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# *The Lives of Others*: Methodology and Ethics of Archival Research on Political Violence

How can archives be navigated when researching political violence and state repression? Recent studies on political violence have increasingly turned to archival research, highlighting its methodological value and ethical implications. In an increasing number of post-conflict scenarios, a variety of documentation – such as memos, investigative reports, and police records – is being archived and released publicly, becoming a critical new source of data and a valuable tool for research on political violence. Yet, as Luft and Subotić have recently pointed out, «archival research methods and ethics are not consistently addressed in sociology and political science, and […] methods and ethics in historical social science are intertwined».[1] Although historical primary sources are increasingly incorporated into social science research, the use of archival documentation remains methodologically under-specified and ethically under-theorized within the social sciences.

This article examines archival documentation as a distinct methodological tool within the social sciences' research repertoire and clarifies the conditions under which archival research can be used to trace causal processes and uncover underlying mechanisms. While a new wave of scholars has "rediscovered" history by systematically collecting and analyzing archival materials on political violence, existing studies have yet to provide clear and consistent methodological and ethical guidelines for its application – particularly regarding how and where historical archives can be effectively integrated into social science explanations.

Recent research on political violence has moved toward a more fine-grained integration of archival research into the explanation of its causes and consequences, by systematically collecting, sampling, and analyzing the "conflict archives" – i.e., «catalogs of written materials systematically produced as part of a political contest between a government force and an armed challenger (either domestic or international), and later collected and preserved for public access».[2]

Building on recent methodological and ethical contributions on "conflict archives," the article develops a set of guidelines for the use of archival materials and illustrates their broader relevance through an empirical application to postwar archival research, showing how similar methodological and ethical concerns extend beyond the study of political violence. Specifically, it outlines methodological guidelines for using archival sources to trace causal mechanisms through process-tracing, highlighting their associated ethical implications, and provides an illustrative application focusing on the postwar Italian democracy (1945–1954). This article makes three main contributions to the use of archival research in the social sciences. First, it defines archival documentation as a distinct source of evidence for tracing causal processes, rather than merely as a repository of historical data, highlighting the political nature of archives' production, collection, and access. Second, it extends existing ethical debates on "conflict archives" by showing how similar concerns arise in the use of postwar state surveillance records, and how methodological and ethical considerations are closely intertwined in archival research. Third, it demonstrates how archival research can be conducted under conditions of uneven and constrained access to sources, specifying when and how silences and inconsistencies can be incorporated into the evidentiary strategy.

The paper proceeds as follows. It first situates the study within recent contributions on working with archives on political violence and state repression, underlining advances while identifying unexplored and under-theorized issues. It then offers insights into navigating archives of violence and repression, focusing on ways to address methodological and ethical concerns in the use of archival documentation. Finally, it provides an empirical example – postwar Italian democracy (1945—1954) – to illustrate how these challenges can manifest and be addressed in practice.

## From "Conflict Archives" to Peacetime Archives of State-Surveillance: An Overview

Historical analysis is not new to the study of politics, nor is the use of archival documentation to explain the causes of collective violence. As early as the seminal work of Tilly, Tilly, and Tilly,[3] the authors drew on historical police registers to reconstruct patterns of conflict-related events and explain why people collectively mobilize. Similarly, Gould's classic work on the Paris Commune draws on archival sources to explain the microdynamics of violent mobilization.[4] While these works pioneered the use of archival research in the study of political violence, recent scholarship has moved toward more systematic approaches, employing structured sampling techniques, developing replicable measurement rules, and introducing more sophisticated analytical tools.

