

Rebel Recruitment and Repertoires of Violence

Abstract:

The conventional wisdom is that militant organizations that rely more on ideological appeals, relative to material incentives, for recruitment, will be more restrained in their treatment of civilians on a variety of dimensions. However, in this paper, we argue that greater reliance on ideological appeals will be associated with restraint in the use of some forms of violence, but not others. We expect that because of normative commitments, institutional constraints, and internal cohesion, ideologically driven rebels will be less likely to engage in sexual violence. However, for the same reasons, we also expect that ideologically committed recruits are often motivated to perpetrate other forms of lethal and non-lethal, non-sexual violence. As a result, ideologically motivated recruits will be more likely to employ repertoires of violence that show restraint in the use of sexual violence, but *not* other forms of abuse. Using novel data on the recruitment practices of rebel groups across the world, we find evidence for our argument.

A prevailing wisdom is that rebel groups that rely more on material incentives, relative to ideological appeals, for recruitment, will be more abusive towards civilians. Specifically, material incentives are thought to attract opportunistic individuals who seek short-term benefits, but who are not invested in the long-term goals of their organizations (Weinstein 2005, 2007). Materially driven recruits are expected to act in their own best interest, even when it undermines the goals of their groups, while ideologically driven rebels behave in ways that benefit their group. Consequently, ideologically motivated recruits are believed to show significant restraint in their treatment of civilians, while their materially driven counterparts are expected to engage in a wide array of abuses against civilians for self-gain (Humphreys and Weinstein 2006).

However, much of the literature tends to focus on whether or not rebel groups victimize civilian populations, lumping multiple forms of violence together (e.g., Weinstein 2005, 2007; Humphreys and Weinstein 2006), rather than examining the variation in repertoires of violence they employ (Gutiérrez-Sanín and Wood 2017). However, these repertoires vary extensively, suggesting it is not just a choice of whether to victimize civilians, but what form that victimization may take. This dynamic is particularly relevant to the literature on rebel recruitment, as rebel leaders often employ ideological indoctrination to get rebel soldiers to show restraint in some contexts, but to encourage violence in others (Hoover Green 2016, 2018).

One unique area of restraint is in the use of sexual violence. Prominent militant movements including the LTTE in Sri Lanka (Wood 2009), Sendero Luminoso (the Shining Path) in Peru (Leiby 2009), rebels in El Salvador (Cohen, Hoover Green, and Wood 2013), and the PKK in Turkey (Haner, Cullen, and Benson 2020) terrorized civilians in a variety of manners but had strong internal prohibitions against the use of sexual violence directed at the same populations they victimized. Data from the Rebel Human Rights Violations (RHRV) dataset (Walsh, Conrad,

and Whitaker 2023), which contains information on a variety of human rights abuses by rebel organizations, reveals that just over half of the 327 organizations in the dataset had at least one year in which they perpetrated at least one type of abuse against civilians, but did not engage in sexual violence.

Thus, in this paper, we argue that prior work on rebel recruitment and violence against civilians has both theoretically and empirically overlooked how rebel mobilization strategies affect a wide variety of violent repertoires, not just general patterns of restraint or abuse. Specifically, we posit that groups that rely more on ideological appeals, relative to material incentives, for recruitment, will be more likely to employ repertoires of violence that involve the use of some forms of abuse against civilians, but which show restraint in the perpetration of sexual violence.

We argue that because of the reputational and physical risks associated with sexual violence, relative to other forms of abuse, rebels often have the incentive to show more restraint in the use of the former than the latter. We expect that normative commitments, institutional constraints, and internal cohesion associated with ideologically motivated recruits will make them more likely to show restraint in the use of sexual violence. However, for similar reasons, ideological beliefs can spur the use of other forms of violence. Consequently, ideologically committed rebels often have the incentive to show restraint in the use of sexual violence but *not* other forms of abuse, such as killing and forced displacement, among other human rights violations. Materially driven recruits, in contrast, lack the same normative commitments, institutional constraints, and internal cohesion, and are thus more likely to employ broader repertoires of abuse, which often include sexual violence.

