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Abstract:

Under what conditions do states delegate their security responsibilities to nonstate actors? Existing explanations for state outsourcing of violence offer two types of explanations. The first points to the structural forces that determine outsourcing based on the historical evolution of the state. The second highlights the potential benefits of using nonstate actors as a cause of outsourcing behavior. Neither explains why the same state would use nonstate actors in one military operation but not in another, very similar, operation. Using a paired comparison of Pakistan's most similar military operations, Operation Gibraltar (1965) and Operation Badr (1998-99), which exhibit significant variation in outsourcing, I identify the role of target density – the spatial distribution of the military target across population. This paper shows how the military target's spatial relationship to the local population directly shapes the state's incentive to use nonstate forces in military operations. The findings are based on fieldwork involving interviews and archival research in Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir, and New Delhi, India; London, UK; and Washington, D.C.