Notably, the «Journal of Peace Research» has recently dedicated a special issue to "conflict archives", advancing a research agenda centered on the systematic analysis of wartime archival materials and on their use to study otherwise underexplored dynamics of violence, given the limited availability of more conventional sources of conflict data.[5] By leveraging 359 pages of military plans and communications from Operation Sofia during the Guatemalan civil war, Schwartz and Strauss show how local interpretations of military strategy and the insurgent threat help explain patterns of wartime civilian victimization.[6] Balcells uses archival documentation from the Spanish Civil War and provides fine-grained evidence that the arrival of refugees sometimes had the side effect of triggering additional violence against local enemies.[7] Beyond revealing hidden dynamics of violence, "conflict archives" help explain long-term legacies of violent conflict. Zhukov and Talibova find that Stalinist deportations have significant effects on Russian contemporary electoral behavior through a careful examination of archival records of Stalinist political imprisonments.[8] Using a mixed-method design with community-kept archives, Cremaschi and Masullo demonstrate that local experiences of wartime resistance left anti-perpetrator legacies that can be translated into contemporary political action.[9] Nevertheless, archival research has also proven valuable beyond the study of wartime violence. Scholars have drawn on state surveillance archives to examine patterns of repression and control in peacetime settings. Sullivan and Davenport, for instance, analyze archival records from both the Republic of New Africa (RNA) and U.S. covert repressive agencies targeting the organization between 1968 and

1971, showing how challengers adapt to overt repression, thereby draining state surveillance efforts.[10] Yet, as the use of archival materials in causal explanations has expanded, archival research remains methodologically and ethically under-specified, particularly in the analysis of postwar archival documentation. Few exceptions exist. Davenport's research on the Black Panthers, for instance, provides important methodological insights on working with state repression files,[11] while Subotić has addressed key ethical issues in the study of "conflict archives".[12] Existing research, however, has yet to offer a systematic framework for how archival materials can be used to trace causal processes in postwar settings and how to navigate the ethical implications of working with sensitive sources such as state surveillance records.

The following section examines how archival materials can serve as an effective source of evidence in mechanism-based explanations, with a particular focus on their use in process tracing. It does so by discussing analytic techniques, ethical considerations, and the importance of contextualizing archival sources.

## Navigating the Archives: Methodology and Ethics of Archival Research

Moving beyond correlational analysis allows researchers to deepen their understanding of conflict dynamics and to improve «causal inference about why (and how) outcomes are produced in civil war settings».[13] Process tracing based on historical archives provides a valuable methodological means to examine causal chains and mechanisms, which often remain hidden in correlational research designs.[14] Although archival material on conflict has recently attracted scholarly attention in peace and conflict research,[15] it remains a relatively underutilized source in the study of postwar politics. Yet, it provides real-time evidence on actors and practices – who said what to whom under what circumstances, and with what purpose,[16] while addressing significant limitations associated with traditional data sources.[17] Whereas memos and interviews gathered retrospectively within "memory communities" may be affected by temporal distance bias and selective reframing of events, archives offer more detailed coverage of historical episodes, owing to their real-time collection and documentation. As process tracing relies on the identification of mechanisms' empirical traces, archival materials are particularly valuable in this respect, as they record interactions, decisions, and practices as they were produced, often capturing both actors' behavior and the ways in which

it was interpreted and reported.[18] In other words, they provide first-hand insights into actors' behavior and a real-time understanding of the strategic environment in which actors live, act and speak. This is particularly relevant in violent settings, where the real-time experiences of violence are often *nearly impossible* for victims to frame, may generate trauma responses in interview settings, or become difficult to recount in retrospect.[19] This, in turn, raises methodological and ethical concerns when relying on interviews with victims in the aftermath of violent events. In this respect, archival documentation can serve as a complementary source of evidence, providing access to information that often remains unspoken in violent settings while mitigating the ethical risk of exposing individuals to further harm or re-traumatization.

