Optimal standard of human rights in countering an insurgency

Abstract

We explore why human rights violations take place in the midst of a rebellion. Our results indicate that faulty intelligence compels governments to tolerate human rights violations of its armed forces. There are two type of defective intelligence that can occur- a false alarm and a missed alarm. We consider each of these cases and identify the incentives of the government to allow its armed forces to violate human rights. We then examine the effect of a decrease in the human rights standard on the probability of quelling the rebellion. In our theoretical model, this effect is indeterminate (that is, can be positive or negative). We therefore empirically quantify this effect using the case of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) in India. We find that a lowering of the standard of human rights reduces the chance of quelling the rebellion and this effect is statistically significant.