To evaluate this argument, we employ novel data from the Rebel Appeals and Incentives Dataset (RAID), which contains information on the recruitment strategies of 232 rebel organizations that operate around the world (Soules 2023). RAID contains an ordinal measure of the extent to which rebel groups rely on ideological appeals, relative to material incentives, for recruitment. We pair RAID with the Rebel Human Rights Violations (RHRV) dataset (Walsh, Conrad, and Whitaker 2023), which contains data on a diversity of lethal and non-lethal human rights abuses perpetrated by rebel movements. These data allow us to investigate how groups' recruitment strategies affect their repertoires of violence.

We find that groups that rely more on ideological appeals, relative to material incentives, for recruitment, are more likely to employ repertoires of violence that involve the use of some types of violence, but restraint in the use of sexual violence. Subsequent tests reveal that, even when various forms of violence against civilians are analyzed separately, reliance on ideological appeals curtails the use of sexual violence but not other forms of abuse.

This paper offers several contributions. First, it challenges the conventional wisdom regarding the impact of ideological appeals and material incentives on civilian victimization. The conventional wisdom suggests that groups will be less likely to perpetrate multiple types of abuse, not just sexual violence (Weinstein 2005, 2007; Humphreys and Weinstein 2006). Instead, our results indicate that ideological-based recruitment strategies reduce rebels' use of sexual violence, but not necessarily all forms of violence against civilians.

Second, it provides one of the only, to our knowledge, quantitative assessments of how the persuasive recruitment practices of a large number of rebel organizations affect their repertoires of violence. Cross-conflict and cross-group quantitative studies tend to use measures of rebel organizations' broader ideologies and/or material resources (e.g., Weinstein 2007; Asal and

Rethemeyer 2008; Wood 2014; Fortna, Lotito, and Rubin 2018; Walsh et al. 2018; Whitaker, Walsh, and Conrad 2019; Basedau, Deitch, and Zellman 2022). However, the broader ideology and material resources of militant organizations do not always map on to their actual recruitment practices (Herbst 2000; Soules 2023). As a result, the association between natural resource wealth and violence against civilians could be driven by some other mechanism, such as the lack of dependence on civilian support decreasing the incentive to show restraint. This analysis uses data specific to the recruitment practices of armed organizations allowing us to assess theoretical mechanisms that are specific to mobilization strategies. Other analyses that directly test this relationship (Humphreys and Weinstein 2006) are limited in geographic scope (e.g., Sierra Leone).

Third, prior quantitative work on recruitment and civilian victimization often does not fully disaggregate the repertoires of violence available to rebels, nor does it distinguish between different combinations of these violent tactics (Gutiérrez-Sanín and Wood 2017). There are a couple of exceptions, as Humphreys and Weinstein (2006) distinguish between rape and food extraction and Soules (2023) analyzes how rebel recruitment practices affect the perpetration of single and multi-perpetrator rape.

However, neither study considers variation in the combinations of violence that rebel groups employ. Additionally, while Soules (2023) employs data on wartime rape from the Repertoires of Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict (RSVAC) Dataset (Dumaine et al. 2022), we examine sexual violence more generally, not just rape, as there are often different logics underpinning different forms of sexual violence (Cohen 2016). Thus, this analysis also serves as a further test of the strength of the evidence linking rebel recruitment tactics to sexual violence.

Fourth, we make a theoretical contribution by distinguishing between the causes of sexual violence and other forms of abuses, contributing to the literature that highlights the characteristics that make sexual violence unique, in some ways, from other abuses against civilians (e.g., Cohen 2016, 2017). We posit that the normative and institutional constraints, and internal cohesion, associated with ideological recruitment incentivize some violent tactics but not others.

Ideological Recruitment

We take a broad view of what “ideological recruitment” is. Specifically, because we are directly testing the implications of his work, we make similar distinctions in the recruitment practices of rebel organizations to those made by Weinstein (2005, 2007). Thus, we make a distinction between groups that rely more on material appeals for recruitment, such as salaries or the promises of loot, from those that mobilize around a variety of non-material or grievance-based issues.

Rebels mobilize around a variety of grievances, some of which are directly related to commonly studied ideologies in civil wars, such as Marxism, radical jihadism, or ethnonationalism, and others which address more specific political or social grievances, such as local political problems or opposition to foreign military or economic intervention (Soules 2023). Thus, rather than viewing ideological-based recruitment as being exclusively tied to a broader ideology, such as Marxism, we also consider other grievance-based appeals. Said differently, we consider recruitment appeals related to both grievances associated with broader ideologies as well as more specific or contextual grievances.

