

In-Group Policing and Religious Extremism: Theory & Experimental Evidence from India

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Introduction

A common feature of ethnic dyadic conflicts is that some elites seek to police in-group members to refrain from extremism.. Persuasion is one such means of in-group policing.

Yet to date, there is scant empirical evidence on whether elite persuasion is effective in doing so, or the mechanisms by which persuasion occurs.

1. Does persuasion by an in-group cleric affect extremist behavior?
2. Will clerical persuasion work differently for members of a victimized group?
3. By which mechanisms does persuasion occur?

Approach: Qualitative field work and an audio recording experiment in context of extremism among Sunni and Shia Muslims in northern India

Case Background

Lucknow: capital of India's largest state, with population of 4 million (70% Hindu; 30 % Muslim: 60% Sunni 40% Shia)

1722– 1856: Princely state run by Shia kings until Sepoy Mutiny

1856 – 1936: Administered by British Regent under the Raj

Sunni-Shia riots began in 1905 and continue to present day

Violence mostly concentrated during Muslim month of Muharram, when Shia engage in symbolic rituals that increase inter-group salience

Violence exclusively takes place in the Old City neighborhood, an economically under-developed area with population 1 million.

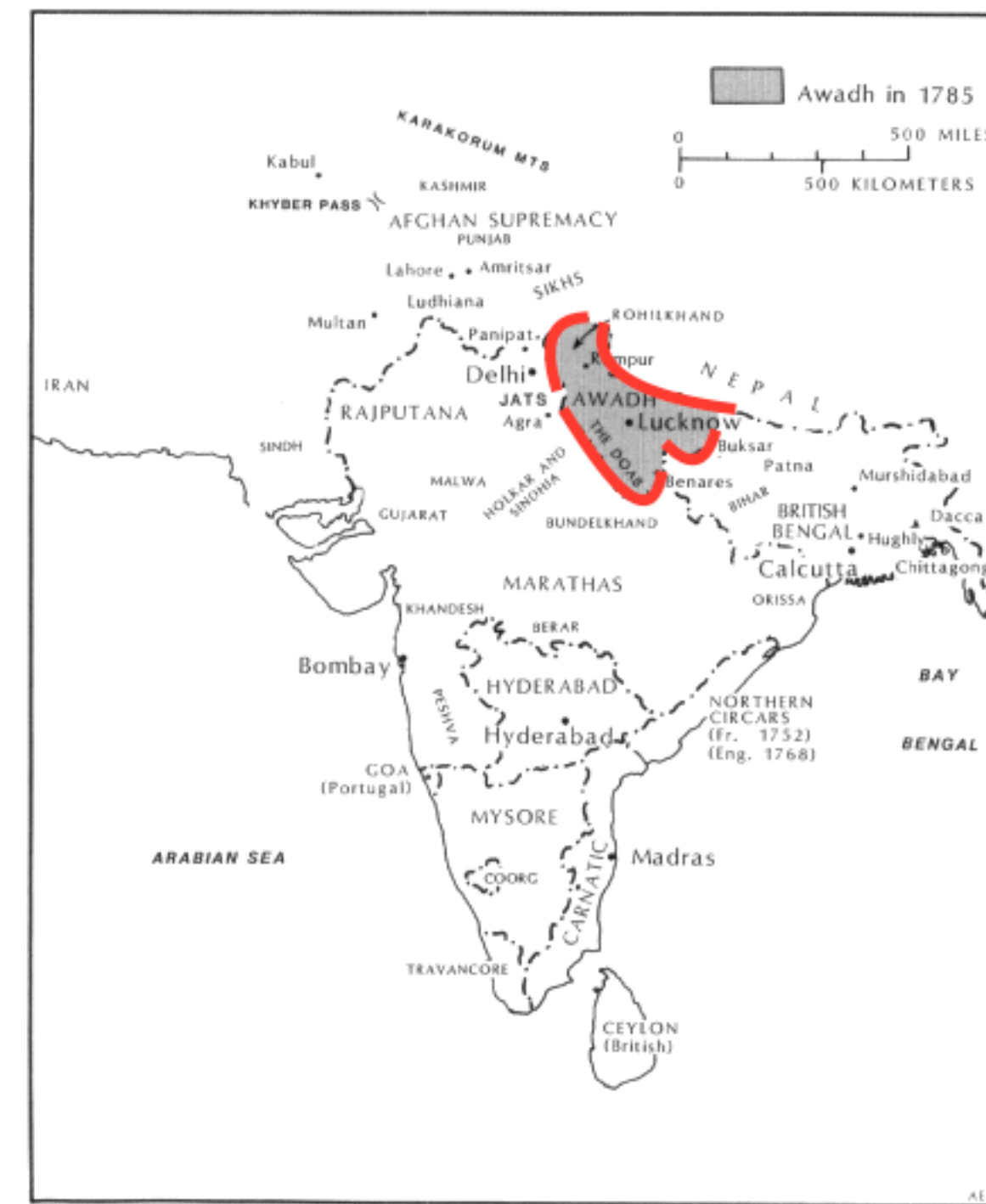
Theoretical Framework

Extension of the model of in-group policing (Fearon & Laitini 1996) to consider:

