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Doing Good while Killing: Why Some Insurgent Groups Provide Community Services

Victor Asal[a], Shawn Flanigan[b] and Ora Szekely[c]

[a]Department of Political Science, University of Albany, Albany, NY, USA; [b]School of Public Affairs, San Diego State University, San Diego, California, USA; [c]Department of Political Science, Clark University, Worcester, MA, USA

ABSTRACT

Many nonstate military organizations provide a wide range of social services to civilians. The apparent contradiction between their use of violence and their provision of charity has been the subject of a great deal of research in the conflict studies literature. Two of the most common sets of arguments hold that such services are either a form of bribery aimed at controlling and isolating constituents and potential recruits, or an extension of the organization's ideological commitments. Our findings, based on a new analysis of the BAAD dataset, demonstrate that neither explanation is correct. Rather, we find that the provision of social services represents a means of confronting and undermining the authority of the state. In this sense, the provision of social services represents an extension of the broader political goals of the nonstate armed groups providing them.

One of the enduring contradictions characterizing the behavior of nonstate military actors is that the same organizations which inflict extraordinary violence on some civilians also provide much needed and generous community services to others. A group that operates hospitals and clinics for one community may launch violent attacks leading to enormous suffering against soldiers, police, and even civilians from another. At times, such violence may even target members of the community whose interests the organization purports to represent.

In this article we seek to understand which factors are most likely to motivate insurgent groups to provide community services to civilians. We argue that, contrary to explanations that characterize such services as either a manifestation of the organizations' ideological commitments or as a cynical means of buying popular support, they are instead an extension of what is often the armed group's central purpose: to challenge the authority of the state.

This article begins with an overview of the literature on the provision of community services by militant groups. Based on this discussion, we then propose a set of potential explanations, which we test using the Big, Allied and Dangerous Insurgency dataset (BAAD-I) that has yearly organizational data for insurgencies from 1998 through 2012.[1] Ultimately, we find that when used by insurgent groups, community services serve as a means of contesting, weakening, and supplanting the authority of the state. After examining data related to ideology and identity, dependency and poverty, and

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organizational legitimacy, we find that it is the last of these, insurgents' quest for legitimacy, which offers the best explanation for service provision to civilians. The most powerful determinant of community service provision in our dataset is territorial control, suggesting that community services may help build support among the governed population and demonstrate that the organization can function as well as the state it seeks to supplant.

Violence and charity

Many militant groups, in addition to their violent activities, are also actively involved in social welfare provision and the provision of other community services.[2] In some cases, the community services they provide rival or surpass those provided by the state in terms of their quality and reach. The existing work on this odd confluence of violence and charity is by now both substantial and (sometimes) contradictory. Therefore, we seek to systematically evaluate the range of arguments offered, not simply as a brush clearing exercise but as an attempt to generate a logically coherent and internally satisfying explanation.

For purposes of this research, we define community services broadly as nonmilitary activities that benefit the larger community in which an insurgent organization operates.[3] Within this category, our data include services that are of benefit to individuals and families such education, public health and medical services, and social welfare services. We include instances when insurgent groups have close ties to related charities providing such services, or when other charitable organizations knowingly give such aid to an insurgent group. Beyond services benefitting individuals and families, our dataset also includes services that provide larger-scale community benefit. These include infrastructure services (such as developing or maintaining systems that provide water, electricity, telephone, or internet access), policing and public protection services, and religious services. We also include instances of provision of club goods,[4] when organizations offer preferential service provision to a specific group or target population. This might include access to kindergartens available only to members of a particular religion or infrastructure maintenance only in certain neighborhoods.

We will argue that the provision of these services by insurgent groups represents an extension of their primary project: to challenge, weaken, and supplant their adversary the state. To this end, community services are useful in that they strengthen the group's reputation as potential governors and as a viable alternative to the existing regime. We find less support for explanations that frame community services as an expression of the movement's inherent ideological character, or for arguments suggesting that these services are a purely top-down initiative meant to bribe or isolate movement adherents, or punish defectors.

Why provide services?

Despite the fact that this behavior has been the subject of a great deal of academic study, it remains true that social service provision is hardly an automatic or obvious feature of armed groups. After all, most armed groups experience at least some degree of resource scarcity, and the choice to allocate funding and human capacity to fixing water mains,

operating rural health clinics, or providing childcare means that those resources will not be available for other purposes. And yet, this behavior is in fact rather widespread. We find that thirty-one of the 140 armed nonstate organizations chose to do so in the years 1998–2012. Of the 1386 organizational years in the dataset, social services were provided by organizations in 136 of those years or almost 10percent. On the other hand, this behavior is also not universal–rather, it is a choice. So, what leads nonstate armed groups to choose to do so?

There are two major sets of explanations for such policy choices in the current literature: first, that nonstate actors provide social services as an extension of their own ideologies (an argument also made by nonstate actors themselves) and second, that such organizations provide social services for instrumental reasons related to recruitment and control of their members.[5] We argue, however, that neither of these is ultimately correct, and that the provision of services is instead a means of challenging the authority of the state. Therefore, such behavior should be accompanied by other forms of antagonism toward the central government.