Our reason for this is theoretical. The prior literature holds that when rebel organizations employ material recruitment incentives, they draw in recruits who are more interested in personal enrichment than helping these groups achieve their goals. Consequently, materially driven recruits often abuse civilians for personal gain, even though such abusiveness is detrimental to the group as a whole. In contrast, recruits that are motivated by non-material issues tend to behave more pro-socially, as they are more invested in their groups' success. As a result, such recruits will be more obedient and less likely to abuse civilians, in a variety of ways, in contexts in which it could harm the reputations or operations of their organizations (Weinstein 2005, 2007; Humphreys and Weinstein 2006).

Thus, the expectation in prior work is that recruits that are motivated by non-material, grievance-based issues will be less abusive towards civilians, in a variety of ways, than their materially motivated counterparts. We use "ideological recruitment" as shorthand for recruitment strategies that are based around tapping into grievances, some of which are related to broader ideologies, some of which are more specific or contextual.

Another important distinction to make is that ideological-based recruitment is related to, but still distinct in important ways, from ideological indoctrination and the broader ideologies of groups. Militant organizations often extensively indoctrinate members after they have already been recruited, and thus, the recruitment and indoctrination stages should not be conflated, even though they are interrelated (Wood 2009). Rebel movements also often employ ideological recruitment appeals that address issues beyond their broader, publicly declared ideologies (e.g., religious, left-wing, ethnonationalist) and groups with these broader ideologies still often mobilize recruits with material incentives (Soules 2023).

Thus, for two different reasons, we analyze the effects of ideological recruitment strategies separately from indoctrination or broader ideologies. First, the conventional wisdom is that rebel recruitment tactics affect their repertoires of violence (Weinstein 2005, 2007; Humphreys and Weinstein 2006). To assess this conventional wisdom, we must evaluate the effects of recruitment strategies specifically.

Second, there are strong theoretical reasons to believe that recruitment will have distinct effects on patterns of violence. Based on the literature discussed above, we expect that ideologically motivated recruits will be more likely to employ repertoires of violence that involve restraint in sexual violence but not in other areas because of the risks associated with sexual violence. Ideologically motivated recruits are better positioned to do this because of (1) their normative beliefs about the appropriateness of specific types of violence; (2) they are more obedient, and thus, more likely to obey rebel commanders' orders for violence or restraint; and (3) will help form more cohesive fighting forces that are less dependent on violence to forge bonds among cadres.

Relatedly, because ideologically motivated recruits are more pro-social and care more about the good of the group, we expect that they will also be more open to further ideological indoctrination once they join. Such indoctrination is also important in explaining the repertoires of violence groups employ (Hoover Green 2016, 2018). We therefore expect that mobilization tactics matter in explaining both recruits' initial propensities toward specific repertoires of violence as well as the degree to which they can be encouraged by rebel leaders to perpetrate certain types of violence, but to show restraint in other areas.

Recruitment and Violence

This discussion suggests that the recruitment appeals rebel groups employ should affect both the types of individuals drawn in (e.g., recruits with varying motives and attitudes), and their propensity or susceptibility to indoctrination. Thus, groups' mobilization strategies affect the willingness of recruits to engage in certain forms of violence from the outset *and* the probability they can be indoctrinated or socialized into engaging in specific types of abuses. However, while the conventional wisdom suggests that indiscriminate violence is often wielded by groups that use material incentives, while restraint follows those groups that employ ideological appeals, ideology can be used in ways that promote violence. Depending on its type and framing, ideology can itself have either a restraining or encouraging effect on violence (Straus 2012; Sarwari 2021). We consider these issues below.

Ideology and Restraint

Militant organizations sometimes employ violence against civilians to achieve a variety of objectives. However, Humphreys and Weinstein (2006) explain that, because violence often leads to substantial civilian backlash and loss of support, rebel leaders try to prevent cadres from overemploying violence against civilians. Loss of civilian support can make it difficult for rebel movements to achieve their objectives.