- (1) how the structure of conflict between a victimized and non-victimized group affects in-group policing;
- (2) how learning that the outgroup is policing itself affects in-group extremist behavior

Expectations:

- 1. In-group policing will reduce extremist behavior among the non-victimized group, but not the victimized group. The latter retains extremism as a means of self-defense.
- 2. Learning that the outgroup is policing itself is not expected to reduce extremism among either group since it lacks the force of a sanction to in-group members
- 3. Combination of in-group & learning about out-group policing expected to reduce extremism for both groups,



Experimental Design and Implementation

No Ingroup Cleric Msg. Ingroup Cleric Msg.

No Outgroup Cleric Msg.	420	420
Outgroup Cleric Msg.	420	840

This is a (2 * 2) * 2 fully factorial design

- Equal numbers of Sunni (1,050) and Shia young adult men (ages 18-40) (1,050)
- Overall N = 2,100

Sampling. Subjects randomly sampled in different Old City neighborhoods by co-sectarian enumerators. Used pre-made randomization scheme.

Procedure.

- Round 1: Enum administers background questions; delivers audio message via cell phone and headphones; sells pro-peace wristband for 5 rupees. Survey ends
- Round 2: Diff. enum contacts subject by cell phone and conducts in-person survey. Observes if still wearing the band; measures level of extremist speech. Final survey items measure mechanisms.

Primary Outcome Measures of Extremist Behavior

- Purchasing pro-peace wristband after treatment
- Still wearing wristband at follow-up 7 hours later
- Level of extremist speech supporting outgroup violence in the face of a hypothetical insult from the outgroup.

Main Results

Table 2: Pooled Sample: Group Means and ATEs

	Did Not Purchase Peace Band at T1			
	No Ingroup Cleric (1)	Ingroup Cleric (2)	All (3)	Change (4)
(A) No Outgroup Cleric	0.002 (0.022)	0.645 (0.023)	0.649 (0.016)	-0.047 (0.022)
(B) Outgroup Cleric	0.665 (0.023)	0.663 (0.016)	0.664 (0.013)	-0.001 (0.028)
(C) All	0.679 (0.016)	0.657 (0.013)	0.666 (0.010)	-0.021 (0.021)
(D) Change	-0.028 (0.022)	0.017 (0.028)	-0.002 (0.021)	-0.047 (0.022)
	Now Wearing Peace Band at T1			
	No Ingroup Cleric (1)	Ingroup Cleric (2)	All (3)	Change (4)
(E) No Outgroup Cleric	0.764 (0.020)	0.710 (0.022)	0.727 (0.015)	-0.053* (0.030)
(F) Outgroup Cleric	0.761 (0.020)	0.744 (0.015)	0.750 (0.012)	-0.017 (0.026)
(G) All	0.762 (0.014)	0.723 (0.012)	0.745 (0.009)	-0.032* (0.019)
(H) Change	-0.002 (0.029)	0.033 (0.026)	0.017 (0.019)	-0.032* (0.028)
	Extremist Speech at T1			
	No Ingroup Cleric (1)	Ingroup Cleric (2)	All (3)	Change (4)
(I) No Outgroup Cleric	0.033 (0.044)	-0.001 (0.047)	0.025 (0.032)	-0.005 (0.064)
(J) Outgroup Cleric	0.033 (0.048)	-0.042 (0.036)	-0.017 (0.029)	-0.075 (0.062)
(K) All	0.043 (0.022)	-0.028 (0.029)	0.000 (0.021)	-0.066 (0.045)
(L) Change	-0.020 (0.065)	-0.040 (0.062)	-0.021 (0.046)	-0.055 (0.069)

