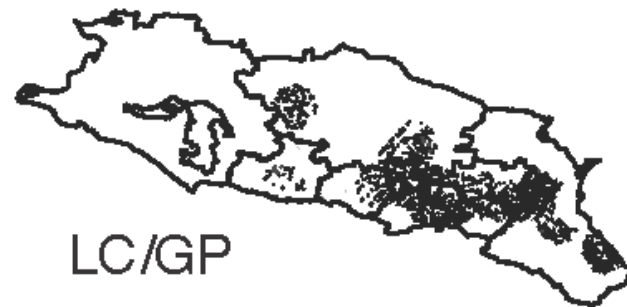
Local Permissiveness, Global Control



Local and Global Permissiveness



Local and Global Control



Local Control, Global Permissiveness

Probability of Islamist violence

□ [0,0.2) ◻ [0.2,0.4) ◼ [0.4,0.6) ◼ [0.6,0.8) ◼ [0.8,1]

Summary: Preliminary findings

Descriptive:

- Islamist violence accounts for relatively small share of all violence in the Caucasus
- But this share has increased over time, and Islamist attacks have been more deadly on average

Explanatory:

- A village is far more likely to experience Islamist violence if it has recently been exposed to government repression
- Arab presence and international terrorism have a positive, but relatively modest effect

Predictive:

- A strategy built on the assumption that local grievances can be set aside is more likely to spread violence than contain it

Conclusions

- Not all religious violence is local
- ... but most of it is
- Governments are in a position to contain it or make things worse
- Turning a blind eye to external support can conceivably turn a localized conflict into a regional epidemic
- ... but global jihad can only assert itself locally if the scale of local grievances allows it to take root

Questions?

Backup Slides: Definitions

Islamist violence. At least one from each category:

Actors described (or self-described) with terms such as Muslim, Salafist, “modzhahed,” or Wahhabi

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Government repression. At least one of each:

Actors: Russian Armed Forces, Federal Security Services, Special Forces, Ministry of Internal Affairs, local police, local administration, federal administration

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Targets: religious places of worship, religious organizations, or religious leadership.

If one or more such events is observed in a month, village is coded as having experienced government repression.

Backup Slides: Definitions

Arab presence.

If there is at least one report in a month, indicating the local involvement of ethnic Arabs or citizens of Arab states like Saudi Arabia and Iraq, that village is coded as having an Arab presence.

Matched Analysis on Government Repression and Arab Presence

- Repression may be a response as well as a cause of violence.
- Some villages may be more likely to be subject to government repression or attract the presence of Arab jihadis for the same reasons that make them at high risk for Islamist violence (controlling for endogeneity).
- Treatment effect on the treated: Matched villages on pre-treatment covariates (on villages with almost identical control variables such as past history of violence, existence of repressive infrastructure, roads, pop density, elevation, oil)
 - In villages already at risk for government repression, the use of repression drives up Islamist violence (change in risk increases from from .07 to .40).
 - In villages already likely to attract foreign fighters, the presence of Arabs has no effect.

Matched Pairs on Repression and Arab Presence

Table 4: Average effects of repression and Arab presence (Model 2, matched sample).

	<i>Elite Repression</i>	<i>95% CI</i>	<i>Arab Presence</i>	<i>95% CI</i>
Unmatched	0.077	(0.050, 0.111)	0.004	(0.001, 0.012)
Matched (PS)	0.406	(0.315, 0.496)	-0.074	(-0.163, 0.128)
Matched (MH)	0.379	(0.292, 0.470)	-0.071	(-0.162, 0.137)

PS=Propensity Score matching, MH=Mahalanobis distance matching.

Quantities reported are first differences in probability of Islamist violence associated with either government repression of Islamic elites or the presence of Arabs in the village, averaged over 1,000 simulations. Model specification is same as in Model 2, with all other covariates held constant at their median values.

The matched samples included 167 treated and 167 control villages for repression, and 55 treated and 55 control villages for Arab presence.

Backup Slides: Model

Two-stage spatiotemporal autologistic model

Probability of a violent event in village i at time t ($y_{i,t}$) is conditioned on the predicted level of Islamist violence in neighboring units and a set of exogenous variables

$$P(y_{i,t} | \hat{W}y^*_{i,t}, Z_{i,t}) = \frac{e^{\alpha + Z'_{i,t} \beta + \gamma \hat{W}y^*_{i,t}}}{1 + e^{\alpha + Z'_{i,t} \beta + \gamma \hat{W}y^*_{i,t}}}$$

where \mathbf{W} is a binary contiguity matrix (49.27 km radius), y is a binary indicator of Islamist violence in a village-month, y^* is a count of incidents of Islamist violence in a village-month, and $\mathbf{Z}_{i,t} = [\mathbf{X}_{i,t}, \mathbf{X}_{i,t-1}]$ is a matrix of contemporaneous and lagged exogenous variables. 47