Ideology, grievance, and identity

One explanation for this behavior is rather simple: that nonstate armed groups provide community services because they believe it is the right thing to do. Some scholars have argued that religious or ideological principles, as much as practical concerns, motivate the provision of community services. By this logic, offering charitable services represents an extension of an organization's broader ideological or moral commitments. But ideology isn't a binary variable—most if not all insurgent groups make ideological claims and can, almost by definition, be said to "have" an ideology. Indeed, this is a critical aspect of how insurgent groups differentiate themselves from other groups, including the state. Certainly one may argue that all organizations seeking to delegitimize the state may couch their grievances against the state in ideological terms. Therefore, rather than assessing whether or not a group can be considered ideological (which we think applies to all such organizations in one way or another), we examine the influence of particular ideologies. Based on the extant literature on insurgent groups, and the claims made by the organizations themselves, we focus our analysis on three specific types of ideologies as espoused by groups themselves: leftist political orientation, religious orientation, and ethno-nationalist political ideology. We isolate these ideologies for examination specifically because they are known to be strong motivators for community service provision even outside contexts of violent conflict, such as in economically well-developed and democratic states. For example, a rich literature documents religious[6] and ethno-communal[7] motivations for service provision in Europe and North America. Therefore, we examine these three ideologies with an understanding that they may motivate service provision in a different manner than, and even in the absence of, efforts at insurgency.

Work on religiously oriented organizations has explored the role of faith in shaping the choice to provide social services. Sarah Roy (2011), for instance, has argued that the social service networks linked with the Islamic Movement in Gaza (and by extension, with Hamas) are motivated primarily by principle, rather than pragmatism.[8] Davis and Robinson compare groups as varied as the Israeli political party Shas, the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, the American Salvation Army, and the Italian *Comunione*

e Liberazione and argue that their social service programs are part of a wider project of promoting their religious values in an attempt to "sacralize" society.[9] Work on nationalist groups, particularly on ethnic entrepreneurship and the policing of ethnic boundaries, suggests that civil society organizations that offer services based on group membership may play a role in these processes.[10] And while this argument is made less frequently in the academic work on leftist groups, theorists of leftist guerilla warfare—including Mao and Che Guevara—both talk about the importance of building bridges to the civilian population as an extension of the guerrilla's larger political project (although both also view this through a utilitarian lens as well).[11]

Perhaps more importantly, though, this is an explanation often offered by militant groups themselves. In explaining the provision of social services by their organizations, leaders often frame these services as a natural outgrowth of their ideology or political project.[12] Indeed, some organizations view aid and violence as two means to the same end, that is, resisting oppression and addressing communal or political grievances.[13]

A comparison of the three branches of the Palestinian national movement is instructive in this regard. Islamists often describe the provision of charity to the poor as an expression of their religious beliefs: members of Hamas' political wing, for instance, describe their social services as being an outgrowth of their religious convictions. Leftists may frame such services as a form of class solidarity; George Habash, founder of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, was well known for having operated a "people's clinic" in the Jabal Hussein refugee camp in Amman. And ethno-nationalists may treat social services as a form of intra-communal solidarity; Fatah, which defines itself as a "nationalist" Palestinian organization, operated a range of social service projects in the refugee camps in Lebanon, which were framed as offering support to Palestinians as a whole, who had been abandoned by the Lebanese state.[14] While these organizations differed ideologically, their leaders all described the provision of services as being an extension of their respective ideological commitments.

This suggests the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1a: Insurgent groups with a leftist political orientation will be more likely to provide community services.

Hypothesis 1b: Insurgent groups with a religious orientation will be more likely to provide community services.

Hypothesis 1c: Insurgent groups with an ethno-nationalist political ideology will be more likely to provide community services.

It is worth noting, however, that public claims regarding motivations—by leaders of armed groups or by any other politician—are perhaps worth taking with a metaphorical grain of salt. Just because an insurgent group claims that it provides community services as an extension of their ideological commitments doesn't mean that this is their only, or even their most important, reason for doing so. Nonetheless, in the dataset we identify insurgent groups by the ideologies their leaders publicly profess the group to have.

Recruitment and dependency

A second set of potential motives comes from the literature on public choice economics, which argues that community service provision actually represents a utilitarian strategy.[15] This argument frames the provision of public services as a means of rendering the target population dependent on the armed group, and of securing a reliable pool of recruits. Berman (2009) and Berman and Laitin (2008)[16] argue that the costs imposed by religious prohibitions and sacrifices are useful to organizations when determining which members will prove dependable over time. Limiting membership only to those who are devoted enough to accept these burdens helps violent organizations navigate the 'free-rider' problem. This logic further posits that service provision functions as a sort of coercive recruiting tool. Lower-income individuals—the exact population who would be drawn to social assistance—are desirable recruits because their dependence on the organizations they fight for makes them less likely to defect.[17] In addition to the utility of using services to draw in a suitable group of would-be recruits, fighters are offered special benefits such as compensation to the families of those who are killed or wounded, or other club goods not available to nonmembers.[18]

This logic generates a number of testable propositions. Perhaps most obviously, it suggests that widespread poverty should make the provision of social services more likely. If social services are being provided in order to render recipients dependent on the organization providing them, then this strategy is only likely to work if there's actually a need for those services in the first place. Wealthy parents who can afford expensive private schools for their children are less likely to become dependent on a free kindergarten operated by an armed movement than parents without the resources to make such a choice. Parents in societies where free public education is broadly of a high quality may similarly be less drawn to such services. Therefore, in communities or countries where poverty is widespread, this strategy would ostensibly be more effective than in wealthier places. So, the poorer the country, the more likely militant groups will be to provide social services:

Hypothesis 2: Insurgent groups in poorer states will be more likely to provide community services.