Humphreys and Weinstein note that individual rebels often face a tradeoff between the within-group social benefits of showing restraint and the private benefits they can garner from abusing civilians, such as looting their resources. Humphreys and Weinstein posit that when members share common goals and ideologies, they will be more likely to engage in, and sustain, cooperative behavior to achieve these goals. Consequently, they expect that groups that recruit

with material incentives will be more violent towards civilians than those that employ ideological appeals because recruits in the former type of organization value private rewards more while those in the latter category will work together to achieve common goals.¹ These goals are more difficult to achieve if groups lose civilian support because of their abusiveness.

Weinstein (2005, 2007) argues that when groups use social and political ties to organize an effective and cohesive fighting force, they often benefit from the use of selective violence to maintain control over civilian populations. However, Weinstein also explains that opportunistic rebels will instead engage in indiscriminate acts of violence, such as arbitrary killings, looting, and destroying property, all of which hamper the ability of groups to achieve their goals. A similar logic links material-based recruitment strategies to wartime rape (Cohen 2013). Sexual violence has been conceptualized as part of the “spoils of war” for opportunistic combatants (Mueller 2000, Mitchell 2004).

Norms associated with specific ideologies also play an important role in restraining the behavior of rebels. Balcells and Kalyvas (2010) expect that Revolutionary Socialist groups are less likely to victimize civilians because of normative commitments. Relatedly, ideology shapes how rebels govern their constituents (Balcells and Kalyvas 2010, Gutiérrez-Sanín and Wood 2014), and thus, their patterns of violence as well (Balcells and Stanton 2021). Groups with broad domestic constituencies, such as left-wing movements, have the incentive to limit their use of violence to maintain support (Stanton 2013, 2016; Polo and Gleditsch 2016). Thus, if militant organizations employ recruitment appeals that draw on these ideologies, then they should be

¹ Rebels are more likely to engage in both lethal and non-lethal forms of civilian victimization when they profit from the exploitation of natural resources (e.g., Cohen 2013; Fortna, Lotito, and Rubin 2018; Walsh et al. 2018). These findings are thought to be consistent with the theoretical argument that material incentives draw in more violent recruits than ideological appeals.

more likely to attract recruits who are committed to these norms. However, it is also important to consider the ways in which ideology can sometimes promote violence against civilians.

Ideology and Violence

Ideology helps shape the tactical choices of militant organizations, including the specific repertoires of violence they employ (Leader Maynard 2019; Revkin and Wood 2021). Thus, individuals with these ideological beliefs will be more likely to employ the specific repertoires of violence encouraged by their ideologies.

The ideological indoctrination process that recruits undergo once they join the organization is also relevant to the repertoires of violence they are willing to use. Hoover Green (2016) explains that there is a “Commander’s Dilemma,” in which rebel leaders must construct fighting forces that are willing to unhesitatingly employ violence in some contexts but show restraint in others. Hoover Green posits that rebel movements with stronger, internal political education programs are more effective at socializing recruits to shift their preferences to align more closely with that of the rebel leadership. Consequently, recruits that undergo stringent indoctrination will be more likely to obey their commanders. Hoover Green argues that this will result in such groups employing narrower repertoires of violence.

We expect that ideologically driven recruits will be more amenable to these socialization and indoctrination processes because (1) they are more willing to buy into groups’ ideologies as a function of the fact that they were persuaded by ideological recruitment appeals and (2) they are more likely to behave in ways that benefit their groups (Humphreys and Weinstein 2006). Thus, they will be more likely to obey rebel commanders and not deviate from norms of the group.

Thus, based on this literature, we expect that ideological-based recruitment strategies, relative to material-based appeals, are more likely to attract recruits who already share the normative values of the groups (including beliefs in the appropriateness of violence) and who are more amenable to group socialization and indoctrination processes.

These dynamics are relevant in light of the vast body of literature that examines the ways in which militant ideology contributes to violence against civilians. Contrary to the literature discussed earlier, other scholars argue that ideology is a key driving force behind political violence. For instance, prewar political polarization, which can forge fierce loyalties to different factions, is a strong predictor of violence against civilians during early stages of conflicts (Balcells 2010). Mass violence is also often perpetrated by ideologically driven actors (Valentino 2004).