Yet, the use of historical archives may often entail important empirical constraints. While scholars generally address concerns of bias by verifying information through triangulation with other sources, this is not always possible in archival research. The timing and conditions of archival releases may limit access to complementary materials, making systematic verification difficult. In some cases, combining different types of sources may help address these limitations, though this requires careful consideration of how and why they are selected and integrated.[20] This could be done by selectively integrating secondary sources – such as newspaper articles – so long as they align with the evidentiary strategy and can be analytically linked to the actors and processes under investigation. As Larson suggests,[21] newspapers can serve as a useful source of evidence rather than merely a fragile tool for triangulation, especially when private autobiographical accounts diverge from one another or from bureaucratic politics and party lines. Newspapers allow the reconstruction of events unfiltered by later interpretation; they can tell us how the actors and the events interacted with each other and with the surrounding strategic environment.[22] In this sense, inconsistencies regarding known events and actors often may themselves be incorporated as part of the evidentiary strategy

Notably, archives also generate new metadata about how the organizations producing the documents framed and reported actors' practices.[23] Yet, using historical archives poses several methodological challenges and ethical concerns when used for theory testing. Methodologically, historical literature has long emphasized the key potential pitfalls when dealing with historical archival material: selectivity and political biases. These issues mainly concern availability, whether of documents (e.g., records can be destroyed or made otherwise unavailable;

many are blocked by state secrecy laws) or information within the documents, leading to questions about the internal validity of the findings.[24] When documents are released, they may be affected by deliberate manipulation of the types of information that were collected – e.g., historical police registers and surveillance documents may include information intended to discredit certain political groups or individuals while omitting others. Even when an archive provides extensive access to repressive institutions, important *silences* may remain, impacting subsequent analysis. Yet, similar to Fujii's work on silences in interviews in violent settings,[25] silences in archival materials may likewise constitute crucial metadata and should be treated as an integral component of data collection and analysis. Repressive institutions and actors' undocumented practices may indicate how political conditions shape what people were willing to say about violence, and what they had reasons to minimize or censor in the aftermath. In this sense, the absence of archival data should not be treated merely as missing information, but as *evidence of silence*. From a process tracing perspective, the systematic absence of documentation of certain practices or actors can therefore be interpreted, in certain circumstances, as analytically meaningful "evidence of absence".[26] As Thies succinctly states, «Often silences or inconsistencies concerning known events or actors in autobiographies or official chronicles may speak volumes».[27]

Yet, how can we navigate such silences and inconsistencies when researching with archives? In other words, how can we distinguish between silence and merely missing data? This is particularly relevant when using process tracing, as the observable implications of certain theoretical expectations may not appear in archives, raising concerns about the findings' internal validity and favoring alternative explanations. Scholars using archives to explore the dynamics of violence and state surveillance activity offer some insights into how these challenges can be addressed. Balcells and Sullivan suggest that "understanding the archives" should be a scholar's first step before engaging in the analysis of archival documentation.[28] Determining the historical and political context in which archival documents were produced is needed to mitigate potential sources of bias, thereby helping to better understand silences and inconsistencies in the documentation. More precisely, scholars should have a deep prior knowledge of the historical case and, in particular, of the institutions and processes through which archival materials are generated, collected, and ultimately released. Therefore, «when conducting research and writing publications, we recommend that social scientists who work with archives

consider, describe, and contextualize the provenance of their archives, including how they were formed and why they exist as they do currently».[29]

Taken together, these methodological challenges also raise broader ethical concerns when analyzing archival material, as Subotić recently emphasized regarding using conflict archives.[30] Archives are «political institutions [and] the decision about what to store and what to discard, what to classify and how, what to make accessible and to whom, are political».[31] Therefore, archives and archival material should not be conceived as neutral spaces. Rather, they may perform a censoring role, shaping how information was originally collected and decisions about what information is ultimately made accessible.[32] As a result, "understanding the archives" not only offers methodological benefits for research but also helps address ethical issues, especially when working with sensitive information about individuals or groups. While archival research does not include direct interaction with living subjects, archival material often contains sensitive personal information about individuals no longer alive. Yet, as Subotić argues, their dignity still warrants ethical consideration.[33] Publishing unflattering private information may cause reputational harm to the deceased and their descendants. Furthermore, such information was often produced within repressive or surveillance systems, raising concerns not only about its reliability but also about the risk of reproducing the practices and harms embedded in those systems. Therefore, contextualizing archives within the political system that produced them is an essential step for both assessing the evidentiary value of archival materials and addressing their ethical implications.