We recognize the limitations of this measure. Ideally, we would be able to test this hypothesis with fine-grained subnational data on income variation at the neighborhood level, and similar data on the precise geographic location of service provision by insurgent groups. But at this time, such complete economic and service provision data simply do not exist for the broad spectrum of organizations and locales included in the BAAD dataset. Therefore, rather than electing not to analyze the role of poverty at all, we choose instead to include it in the analysis using the national-level data we do have available.

This argument has other testable implications as well. It also suggests that the provision of social services is primarily about recruiting new movement members, including combatants. Accordingly, the stronger this need, the more likely an armed group should be to provide social services. Groups facing recruitment pressure should be more likely to provide social services. While recruitment pressure is itself somewhat difficult to measure in isolation, the sources of this incentive are fairly clear. Most simply, being engaged in conflict—which can lead to the death of fighters and a need to replace them—creates recruitment pressure:

Hypothesis 3: Insurgent groups are more likely to provide services when they are actively engaged in combat.

Relatedly, the need to compete for qualified recruits—even if a regular supply exists–can mean that individual movements experience shortages. After all, most armed movements do not exist in simple binary opposition to their state adversaries, but are rather only one of many such organizations in their immediate environment. Groups engaged in competitive or hostile relationships with their peers face not only an additional set of adversaries (a dynamic that may in and of itself lead to fighting and a loss of soldiers) but also heightened competition for qualified fighters. If social services are about tying constituents to the organization and increasing their ability to recruit fighters, then rivalry with other armed groups should make social service provision more likely:

Hypothesis 4a: Insurgent groups with greater numbers of rivals are more likely to engage in service provision.

On the other hand, a movement with a network of local allies should, by this logic, be less likely to engage in the provision of social services because they will experience less pressure to prevent other organizations from poaching "their" recruits:

Hypothesis 4b: Insurgent groups with greater numbers of allies will be less likely to engage in service provision.

Overall, we are somewhat skeptical of this argument. For one thing, evidence from the membership profiles of many insurgent groups suggests that some of the most committed fighters are those who do not necessarily need the services provided by these organizations; Hamas, for instance, tends to recruit highly educated people, even for suicide bombing missions. This suggests that if there is a connection between the use of services and recruitment, that connection is based in something other than dependency and desperation.

The struggle for legitimacy

We suggest a third potential explanation: that the provision of social services is primarily used as a tool by militant groups to improve their reputations in the areas in which they operate and to increase their legitimacy in comparison with the existing regime. At the same time, the provision of social services represents a means of directly challenging the authority of the state by assuming some of the functions normally claimed as the sole province of the government.

Nonstate actors who seek to challenge the authority of the state can sometimes face a reputational problem. The state is a known quantity: it has access to a range of bureaucratic and security institutions which the public has seen it operate. But an armed rebel group is an unknown. If, as scholars of prospect theory suggest, individuals are disinclined to risk what they already have even for the promise of greater gains later on,[19] a government that is lousy at governing may still seem more appealing than a potential replacement that might be even worse. Rebel groups therefore need a way to demonstrate

to potential constituents that they could function as a reasonable alternative to the current regime. But this poses a challenge: rebel groups tend, after all, to be focused on military action. When all their potential constituents have ever seen them do is fight, it can be difficult for such organizations to credibly claim that they'd do a better job of running the state than the current incumbents. The provision of social services can offer a solution to this problem by giving nonstate actors a way to demonstrate that, given the chance, they might represent a better alternative to their adversaries. And for rebel groups who have taken territory, these services can improve their reputation among those they now effectively govern.[20]

In addition to bolstering the reputation of the rebels, the provision of services by rebel groups can weaken that of the government.[21] It does so in two ways. First, authoritarian states often use patronage networks as a means of maintaining loyalty. By offering a rival source of such services, it can undermine the regime's ability to do so. Secondly, in a less tangible way, providing services, and maintaining the bureaucracies that manage them, is a key component of the state's legitimacy. By taking over those functions, an armed group can undercut the regime's claims to greater legitimacy as a consequence of its record as a builder and maintainer of institutions, and challenge the regime's special status as governing incumbents.

