

Risk, Uncertainty and Effects on Violence in Eastern Africa

Carol R. Ember

Human Relations Area Files at Yale University

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(Organized by Carol R. Ember)

Aims of the Cross-Cultural Regional Comparison:


- ❑ To see if previous worldwide cross-cultural findings (Ember and Ember 1992) regarding resource unpredictability and warfare replicate in eastern Africa
- ❑ To explore whether resource problems affect other aspects of warfare, such as the taking of resources and behavior toward noncombatants

Sample:

- ❑ About 40 societies (e.g., Ganda, Somali, Gikuyu, Rwandans) from the broad eastern African region (from the Horn of Africa in the east; the eastern Congo in the west, southern Sudan in the north, and the northern parts of Zambia, Malawi, and Mozambique in the south) were sampled. Sample included:
 - ❑ all societies in the HRAF Collection of Ethnography in this region; and
 - ❑ a random sample of societies from the Ethnographic Atlas.

Predictors of Warfare Frequency in Non-State Societies in Eastern Africa

unpredictable resource problems predict positively



	Overall Frequency	Internal Frequency	External Frequency
Famine	.40*	.25	.44*
Natural disasters that destroy food supplies	.42*	.37	.43*
Chronic hunger for none/some/all of the population	-.13	-.17	-.13
Chronic—yearly hungry seasons	.06	.04	.24

Gammas shown

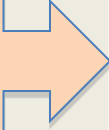
* $p < .05$ (one tail)

Table 1

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chronic problems have no effect



Gammas shown

* $p < .05$ (one tail)

Table 1

Predictors of Warfare Frequency in State Societies in Eastern Africa

	Overall Frequency	Internal Frequency	External Frequency
Famine	-.15	.10	.23
Natural disasters that destroy food supplies	-.58	.23	-.67*
Chronic hunger for none/some/ all of the population	-.76+	-.75+	-.67
Chronic—yearly hungry seasons	.14	.43	.05

significantly
negative-op
posite from
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Gammas are shown

+ $p < .10$ (two tails)

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Percentage of Societies Never Taking Resources by Type of Warfare

Type of Resource Taken	Internal Frequency	External Frequency
Land	38%	20%
Non-land/Non-people	8%	5%
People	20%	4%

Relationship between Resource Unpredictability (Measured by Natural Disasters) and the Taking of Resources in Nonstate Societies (State Society Coefficients in Parentheses)

Type of Resource Taken	Internal Frequency	External Frequency
Land	-.18 (.20)	.06 (-.08)
Non-land/Non-people	.64+ (-.33)	-.69+ (-.69***)
People	.40 (-.11)	-.91*** (1.00*)

Gammas are shown

+ $p < .10$ (two tails)

* $p < .05$ (two tails)

** $p < .01$ (two tails)

*** $p < .001$ (two tails)

Resource Unpredictability and Warfare Frequency

- ❑ In non-state societies, more resource unpredictability (e.g., famine, severe drought), but not chronic scarcity, predicts more warfare. (Replicates the world-wide comparison.)
- ❑ The relationships in state societies appear to be opposite—that is, more unpredictability is associated with less warfare in state societies. Some of the relationships with chronic resource problems are also marginally significant in the same direction—chronic hunger is associated with less warfare.

Taking of Resources

- ❑ In almost all warfare episodes, some type of resource is taken.
- ❑ Somewhat more restraint is shown in internal warfare compared to external warfare.
- ❑ Resource problems do not have simple relationships to the taking of resources.
 - ❑ In nonstate societies, more resource unpredictability predicts greater likelihood of taking nonland/nonpeople resources in internal warfare; but less likelihood in external warfare.

Percentage of societies never or rarely harming noncombatants during warfare

Type of Behavior	Internal Frequency	External Frequency
Killing Non-Combatants	36%	16%
Rape of Women	31	33
Torture and/or Mutilation	33	14
Destruction of Resources	9	0
Non-Physical Intimidation	20	18

Relationship between State/Non-State and Atrocities during Internal and External Warfare

Type of Behavior	Internal Frequency	External Frequency
Killing Non-Combatants	.56	.52
Rape of Women	.93**	.87***
Torture or Mutilation	.48	.62
Destruction of Resources	.82**	.77*
Non-Physical Intimidation	.75	.91***

Gammas are shown

+ $p < .10$ (two tails)

* $p < .05$ (two tails)

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*** $p < .001$ (two tails)

Behavior Towards Non-Combatants

- ❑ Most of societies at least sometimes inflict serious harm to noncombatants (killing, rape, torture or mutilation, and destruction of property) in both internal warfare and external warfare
- ❑ Most of societies at least sometimes inflict serious harm to noncombatants (killing, rape, torture or mutilation, and destruction of property) in both internal warfare and external warfare
- ❑ Contrary to expectations, resource problems do not predict atrocities against noncombatants particularly well.
 - ❑ The major exceptions relate to destruction of resources. More resource unpredictability generally predicts less destruction of resources
- ❑ Best predictor to date of atrocities is a state-level society (three or four levels of political hierarchy above the community). Non-state societies are significantly less likely to commit atrocities. **Why?**

Why might state societies commit more atrocities?

State societies in the ethnographic record tend to be autocratic.

This suggests the following hypotheses to be explored in future research:

- Greater political participation in the local community (more “democracy”) was previously found (Ember, Ember and Russett 1992) to predict less internal warfare. The reasoning is that if members of the same community work out their disagreements or learn to disagree there may be less violence between the units sharing the same culture. Thus, we might assume that others sharing the same culture will be less inclined to commit atrocities against each other when warfare does occur.

- More complex societies tend to be harsher on children—for example, they have more rejection of children and more corporal punishment. While children learn to obedient to their parents, they may have much less need satisfaction and in stressful situations, which warfare is, may be overly aggressive and destructive to others.

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Current HRAF Team: Carol R. Ember (co-PI), Teferi Abate Adem, Ian Skoggard, and Eric C. Jones.

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References

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