The following section presents an empirical example based on archival research on postwar Italy and memory of wartime violence, illustrating how the methodological and ethical challenges discussed above can be *navigated* in practice.

## Navigating the Italian Archives: An Illustrative Example from Postwar Italian Democracy (1945-1954)

This example draws on archival research conducted to investigate the local-level legacies of wartime violence in postwar Italy, using the process-tracing method. The analysis focuses on two Italian provinces, Savona and Imperia, selected as positive and negative cases, respectively, following a nested-analysis design. While the former allows for assessing the operation

of the proposed mechanisms, the latter is used to evaluate their robustness, with the systematic absence of empirical traces treated as "evidence of absence". In other words, *silences* in Imperia archival documentation are incorporated into the evidentiary strategy.

Following the guidelines for mitigating methodological and ethical concerns in the use of archives, I present the choices made regarding the selected types of archival material, while detailing the historical context and the organizational and institutional settings in which these documents were produced and collected.

As the unit of analysis is defined at the provincial level, archival evidence was collected for each case accordingly. The analysis focuses on documents produced between 1945 and 1954. Sources include materials preserved in provincial State Archives, local party archives, and local historical institutes. The type and availability of documentation vary across the two cases and are described separately below.

For Savona, materials were drawn from the provincial branch of the State Archives, the local archives of the Communist Party, and additional local repositories. The analysis of the Provincial State Archives includes documentation from the A3a category on "Political associations," the A8 on "Subversives/Persons Dangerous to State Security," and the D7 category about "Monthly Reports on the Situation in the Province." All this material was produced, preserved, and released by the local police headquarters and local prefectures. All the archival material contained in A3a and A8 categories was explicitly produced for surveillance purposes on political activities and politically active individuals, with significant differences between groups, associations, and individuals depending on their ideological and partisan affiliations. Therefore, explicit elaboration on the production context of these categories is needed to mitigate political bias and ethical issues.

Regarding the A3a category on political associations, the folders document the activities of associations affiliated with the communist party, those with an anarchist ideological orientation, and extreme-right associations. The records were initiated between 1946 and 1980, and closed with the cessation of the associations' activities. While records of the A3a category collect general information about the programs, manifestos, and members of these associations, the A8 archival category often includes sensitive personal information about individuals, thereby raising ethical concerns about its use and analysis.

The documents classified by the Cabinet of the Police Headquarters under the A8 category serve as historical evidence of the Italian

government's ongoing surveillance activities of individuals labelled as "subversives." This archival category, established in 1894, experienced a significant increase in documentation production during the Fascist period, as police surveillance and control practices intensified. No longer limited to political dissidents, these practices came to encompass a broader defined group of individuals, generally identified as anti-Fascists. After the war and under the consolidated Italian democracy, the *Casellario Politico Centrale* was not dismantled. Instead, a circular issued by the Ministry of the Interior on 23 August 1945 authorized its continued use, adapting it to meet the new demands of political surveillance. The category of potential subversives was redefined to include former Fascists, collaborators, politically violent individuals from any faction, anarchists, and, more broadly, all left-wing activists. The types of surveilled individuals vary by historical period and specific provincial local police headquarters. The temporal span of surveillance documented in each record often correlates with the individual's ideological leanings, resulting in variations in the length and intensity of police monitoring. For instance, records on former Fascists were generally opened between late 1945 and 1946 and closed in the early 1950s, reflecting the perception – shared by the Italian government and local police headquarters – of a declining threat posed by these individuals. Instead, the records on members of the Communist Party span a more extended period, documenting not only their political activities but also detailed aspects of their personal lives. This gathering of private data aimed to undermine the credibility of individuals holding key party roles, casting them as morally compromised or socially untrustworthy.