In sum, the provision of social services can help improve a nonstate actor's own legitimacy while also helping it to challenge the legitimacy of the state. There is evidence elsewhere in the literature that the provision of community services can improve the reputations of the organizations providing them. For instance, in a survey of more than 1,000 residents of the West Bank and Gaza, Flanigan and O'Brien (2015) find statistically significant relationships between the seeking of services from armed non-state actors and perceptions of the service providers and competing groups.[22] There is also evidence that this reputational boost can be useful to organizations who are seeking to increase their legitimacy and credibility as governors as a means of keeping the peace and forestalling local rebellion.[23]

If the provision of services is about improving a group's reputation in the eyes of those it seeks to govern, then this tactic should be especially appealing to armed groups which have seized territory. Controlling territory is a permissive condition that gives insurgent groups an opportunity to try their hand at governing. But it can also confront armed groups with new challenges, and therefore additional incentives to bolster their legitimacy in the eyes of the public. Newly seized territory isn't always easy to govern, as not all inhabitants will necessarily support the rebels, and some may be actively loyal to the government. Moreover, even as they contend with the pressures created by the need to govern and hold territory, they may still be engaged in fighting against the regime elsewhere, or trying to fend off attempts to retake the territory they hold. Therefore, armed groups that have managed to conquer territory have multiple incentives to provide social services: on the one hand, service provision offers a means of improving their legitimacy in the eyes of the civilian population, thereby easing, at least slightly, the difficulties in holding the territory they've conquered. On the other hand, if there is a newly felt absence of services after territory changes hands from the state to an insurgent group, failing to fill this service void may pose serious legitimacy risks. Armed groups who hold territory therefore have a double incentive to provide services there.

But the decision to provide social services after taking control of territory isn't necessarily one that all armed groups make—after all, maintaining infrastructure, operating schools and clinics, and providing local security require resources and expertise, as well as a commitment to prioritizing local governance.[24] Nevertheless, faced with the (sometimes unexpected) challenges of governing, a nonstate actor may find that offering community services can strengthen their claims, bolster their reputations, and ease friction with the local civilian population.[25] Indeed, Martinez and Eng find that the provision of social services is so crucial to rebel groups' ability to manage their relations with civilians that these services are deliberately targeted by state adversaries seeking to dislodge them from territory they have taken.[26] In sum, groups that hold territory have both a greater incentive to increase their legitimacy, and a greater opportunity to do so by providing services. We therefore hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 5: Insurgent groups who hold territory are more likely to provide community services.

But militant groups are not competing for public support in a vacuum. Not only do they face the task of convincing the public to support them, they also must convince the public to support them *instead of the state*. This can be a difficult task, particularly in systems in which access to resources is predicated on having connections to those in power through a system of patronage. In patronage-based political systems, elected officials dispense access to government services with the tacit understanding that this patronage will be repaid with electoral or other political support. Community members themselves do not expect government services as a right of citizenship; rather the exchange is governed by social norms of reciprocity.[27] For militant groups who are outsiders in these patronage-based systems, or who represent those excluded from them, establishing a separate network of public services can be a way of challenging the established political hierarchy and its dominance over the goods distributed through the patronage process. Directly operating community service agencies allows them to reap the political rewards of service provision without relying on the state as an intermediary. (For instance, the electoral success of organizations like Lebanon's Hezbollah and Hamas in the Palestinian Territories is attributed in part to their ability to provide high quality community services.) This suggests that the provision of community services should be particularly useful for groups seeking to bolster their image politically.[28]

At first sight, this argument may appear rather similar to the contention that the provision of public services is a matter of buying public support. But there is a crucial difference: under this logic, services aren't being provided as a means of rendering recipients dependent, but rather as a means of proving that the organization providing them can offer access to the same patronage-based goods as those currently controlling the state, thereby weakening the state's own networks of political support. It also serves as a means of demonstrating the group's competence. Hezbollah's "vast network of womb-to-tomb services … put Hezbollah—or Party of God—on the map as the agency that gets things done."[29] This stands in contrast to the Lebanese state's inability to effectively manage basic services. For instance, when a major landfill closed in 2015, the state was unable to formulate a new waste management policy, leading to a pile-up of trash across the country and eventually an ad-hoc combination of burning the trash and dumping it into the Mediterranean, which have had catastrophic consequences for air quality and the marine

environment.[30] Hezbollah does not see itself as being a permanently adversarial relationship with the Lebanese state—while in the past it has used the implied threat of force to induce the state to cooperate with its demands, it is also, as of this writing, part of the governing coalition. But these services have still been invaluable in burnishing the group's credibility as a civilian political party as it shifted its focus from full time armed conflict to political participation in the aftermath of the Lebanese civil war.[31]

If social services are part of a larger challenge to the state's authority, then we should expect their provision to be more common among groups challenging the state in other ways. Community services should be provided in tandem with other forms of confrontation with regime forces, including both political and military confrontation. An organization that is engaged in a direct campaign to challenge and replace the state may find it useful to reassure those who worry that such conflict will reduce the availability of state services that, should they emerge from this conflict victorious, the state will continue to function, and perhaps function more effectively. Therefore:

Hypothesis 6: Insurgent groups are more likely to provide services when they are engaged in attacks against state targets, like the police or military.

Hypothesis 7: Insurgent groups who act as political parties should be more likely to provide community services than those who do not.

Control variables

To account for a range of unrelated organizational characteristics and environmental factors, we also tested a number of control variables. We include the nature of the target regime, varying from a full democracy to a complete dictatorship. This accounts for the idea that while more democratic regimes offer a broader spectrum of legal means for organizations to provide goods and services (such as nongovernmental organizations and other civil society organizations, which are often heavily involved in service provision), more dictatorial regimes may not provide certain services for their citizens, but also may offer fewer legal opportunities for non-state organizations to provide services outside of insurgency. We also control for the use of terrorism (which we define as attacks on civilian targets) by the organization in question, simply because this represents such a frequently studied feature of armed nonstate groups. Finally, we also controlled for two structural factors that may shape the organization's ability to provide social services in the first place: the size of the organization and access to foreign allies. We selected these because foreign allies are frequently an important source of funding, and both funding and size can shape a movement's capacity to provide services in the first place. Similarly, we also controlled for centralization, under the assumption that this could shape whether or not a movement has the logistical capacity to administer a broad network of social services.