Backup Slides: Model

Two-stage spatiotemporal autologistic model

The log-likelihood function for the autologistic is intractable due to simultaneous dependence between $y_{i,t}$ and the spatial lag $\mathbf{W}y^*_{i,t}$

So we use a two-stage model, where

- 1) The level of Islamist violence in neighboring towns $\mathbf{W}y^*_{i,t}$ is regressed on a spatial lag of the full set of exogenous variables $\mathbf{Z}_{i,t}$ (negative binomial)
- 2) The predicted values from the first stage model are then substituted for $\mathbf{W}y^*_{i,t}$ in the second stage (autologistic)

Backup Slides: Findings

Table 3: Autologistic Model Estimates. Dependent Variable: Incidence of Islamist violence in village i at time t .

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	Coef.	S.E.	Coef.	S.E.	Coef.	S.E.	Coef.	S.E.
<i>Spillover Effects</i>								
Local Spillovers	0.0562	(0.0099)***	0.0467	(0.0098)***	0.0314	(0.0108)**	0.0236	(0.0099)*
Local Spillovers ($t - 1$)	0.099	(0.0086)***	0.0796	(0.0089)***	0.0555	(0.0102)***	0.0517	(0.0091)***
Global Spillovers	0.0248	(0.0059)***	0.0239	(0.006)***	0.0258	(0.0061)***	0.0241	(0.006)***
Global Spillovers ($t - 1$)	-0.0064	(0.006)	-0.0045	(0.0061)	-0.0044	(0.0061)	-0.0034	(0.0061)
<i>Village-Level Conflict Dynamics</i>								
Islamist Violence ($t - 1$)	4.1464	(0.2513)***	1.9742	(0.2778)***	1.903	(0.2882)***	1.8611	(0.2731)***
Repression	6.8047	(0.1875)***	5.9872	(0.2081)***	5.432	(0.2382)***	5.5146	(0.2062)***
Repression ($t - 1$)	1.0019	(0.3723)**	0.7478	(0.4143)	0.7852	(0.4369)	0.6945	(0.4014)
Arab Presence	3.7332	(0.6009)***	2.5195	(0.645)***	1.8464	(0.704)**	2.3636	(0.6106)***
Arab Presence ($t - 1$)	2.3462	(0.6024)***	1.0465	(0.7094)	1.0827	(0.7319)	0.9548	(0.6684)
<i>Village-Level Environmental Factors</i>								
Population Density			3e-04	(0)***	4e-04	(0)***	3e-04	(0)***
Elevation			-0.001	(2e-04)***	-0.0011	(2e-04)***	-0.0014	(2e-04)***
Oil			0.3964	(0.155)*	0.1177	(0.1601)	0.218	(0.1652)
Road			0.5487	(0.2198)*	0.4518	(0.2256)*	0.396	(0.2212)
Regional Capital			2.2346	(0.2513)***	2.1851	(0.2703)***	1.909	(0.2641)***
Ethnic Russian Area			-1.561	(0.1352)***	-1.1977	(0.1514)***	-0.7521	(0.1709)***
Unemployment ($t - 1$)					0.0044	(5e-04)***		
<i>Regional Dummies</i>								
Chechnya							2.5462	(0.4693)***
Dagestan							1.1355	(0.4862)*
Ingushetia							2.3887	(0.5061)***
Kabardino-Balkaria							1.7505	(0.5244)***
Karachaevo-Cherkessia							2.2431	(0.5502)***
Krasnodarskiy kray							-0.7223	(0.5694)
North Ossetia							1.8915	(0.5247)***
Stavropolskiy Kray							1.211	(0.4906)*
Intercept	-8.2702	(0.0961)***	-8.0925	(0.283)***	-8.4294	(0.2976)***	-9.4295	(0.5472)***
AIC	5645.19		5128.51		4633.46		4961.01	
N	706,400		706,200		682,826		706,200	

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Backup Slides: Simulations

Table 4: **Strategy Simulations.** Number of observations by probability interval.

Scenario	[0,0.2)	[0.2,0.4)	[0.4,0.6)	[0.6,0.8)	[0.8,1]
Local Permissiveness, Global Control	7060	1	1	0	0
Local Permissiveness, Global Permissiveness	7030	15	11	0	6
Local Control, Global Control	6158	737	139	7	21
Local Control, Global Permissiveness	4995	3	2	41	2021

Table 5: **Strategy Simulations.** Summary statistics by strategy (mean probability of violence).

Scenario	Mean	2.5% Q	97.5% Q
Local Permissiveness, Global Control	0.0010	0.0001	0.0014
Local Permissiveness, Global Permissiveness	0.0270	0.0050	0.0949
Local Control, Global Control	0.0610	0.0001	0.3978
Local Control, Global Permissiveness	0.2900	0.0056	0.9929