Therefore, I neither use nor display private individual information in order to mitigate ethical concerns. When such information is relevant to the empirical analysis, it is carefully triangulated with documents from the local archives of the Communist Party.

The local Communist Party archive contains various documents produced by the party between 1945 and the 1970s. I analyze primarily materials from the early stages of the Italian Republic (1947-1954) to evaluate the operation of the theorized mechanisms.

All materials produced by local prefectures and police headquarters are thus carefully triangulated with documents from the Communist Party's local archive and vice versa.

The overall analysis of the material from the provincial State Archives and the Communist Party's local archives draws on diverse types of documents. These include surveillance reports on the organizational activities of political associations and individuals (categories A3a and A8),

political manifestos, minutes form public meetings, records of public demonstrations (categories A3a, A8, D7), administrative reports (category D7), and party communications – both internal documents such as activity logs and external materials such as articles from the local Communist newspaper «l'Unità» (Communist Party archives and category A8). Articles from «l'Unità» are included in the analysis as the newspaper functioned as the official press organ of the Communist Party at both national and local levels. The local editor was a member of the Party's federazione, and the publication of news items was closely coordinated with discussions and decisions made within that body. The newspaper was used to communicate the Party's political line and activities to the public. This role is documented both in internal minutes of the local federazione (PCI's local archive) and in police reports, which frequently referenced «l'Unità» as a source of information on the Party's actions (categories A3a and A8). Newspaper articles, in this context, are integrated into the evidentiary strategy, despite their status as secondary sources. In line with the methodological guidelines outlined above, they are carefully selected based on their analytical linkages to the actors and practices under study, and their inclusion is explicitly justified.

Archival evidence for the Imperia case was primarily collected from the Historical Institute of the Resistance and Contemporary History of Imperia (IsrecIm). The documentation preserved at IsrecIm includes materials concerning the local Communist Party, the National Association of Italian Partisans (ANPI), and police reports on provincial political activity between 1945 and 1948.

The police documentation available at IsrecIm consists of scanned copies of reports originally held at the Central State Archives (*Archivio Centrale dello Stato*) in Rome. No additional information is provided regarding their original archival classification within the central records. The archival fonds of the Provincial Police Headquarters (*Fondo Questura*) of Imperia have not been transferred to the Provincial State Archives, as prescribed by archival regulations, and are therefore not available for consultation. No official explanation for this non-transfer is recorded.[34] Therefore, the A3a category (surveillance files on political associations), the A8 category (individual surveillance files on persons labelled as "subversives"), and the monthly political situation reports of the Police Headquarters for the years 1949-1954 are not available for direct examination.

As a non-state archival institution, IsrecIm follows preservation and cataloguing practices that differ from those of public State Archives. The available documentation is uneven over time. Materials concerning the local

Communist Party are preserved mainly for the years 1945-1946. The limited availability of documents for subsequent years reflects both archival preservation constraints and the partial loss of records due to a fire affecting part of the collection.

Taken together, these constraints highlight how the selection of sources and materials is shaped by their availability. In the case of Savona, materials from political parties' archives are available for the local branch of the Communist Party, whereas comparable records for other political parties are not accessible. Yet, certain information about other parties' activities, the roles of some of their leading members, and the minutes of their public meetings is obtained from materials preserved in the provincial State Archives and the local archive of the Communist Party. In the case of Imperia, by contrast, the archival documentation is structurally incomplete and temporally discontinuous. These constraints affect the evidentiary symmetry across cases by limiting the availability of equivalent archival categories, thereby reducing the scope for systematic cross-case triangulation. Yet, these constraints reflect broader challenges inherent in archival research on historical processes, particularly in fine-grained subnational analysis. The choice of subnational unit of analysis shapes the selection of archival materials and the evidentiary base on which the research relies, as in-depth, micro-level investigations are especially exposed to variations in archival preservation and accessibility. Moreover, the preservation and accessibility of politically sensitive records – especially those produced for state surveillance – are inherently shaped by what Subotić defines as "political bias" in conflict archives,[35] whereby archival preservation, classification, and access are structured by state institutions and their governing practices. Yet, these constraints do not significantly compromise the validity of process-tracing inference. The available documentation provides sufficient leverage to evaluate the hypothesized non-activation of mechanisms in the negative case of Imperia. Rather, these archival challenges become an integral component of the evidentiary strategy and constitute a methodological contribution to the literature on violent legacies, demonstrating how qualitative research on wartime legacies can be conducted through critical engagement with historically produced and politically mediated archival material.