Data and analysis

To analyze the factors that help to explain why insurgent groups are more or less likely to provide community services we use the Big, Allied and Dangerous Insurgency (BAAD-I) dataset,[32] which has yearly data on 140 organizations for the years

1998–2012. To identify insurgent groups, the BAAD-I dataset uses the *Uppsala Conflict Data Program* (UCDP) battle deaths dataset as a basis for coding all organizations coded as having had at least twenty-five battle deaths in at least one year during the years the BAAD-I dataset codes.[33]

Organizations are included in the dataset if they are included in the UCDP and are coded for all the years during the time period in question, including years when they are not using violence as long as they are still in existence and have not made a deal with the government or explicitly said they are no longer using violence. (We should note that if an organization has one year in UCDP battle death data it is coded in BAAD-I for the entire period that it exists.) Groups were no longer coded if:

> (1) They disbanded and remained so through 2012. This excludes groups that issued statements of surrender or agreements to disband but evidence shows their continued existence or official resumption of activities years later. (2) They were integrated into the government and ceased to operate as an insurgent group. Generally, this is the result of a negotiated peace agreement that includes power-sharing provisions. (3) The group transitioned to a nonviolent, legal organization and remained so for all subsequent years. If the group perpetrated violence documented either in the Global Terrorism Database (GTD) or UCDP, their coding will include their "peaceful" years. (4) No further information could be found about the group.[3]

The BAAD dataset allows for analysis not previously possible because it has data for the organizations in question on a yearly basis as well as a wide variety of yearly coded variables related to organizational structure, ideology, alliances, control of territory, as well as various behaviors by the organization. The wide variety of variables that the dataset provides us allows us to test key arguments related to violent organizations providing social services as well as controlling for other variables that may have an impact. The criteria used to identify organizations resulted in 140 insurgent organizations in the dataset from 1998 to 2012 with some organizations lasting a year and some organizations coded for the entire time period.

The dependent variable of community service provision is a binary variable which is coded as '1' if in that year there is evidence that the organization provided medical, welfare, education, infrastructure, or public protection (such as police services) to a population outside of the organization itself, and a '0' otherwise.

We included a range of independent variables based both on the existing literature and on the theoretical arguments we are making. As mentioned earlier, because most if not all insurgent groups profess some ideological orientation as a means of distinguishing themselves from other groups, we cannot treat ideology as a binary variable. Rather, we included binary variables for specific types of ideologies that are commonly found in the extant literature. Insurgent groups were coded as a '1' if the organization was found to profess leftist, ethnic, or religious ideology. Alliance connections and rivalry connections for each of the insurgent organizations were coded as a count of each type of relationship that an insurgent organization had with other insurgent organizations.

The size of the insurgent organizations was measured with an ordinal variable that coded the size of organizations as '1' if the number of members is 0–100 or unknown, '2' if it is 100–999, '3' if 1000–9999, and '4' if it has 10,000 or more members. The data uses binary variables to capture whether the organization also functions as a political party and whether it controls territory. Leadership structure is coded using an ordinal measure by

which an organization is coded as a '0' if it is leaderless, a '1' if it has multiple leaders, a '2' if there is a functioning governing council, a '3' if it has a hierarchical leadership structure and a '4' if the organization has a single leader.

When it comes to the killing done by the organization, there are three different measures using the Global Terrorism Global Terrorism Database (GTD)[34] and the UCDP battle death data.[35] The battle death data captures how many battle deaths are recorded for each year above twenty-five. For the GTD data we made a count as well, but we separated the data into fatalities of military and police targets and fatalities of non-military and non-police targets. To control for country level factors, we included a variable from The Quality of Government Dataset[36] that combines a measure of the Polity data[37] and the Freedom House democracy measure.[38] We also included a variable from the United Nations GDP dataset,[39] which is one of the key ways scholars control for state capacity.[40] Table 1 provides descriptive statistics for the dependent and independent variables.

Of the 1386 years in the dataset, organizations provided community services in 136, or 9.81percent, of all organizational years. There are thirty-one organizations that provide community services for at least one year. Moreover, in examining the organizations themselves it appears that many of those providing services are religious organizations. Table 2 shows a list of organizations that provided community services during at least one year from 1998 to 2012.

Since we examine community service provision using a binary variable with a '0' indicating that an organization did not provide community services in that year and a '1' indicating that it did, we use a logistic regression as our method of analysis.[41] We used the software STATA to do our analysis, and year dummies were created using the i.year command. We also clustered the data by organizations. We used a VIF test to check if there are collinearity issues and no variable except the year dummies had a VIF score higher than 1.59. We used the prchange command in STATA created by Long and Freese (2006) to generate probabilities of an insurgent organization providing community services and the impact of each variable as that variable goes from its minimum value to its maximum value. The logistic regression as well as the probabilities are displayed in Table 3 below.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics.

