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| Project Title: | Selective Leviathans: Explaining State Strategies of Counterinsurgency and Consolidation |
| Abstract: My dissertation seeks to explain why states choose ineffective strategies, either brutal or half-hearted, to counter violent challenges to their authority from sub-national movements. Most of the counterinsurgency literature over-studies Western expeditionary forces while neglecting how incumbents devise strategies to manage conflict on their own soil, dislodging it from the challenging context of state- and nation-building. To correct this, my dissertation theorizes a new dependent variable of internal security strategy and identifies four approaches—attrition, population control, enfeeblement, and cooptation—that encompass distinct sets of tactics and objectives measured in terms of effort and force. It explains these choices with a theory of center-periphery relations based on the state’s value of threatened territory and ties to the insurgent base. I test this on contemporary cases from India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka as well as historic cases during British colonial rule of South Asia from 1847-1947 by employing qualitative and quantitative data gathered from archival research, field research, and interviews. (I am specifically seeking this AIPS fellowship to support further archival research and interviews in London). By exploiting within-country variations for tight controls, I identify why particular strategies were adopted. Understanding incumbents’ strategic constraints and incentives is critical to explaining the destabilizing internal actions of insecure states. | |