Table 3: Sunni Sample: Group Means and ATEs

	Group Means, Average Effects, and Marginal Effects on Not Purchasing Band at T1			
	No Ingroup Cleric (1)	Ingroup Cleric (2)	All (3)	Change (4)
(A) No Outgroup Cleric	0.282 (0.034)	0.637 (0.034)	0.220 (0.034)	-0.130** (0.048)
(B) Outgroup Cleric	0.528 (0.034)	0.498 (0.034)	0.508 (0.019)	-0.029 (0.042)
(C) All	0.506 (0.024)	0.484 (0.019)	0.513 (0.015)	-0.071** (0.021)
(D) Change	-0.055 (0.048)	0.041 (0.042)	0.000 (0.021)	0.096 (0.064)
	Group Means and Effects on Now Wearing Band at T1			
	No Ingroup Cleric (1)	Ingroup Cleric (2)	All (3)	Change (4)
(E) No Outgroup Cleric	0.661 (0.014)	0.541 (0.019)	0.601 (0.023)	-0.120** (0.047)
(F) Outgroup Cleric	0.628 (0.018)	0.581 (0.023)	0.596 (0.019)	-0.046 (0.041)
(G) All	0.645 (0.022)	0.568 (0.019)	0.588 (0.015)	-0.078** (0.021)
(H) Change	-0.023 (0.045)	0.040 (0.042)	0.008 (0.021)	0.074 (0.062)
	Group Means and Effects on Extremist Speech at T1			
	No Ingroup Cleric (1)	Ingroup Cleric (2)	All (3)	Change (4)
(I) No Outgroup Cleric	0.015 (0.032)	-0.203 (0.059)	-0.063 (0.040)	-0.219** (0.079)
(J) Outgroup Cleric	-0.011 (0.032)	-0.198 (0.048)	-0.136 (0.028)	-0.181** (0.081)
(K) All	0.022 (0.040)	-0.200 (0.027)	-0.107 (0.026)	-0.228** (0.027)
(L) Change	-0.086 (0.081)	0.004 (0.080)	-0.024 (0.064)	0.091 (0.117)

Table 4: Shia Sample: Group Means, Conditional Average Treatment Effects, and Average Treatment Effects

	Did Not Purchase Band at T1			
	No Ingroup Cleric (1)	Ingroup Cleric (2)	All (3)	Change (4)
(A) No Outgroup Cleric	0.803 (0.027)	0.829 (0.025)	0.821 (0.018)	0.018 (0.027)
(B) Outgroup Cleric	0.802 (0.027)	0.829 (0.018)	0.830 (0.015)	0.026 (0.032)
(C) All	0.803 (0.019)	0.822 (0.014)	0.830 (0.011)	0.024 (0.024)
(D) Change	-0.001 (0.029)	-0.009 (0.021)	-0.005 (0.024)	-0.008 (0.049)
	Now Wearing Band at T1			
	No Ingroup Cleric (1)	Ingroup Cleric (2)	All (3)	Change (4)
(E) No Outgroup Cleric	0.868 (0.023)	0.882 (0.022)	0.875 (0.016)	0.013 (0.032)
(F) Outgroup Cleric	0.884 (0.021)	0.900 (0.013)	0.904 (0.011)	0.015 (0.025)
(G) All	0.881 (0.015)	0.900 (0.012)	0.893 (0.009)	0.014 (0.019)
(H) Change	0.025 (0.021)	0.027 (0.025)	0.026 (0.019)	0.002 (0.040)
	Extremist Speech at T1			
	No Ingroup Cleric (1)	Ingroup Cleric (2)	All (3)	Change (4)
(I) No Outgroup Cleric	0.020 (0.071)	0.201 (0.070)	0.115 (0.060)	0.170* (0.101)
(J) Outgroup Cleric	0.077 (0.075)	0.116 (0.054)	0.103 (0.044)	0.028 (0.092)
(K) All	0.054 (0.052)	0.144 (0.042)	0.108 (0.032)	0.095 (0.069)
(L) Change	0.046 (0.104)	-0.085 (0.092)	-0.028 (0.069)	-0.121 (0.139)

Interpretation and Discussion

1. Consistent with theoretical expectations
 - pro-peace persuasion by an in-group cleric significantly reduces extremist behavior among the Sunni (non-victimimized group) but not the Shia (victimized group)
 - pro-peace persuasion by an out-group cleric has no effect on either group
2. Contrary to theoretical expectations,
 - the difference in effects between Shia and Sunni subjects of in-group persuasion on extremism is positive and significant, meeting theoretical expectations that in-group persuasion functions differently from out-group persuasion or by both.
- pro-peace persuasion by both clerics does not significantly reduce extremism among the Shia
- suggests higher than expected level of retention of extremism as a means of self-defense.

Broader Implications

1. In-group persuasion is highly dependent on the structure of conflict
1. Novel evidence that in-group clerical persuasion operates through changing mechanisms related to in-group policing, but only among non-victimized group members
2. Novel evidence on relationship between ideas and violence.
3. Countering Violent Extremism programming and policy recommendations