Variable description	VARIABLE NAME	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Community Services	socsvcs	1,386	0.098	0.298	0	1
Foreign State Support	fdstate	1,386	0.0815	0.274	0	1
Battle deaths	ucdpbd	1,386	219.328	825.214	0	14,716
Civilian and government fatalities	nonpm_fata~s	1,386	22.711	110.717	0	2807
Police and military attacks fatalities	pm_fatalit~s	1,386	12.715	68.797	0	1676
Leftist ideology	left	1,386	0.212	0.409	0	1
Ethnic ideology	ethn	1,386	0.543	0.498	0	1
Religious ideology	reli	1,386	0.346	0.476	0	1
Size	size_rec	1,386	2.686	0.704	1	4
Leadership (higher more centralized)	ldrshp	1,386	2.892	0.494	1	4
Does the organization act as a political party?	polparty	1,386	0.232	0.422	0	1
Control territory	terrcntrl	1,386	0.247	0.431	0	1
# of rivals	r_degree	1,386	0.325	0.640	0	4
# of allies	a_degree	1,386	0.818	1.596	0	15
Regime type	fh_ipolity2	1,380	5.071	2.842	0.25	10
GDP per capita	gdp_per_ca~n	1,386	1730.847	4024.953	63.50962	48,601.73

Table 2. Organizations providing community services in at least one year 1998–2012.

Al-Ittihaad Al-Islami (AIAI)
Al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP)
Al-Qa'ida in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb (AQLIM)
Al-Shabaab
Caucasus Emirate
Communist Party of India – Maoist (CPI-M)
Free Syrian Army
Hamas (Islamic Resistance Movement)
Hizballah
Hizbul Al Islam (Somalia)
Islamic Courts Union (ICU)
Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU)
Kachin Independence Army (KIA)
Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA)
Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK)
Lashkar-E-Islam (Pakistan)
Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)
Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD)
Mahdi Army
Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF)
Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army
National Congress for the Defense of the People (CNDP)
People's Liberation Army (PLA)
Popular Resistance Committees
Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC)
Shining Path (SL)
Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA)
Taliban
Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)
United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA)
West Side Boys

Results

As one can see in Table 3, many of the variables including battle deaths, civilian fatalities, size, and all ideologies besides religious ideology are statistically insignificant. The variable that has by far the biggest impact is the number of police and military attack fatalities from the Global Terrorism Database, with a change of 96percent from the minimum value of the variable to the maximum value of the variable. The variable with the next biggest impact is the number of allies an organization has, with a change in probability of 46.54percent from minimum to its maximum value. The other three variables with a positive effect are territorial control (11.79percent), foreign state support (7.66percent) and religious ideology (5.9percent). The only variable having a negative impact on the likelihood of an insurgent organization providing community services was one of our control variables, leadership structure: a centralized leadership structure has a negative impact of almost 20percent when the variable goes from its minimum to its maximum value. Frankly, this was surprising to us, and strikes us as a finding worthy of more research in the future.

Table 4 displays the interaction of territorial control, foreign state support, and the number of alliances using the prtab command.[42] As one can see from Table 4, the interaction of these variables has a large impact on the likelihood that organizations will provide community services. The impact of alliances is particularly interesting. This impact seems to be most powerful for organizations that have connections with between

Table 3. Logistic regression and probabilities.

Variable description	Variable Name	Coef.	Robust Std. Err.	Change in probabilities from min to max
Foreign State Support	fdstate	1.3283**	0.5809	7.66%
Battle deaths	ucdpbd	0.0001	0.0002	NS
Civilian and government fatalities	rev_nonpm_fatalities	−0.0024	0.0018	NS
Police and military attacks fatalities	rev_pm_fatalities	0.0052**	0.0019	96.3%
Leftist ideology	left	−0.6055	0.6433	NS
Ethnic ideology	ethn	0.4996	0.7243	NS
Religious ideology	reli	1.3820*	0.7011	5.9%
Size	size_rec	0.7033	0.4023	NS
Leadership (higher more centralized)	ldrshp	−1.0565*	0.4899	−19.69%
Does the organization act as a political party?	polparty	0.0217	0.7468	NS
Control territory	Terrcntrl	2.0110***	0.5752	11.79%
# of rivals	r_degree	−0.0590	0.2713	NS
# of allies	a_degree	0.2336*	0.1100	46.54%
Regime type	fh_ipolity2	−0.0743	0.1148	NS
GDP per capita	gdp_per_capita_un	0.0000	0.0000	NS
Year Controls	_Iyear_1999	0.4747	0.3282	
	_Iyear_2000	0.7689	0.4386	
	_Iyear_2001	0.3109	0.3590	
	_Iyear_2002	0.3483	0.4655	
	_Iyear_2003	0.3179	0.4743	
	_Iyear_2004	0.1064	0.4437	
	_Iyear_2005	0.0470	0.5516	
	_Iyear_2006	0.1900	0.6176	
	_Iyear_2007	−0.1597	0.6435	
	_Iyear_2008	0.7407	0.6228	
	_Iyear_2009	0.1160	0.7123	
	_Iyear_2010	−0.1661	0.6816	
	_Iyear_2011	−0.3602	0.7556	
	_Iyear_2012	−0.2926	0.7249	
	_cons	−3.4496	2.1664	