## Conclusion

«This is not a story to pass on», wrote Toni Morrison at the end of her novel *Beloved*.[36] The violent history of slavery, Toni Morrison suggests, is

too painful to bear and transmit, yet it has been written and ultimately passed on to us. This narrative contradiction resonates with research on historical violence, raising questions about who can legitimately pass on the violent stories of those no longer alive – and, if we can, how such stories can be studied through archives of violence and repression and written in ways that are methodologically rigorous and ethically grounded. Recent research on political violence has increasingly addressed these questions by providing methodological and ethical guidelines for collecting and analyzing archival materials on violence and repression. Yet, existing research has yet to fully address how these challenges can be navigated in practice, particularly when methodological and ethical considerations are deeply intertwined. This paper aims to address this gap by outlining methodological guidelines for working with archival materials in process-tracing research, while also highlighting how related ethical concerns can be addressed rigorously. More specifically, it shows how silences in archival documentation can be incorporated into the evidentiary strategy, how the political production of archives shapes what can be known, and how triangulation can be adapted when access to sources is uneven or incomplete. Nonetheless, this study is subject to several limitations. First, certain methodological practices for addressing such challenges are grounded in a specific empirical context – archival research on postwar Italy – which may limit their applicability to other settings. While many of the challenges may be common to archival research more broadly, their manifestation may vary depending on the political context and the institutions that produce archival documentation and mediate its access. Second, the analysis primarily focuses on the use of archives within a process-tracing framework. Other methods may raise different or additional challenges, thereby requiring alternative strategies to address methodological and ethical concerns. While this study represents a preliminary contribution to ethics and methodology of archival research on violence, it may serve as a first step towards a more comprehensive approach to archives as «not only a source of data but as a subject itself worthy of interrogation».[37]

## NOTE

[1] A. Luft and J. Subotić, *Ethics of Archives: Improving Historical Social Science Through the Consideration of Research on Violence*, «Social Science History», 49(1), 2025, p. 230.

[2] L. Balcells and C. M. Sullivan, *New Findings from Conflict Archives: An Introduction and Methodological Framework*, «Journal of Peace Research», 55(2): 137-146, 2018, p. 137.

[3] C. Tilly, L. Tilly, and R. Tilly, *The Rebellious Century*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 1975.

[4] R. Gould, *Insurgent Identities: Class, Community, and Protest in Paris from 1848 to the Commune*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1995.

[5] «Journal of Peace Research», *Special Issue on New Findings from Conflict Archives*, 55(2), 2018.

[6] R. A. Schwartz and S. Straus, *What drives violence against civilians in civil war? Evidence from Guatemala's conflict archives*, «Journal of Peace Research», 55(2): 222-235, 2018.

[7] L. Balcells, *Dynamics of internal resettlement during civil war: Evidence from Catalonia (1936–39)*, «Journal of Peace Research», 55(2): 236-251, 2018.

[8] Y. Zhukov and R. Talibova, *Stalin's terror and the long-term political effects of mass repression*, «Journal of Peace Research», 55(2): 267-283, 2018.

[9] S. Cremaschi and J. Masullo, *The Political Legacies of Wartime Resistance: How Local Communities in Italy Kept Anti-fascist Sentiments Alive*, «Comparative Political Studies», 58(14), 2024.

