



Investigating Strategies of Denial in Response to Targeted Mass Killings Committed by Governments



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BACKGROUND

- Denial: a political communication strategy characterized by public declarations that accusations of human rights violations are untrue
- There is a scarcity of data that prevents researchers from systematically examining strategies of denial political leaders use when faced with human rights abuse allegations.
- This study aims to collect data on how political leaders deny human rights abuse allegations in the context of Targeted Mass Killings or TKMs.
- Naming human rights abuse victims terrorists is a common way that governments will try to deflect and deny their involvement (Bracic).
- Shaming of the state undertaken by human rights advocates can trigger anger and shame in turn causing a backlash counterproductive to rights efforts (Snyder).

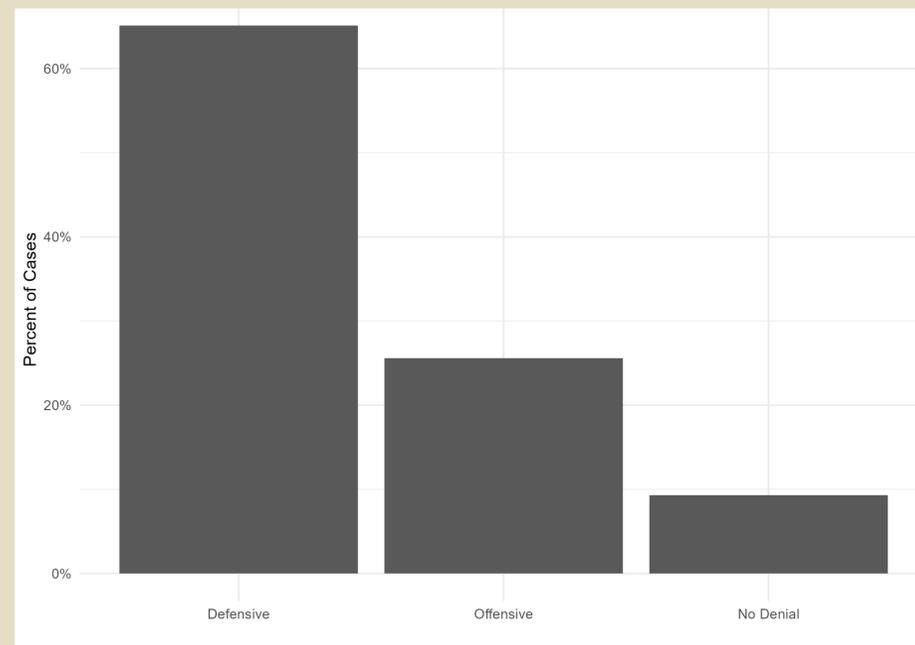
METHODS

1. For each case study, search through Nexus Uni, a library database, for articles published by international news media, primarily the Associated Press, Associated Press International, the New York Times, and New York Times International. If a preliminary search does not yield results, further searches for official government and international organization statements may be considered.
2. Determine whether political leaders employed a strategy of denial, and if so, what type of denial they used.
3. If a denial is identified, use found sources to hand code each case on a comprehensive Excel sheet that lists each variable accounted for by our code book.
4. Download each source used and key search terms.
5. Additionally, a survey experiment was fielded in the Philippines with a sample size of 3,000 participants to assess the effect of public opinion on domestic and international facing factors using the following regression specification to analyze data where M is a vector of pre-treatment covariates to improve the precision of estimates and $Denial$ is a dummy variable indicating a participant was assigned to the Denial vignette:

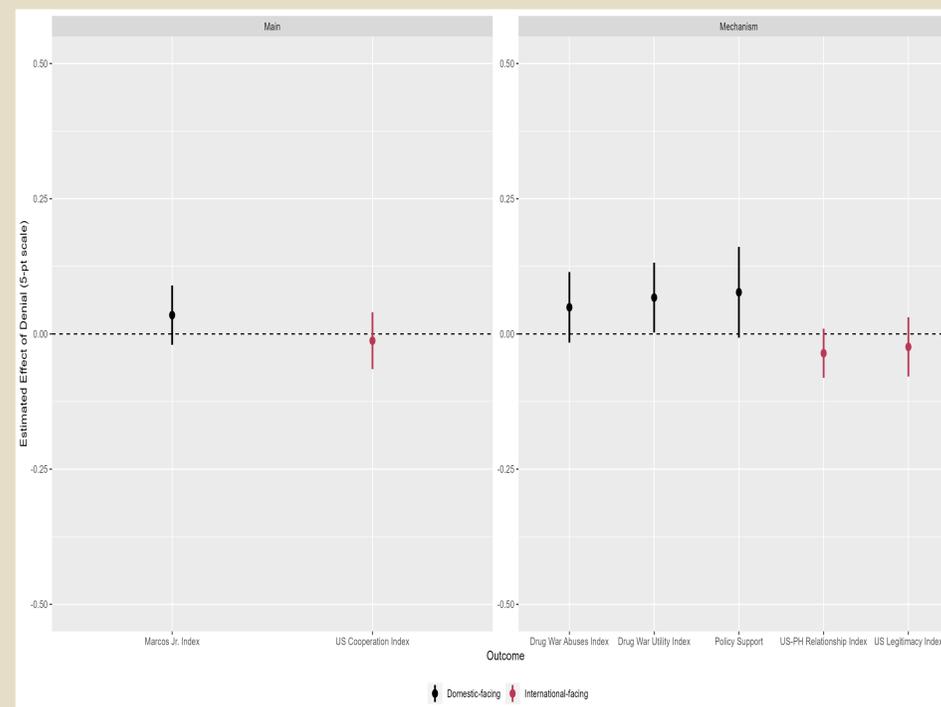
$$Y = \alpha + Denial + M + \epsilon$$

PRIMARY DENIAL STRATEGY

(TMKS, 1983 TO 2017)



SURVEY EXPERIMENT REGRESSION MODEL



EXEMPLAR CASE OF DENIAL

Claim to Sovereignty: Darfur Genocide in Sudan

2003-2007

“Congress is always biased...[The Africans] issued a resolution at an African summit that they stated clearly **there is no genocide in Darfur.**”

- Foreign Minister Mustafa Osman Ismaili (Brand)

“...this matter is not the **business of any one else**”

- Americas Department Head Abdul Basit al-Sanousi (Osman)

RESULTS & CONCLUSION

- Denial is a common response to human rights abuse allegations as it is used in more than 80% of cases studies.
- Variables like strategies of offensive denial, defensive denial, blanket denial strategies, racial rhetoric, and appeals to sovereignty alter instances of denial case by case.
- The survey experiment conducted in the Philippines offered a greater insight into the estimated effect of denial on a variety of factors.
- While the overarching project is ongoing, this research contributes to a systematic analysis of public opinion on denial as well as strategies of denial in an ever-expanding field of human rights.

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