Number of obs = 1,380
Wald chi2(28) = 138.72
Prob > chi2 = 0.0000
Pseudo R2 = 0.3666

***Significant at $p < .001$ using a two-tailed test.
**Significant at $p < .01$ using a two-tailed test.
*Significant at $p < .05$ using a two -tailed test

two and seven other organizations, and not as impactful for groups with more than seven alliances. 65percent of the organizational years (878 organizational years) show an organization having no connections. No organizations provided community services during organizational years when they had nine to fourteen connections. However, such organizations represent less than 1percent of organizations in the dataset since there are only ten organizational years in which organizations have nine or more alliances. On the other hand, looking at Table 5 we see that for organizations with between two and seven connections, organizational years in which community services are provided make up between 15percent to 42percent of all organizational years for each level of alliances. Organizational years when community services are provided account for 136 organizational years or 9.81percent of the organizational years in the data set.

What does this mean for our hypotheses? To begin with, it suggests that there is weak support for most of our structural control variables. Neither living in an authoritarian state nor the size of the organization appear to have an impact on a movement's propensity for providing community services. On the other hand, the impact of foreign

Table 4. Probability of providing community services as impacted by number of alliances, territorial control, and foreign state support.

# of alliances	No Foreign State Support		Foreign State Support	
	Does not Control territory	Control territory	Does not Control territory	Control territory
0	1.58%	5.7%	10.68%	31.09%
1	1.98%	7.09%	13.12%	36.31%
2	2.49%	8.79%	16.02%	41.86%
3	3.12%	10.85%	19.41%	47.63%
4	3.91%	13.33%	23.33%	53.46%
5	4.89%	16.26%	27.76%	59.2%
6	6.1%	19.7%	32.68%	64.7%
7	7.59%	23.65%	38.01%	69.83%
9	11.58%	33.08%	49.45%	78.69%
10	14.19%	38.44%	55.27%	82.35%
11	17.28%	44.09%	60.95%	85.49%
12	20.88%	49.9%	66.35%	88.15%
13	25%	55.72%	71.35%	90.38%
14	29.63%	61.38%	75.88%	92.23%
15	34.72%	66.75%	79.89%	93.75%

Table 5. Alliance connections and community service provision by year.

Alliance connection	Years with no community service provision	Years with community service provision	Total number of years
0	834	44	878
1	208	28	236
2	116	21	137
3	47	9	56
4	17	19	36
5	5	5	10
6	9	7	16
7	4	3	7
9	3	0	3
10	1	0	1
11	1	0	1
12	1	0	1
13	1	0	1
14	1	0	1
15	2	0	2
Total	1,250	136	1,386

sponsorship does find some support, suggesting that having the financial wherewithal to provide services is a relevant, if not overwhelmingly important, factor.

More surprising is the lack of support for the role of specific ideologies. Hypotheses 1a and 1c are unsupported; leftist ideology and ethnic partisanship do not increase the likelihood that a militant group will provide community services. However, religious identity does. This may suggest that Islamic groups feel a particular need to demonstrate their competence as governors relative to more secular regimes, given that they have comparatively few examples to point to as models to reassure potential constituents of their competence.[43]

If the results are mixed for the first two arguments, our findings are much clearer regarding the idea that community services are a strategy by which organizations seek to control their recruits. Our results directly contradict this argument. Having large numbers of rivals (Hypothesis 4a) does not make groups more likely to provide community services, but having large numbers of allies (Hypothesis 4b) does.

Moreover, being involved in active combat does not seem to matter (unless that violence takes a very specific form, as discussed below). In other words, neither a sense of threat from peer organizations nor a need to recruit fighters to replace those being killed is positively correlated with the provision of social services, suggesting that service provision is not about recruiting or controlling fighters after all.

To the contrary, our results suggest instead that the provision of community services is in fact about an attempt to establish legitimacy for the organization, particularly in comparison with its government adversaries. This is further bolstered by the results from Hypothesis 6. Although being engaged in ongoing warfare in general does not make a nonstate military actor more likely to provide community services, the use of violence against state targets in particular (Hypothesis 6) does. Militant groups that attack the police and military are far more likely to provide community services. This suggests that it is not conflict itself, but specifically rivalry with and antagonism toward the state that is associated with service provision. Not only does this undercut support for the recruitment mechanism, it offers support for the idea that service provision is about building organizational legitimacy, and challenging that of the state.

Not all forms of competition with the state have the same effect. Acting as a political party (Hypothesis 7), which could also be seen as a form of conflict with the state, does not increase the likelihood of service provision. This seems to indicate that the political gains of service provision by political parties like Hezbollah are exceptions rather than the rule, or are more closely linked to their legacy of armed conflict than their political role. Broadly speaking, being actively engaged in mainstream politics decreases the incentive to engage in service provision. That service provision is ultimately about legitimacy and reputation is underlined by our finding that holding territory (Hypothesis 5) also increases the likelihood of service provision, suggesting that it may help militant groups build support among the governed population.