[10] C. Sullivan and C. Davenport, *Resistance is mobile: Dynamics of repression, challenger adaptation, and surveillance in US 'Red Squad' and black nationalist archives*, «Journal of Peace Research», 55(2):175-189, 2018.

[11] C. Davenport, *Media Bias, Perspective, and State Repression: The Black Panther Party*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2009.

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[13] J. Lyall, *Process tracing, causal inference, and civil war.* In: Andrew Bennett and Jeffrey T Checkel (eds) *Process Tracing: From Metaphor to Analytic Tool*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 186-207, 2015, p. 186.

[14] R. A. Schwartz and S. Straus, *What drives violence against civilians in civil war? Evidence from Guatemala's conflict archives*, cit.

[15] e.g., L. Balcells and C. Sullivan, *New Findings from Conflict Archives: An Introduction and Methodological Framework*, cit; A. Luft and J. Subotić, *Ethics of Archives: Improving Historical Social Science Through the Consideration of Research on Violence*, cit.

[16] C. G. Thies, *A Pragmatic Guide to Qualitative Historical Analysis in the Study of International Relations*, «International Studies Perspectives», 3(4): 351-372, 2002.

[17] L. Balcells and C. Sullivan, *New Findings from Conflict Archives: An Introduction and Methodological Framework*, cit.

[18] R. A. Schwartz and S. Straus, *What drives violence against civilians in civil war? Evidence from Guatemala's conflict archives*, cit.

[19] e.g., W. Pearlman, *Emotional Sensibility: Exploring the Methodological and Ethical Implications of Research Participants' Emotions*, «American Political Science Review», 2022.

[20] L. Balcells and C. Sullivan, *New Findings from Conflict Archives: An Introduction and Methodological Framework*, cit.

[21] D. W. Larson, *Sources and Methods in Cold War History: The Need for a New Theory-Based Archival Approach*, in *Bridges and Boundaries: Historians, Political Scientists, and the Study of International Relations*, edited by C. Elman and M. F. Elman, pp. 327-350, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, 2001.

[22] *Ibid*.

[23] L. Balcells and C. Sullivan, *New Findings from Conflict Archives: An Introduction and Methodological Framework*, cit.; A. Luft and J. Subotić, *Ethics of Archives: Improving Historical Social Science Through the Consideration of Research on Violence*, cit.

[24] L. Balcells and C. Sullivan, *New Findings from Conflict Archives: An Introduction and Methodological Framework*, cit.; A. Luft and J. Subotić, *Ethics of Archives: Improving Historical Social Science Through the Consideration of Research on Violence*, cit., C. G. Thies, *A Pragmatic Guide to Qualitative Historical Analysis in the Study of International Relations*, cit.; R. A. Schwartz and S. Straus, *What drives violence against civilians in civil war? Evidence from Guatemala's conflict archives*, cit.

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[26] A. Bennett and J. Checkel, *Process Tracing: From Metaphor to Analytical Tool*, eds. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge UK, 2015.

[27] C. G. Thies, *A Pragmatic Guide to Qualitative Historical Analysis in the Study of International Relations*, cit., p. 357.

[28] L. Balcells and C. Sullivan, *New Findings from Conflict Archives: An Introduction and Methodological Framework*, cit., p. 140.

[29] A. Luft and J. Subotić, *Ethics of Archives: Improving Historical Social Science Through the Consideration of Research on Violence*, cit., p. 235.

[30] Subotić, *Ethics of Archival Research on Political Violence*, «Journal of Peace Research», cit.

[31] *Ivi*, p. 9.

[32] *Ivi*.

[33] *Ivi*.

[34] Mail received on February 10, 2026, from the Provincial State Archive of Imperia.

[35] Subotić, *Ethics of Archival Research on Political Violence*, «Journal of Peace Research», cit.

[36] T. Morrison, *Beloved*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1987.

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