Conclusion

Why do some organizations that engage in violence also invest so much effort in providing assistance in civilian communities? In order to better understand the factors that determine the likelihood that insurgent groups will provide community services to civilians, we tested a range of hypotheses derived from the existing research on service provision by violent nonstate actors. After examining data related to ideology and identity, recruitment pressure and top-down control, and legitimacy-building efforts, we find that insurgents' quest for legitimacy offers the best explanation for service provision to civilians.

We find other factors also increase the likelihood of providing community services, though modestly. Insurgent groups with foreign allies are more likely to provide community services, a fact that suggests the financial benefits that come with foreign sponsorship may be an important permissive condition for insurgent service provision. Religious orientation also proves to be an impactful ideological and identity-related variable in our dataset. This perhaps makes some sense in the wider context of the role that religious motivation plays in service provision by a broad spectrum of organizations, including mainstream NGOs, and the fact that a number of insurgent groups have their roots in community-based religious movements that also value charity. It may also be the case that religious rebel groups, who have few similar existing regimes to point to as models to offer

prospective constituents of what success might look like, feel a particular pressure to demonstrate their skill at governance.

Ultimately, our central finding is that community service provision by insurgent organizations is above all else a means of challenging the authority of the state and advertising one's own ability to govern. The most powerful determinant of community service provision in our dataset is territorial control, suggesting that community services may help build support among the governed population. The lack of a relationship between service provision and poverty indicates that service provision is not driven by an attempt to establish dependency among the target population, but by other factors. Insurgent groups are more likely to provide services when they are engaged in attacks against state targets, like the police or military, but not when attacking nonstate targets. This supports the argument that community service provision has to do with governing aspirations and countering the authority of the state, rather than with recruiting fighters for more general military efforts. Nor does service provision seem to be related to competition for fighters, since insurgent organizations are more likely to provide services when they have a large number of allies, and less likely to do so when they have a large number of rivals. Service provision does not seem to be a strategy used to compensate for negative behavior like targeting civilians. Rather, service provision is a tool used to build a positive reputation when organizations are engaged in the specific endeavor of countering state authority and governing one's own territory.

We should reiterate the important limitations to our analysis. As mentioned, we do not have access to the neighborhood-level economic and service provision data that would permit us to carefully parse the precise relationship between poverty and service provision. Similarly, while the BAAD dataset would allow one to differentiate among different types of services, that is a large-scale endeavor that is beyond the scope of this paper, given that the explanatory arguments for the provision of some types of services to the exclusion of others are likely to be quite complex. We believe a more nuanced analysis of service types is a worthwhile, likely book-length, project.

Our analysis leaves questions that deserve further examination. Insurgent groups who act as political parties are not inherently more likely to provide community services, which perhaps suggests that political competition does not necessarily lead to the same impetus to undermine the state's legitimacy. But this finding does challenge the conventional wisdom that the provision of services represents a form of political patronage in many states, and that such services are therefore embedded in (and an outgrowth of) the party system. It may also signal that through their political activity, these organizations already have access to some of the spoils of the state which they are able to distribute directly, without the need for a separate social service system.

Even with these lingering questions, our analysis strongly supports the argument that service provision is means of increasing an insurgent organization's reputation and demonstrating its credibility and capacity as a potential governor and replacement for the state.

Disclosure Statement

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Notes on contributors

Victor Asal is a professor of Political Science and the Director of the Center for Policy Research at Rockefeller College, University at Albany, State University of New York.

Shawn Flanigan is a professor in the School of Public Affairs at San Diego State University.

Ora Szekely is Associate Professor of Political Science and co-director of the Program in Peace and Conflict Studies at Clark University.

Notes

1. Asal, Victor, Brian J. Phillips, R. Karl Rethemeyer, Corina Simonelli, and Joseph K. Young. "Carrots, Sticks, and Insurgent Targeting of Civilians." <italic>Journal of Conflict Resolution</italic>, August 1, 2018, 0022002718789748. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002718789748; Victor H. Asal, R. Karl Rethemeyer, and Eric W. Schoon, "Crime, Conflict, and the Legitimacy Trade-Off: Explaining Variation in Insurgents' Participation in Crime," *The Journal of Politics* 81, no. 2 (2019): 399–410. https://doi.org/10.1086/701492.

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39. UNDP, "UN data Per Capita GDP at Current Prices," 2019. http://data.un.org/Data.aspx?d=SNAAMA&f=grID%3A101%3BcurrID%3AUSD%3BpcFlag%3A1.

40. Scholars argue that, after testing, GDP per capita works remarkably well as a proxy for state capacity. See for example James Fearon and David D. Laitin, "Ethnicity, Insurgency and Civil War," *American Political Science Review* 97, no. 1 (2003): 75–90 and Cullen S Hendrix, "Measuring State Capacity: Theoretical and Empirical Implications for the Study of Civil Conflict," *Journal of Peace Research* 47, no. 3 (2010): 273–85. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343310361838.

41. While the BAAD dataset would allow one to disaggregate the "services" variable into different service types, space constraints prevent us from addressing these variations in full in this paper, as addressed at greater length in the conclusion.

42. J. Scott Long and Jeremy Freese, *Regression Models for Categorical Dependent Variables Using Stata*, 2nd ed. (College Station, TX: Stata Press, 2006).

43. Ora Szekely, *The Politics of Militant Group Survival in the Middle East: Resources, Relationships, and Resistance* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).