Certain ideologies spur more violence than others (Leader Maynard 2019). Asal and Rethemeyer (2008) argue that the extent to which an ideology promotes “othering” affects how violent its adherents are. They explain that when ideologies frame most civilians as potential converts, militant movements with these beliefs have the incentive to only use violence selectively, as they do not want to alienate potential supporters. However, they posit that ideologies, such as religious and ethnonationalist beliefs, that clearly distinguish between members of the in and out-group, result in greater indiscriminate violence. This is because members of the out-group are viewed as legitimate targets, and thus, indiscriminate violence is more likely to be employed to achieve a variety of objectives (Asal and Rethemeyer 2008).

Similarly, ideologies that have more exclusive audiences and foster greater out-group antagonism result in rebel groups shifting more of their resources to attack civilian, rather than military, targets (Polo and Gleditsch 2016; Polo 2020). Relatedly, rebel groups are more likely to

abuse civilians in areas in which their enemies' co-ethnics live (Fjelde and Hultman 2014). Some ideologies, such as right-wing and religious extremism are also linked to greater dogmatism and close-mindedness, which are associated with greater hostility towards out-groups and more violence (Jasko et al. 2022).

Ideology can sometimes drive non-lethal forms of violence as well. Sarwari (2021) argues that left-wing rebels are less likely to perpetrate sexual violence, while religious groups are more likely to, because their ideologies place a different value on gender equality.² Ideological and identity-based issues can drive rebels to forcibly displace civilians (Steele 2011, 2019; Balcells and Steele 2016). Ideological indoctrination of abducted recruits can also lower the costs of employing forced recruitment (Gates 2017).

This all suggests that ideology can sometimes promote civilian abuses, including indiscriminate violence, rather than restraining such behaviors. Thus, in the *context of recruitment*, ideological-based recruitment strategies might attract individuals who are willing to employ specific repertoires of violence because of their a priori ideological beliefs and their susceptibility to ideological indoctrination that promotes certain forms of violence.

Variation in Violent Repertoires

In this section, we discuss how recruitment tactics shape repertoires of violence. However, we first address the ways in which sexual violence may be unique from other abuses commonly perpetrated by armed actors in order to understand the incentives underlying specific repertoires

² Similarly Hoover Green (2016) finds that communist rebels are less likely to perpetrate sexual violence, although this is attributed specifically to their use of political education.

of violence. Broadly speaking, perpetrators may view sexual violence as particularly costly, which can incentivize restraint (Gottschall 2004; Cohen 2016).

Sexual violence often enrages and alienates the broader populations that the targets are part of (Gottschall 2004). Thus, perpetrating armed groups could face significant backlash from either permitting or encouraging their members to engage in such abuses (Cohen 2016). In addition, the perpetration of sexual violence carries with it unique risks, such as the high risk of contracting sexually transmitted infections, the longer amount of time it takes to perpetrate relative to other types of violence (leaving groups vulnerable to counterattacks by opposing forces), and the greater emotional toll sexual violence carries because of the close physical contact required (Cohen 2016). This suggests that rebel leaders often have the incentive to restrain such behavior, including relative to other forms of violence, as these risks affect the whole organization. As detailed below, we expect that armed groups are better equipped to constrain sexual violence (to avoid the associated risks) when they rely more heavily on ideological appeals for recruitment.

Ideology plays an important role in shaping the repertoires of violence groups employ (e.g., Revkin and Wood 2021). Gutiérrez-Sanín and Wood (2017) critique Weinstein's (2005, 2007) theory about recruitment and violence, positing that the analysis would have been stronger if, among other dimensions, Weinstein had also examined variation in the repertoires of violence employed by groups, not just whether they showed restraint. They also note that if Weinstein is correct, ideologically driven groups should employ much narrower repertoires of violence.

As discussed above, ideologically driven recruits are both more likely to come in with normative beliefs that already conform to those of the groups they are joining and they will more readily internalize group norms once they have joined. This will make them more likely to obey

the orders of their superiors to employ violence in certain contexts but how restraint in others (Hoover Green 2016, 2018).

We posit that, overall, greater reliance on ideological recruitment appeals, relative to material incentives, will restrain rebels' use of sexual violence, but not other forms of non-lethal and lethal abuses. We expect this to be the case for at least three reasons, which are connected to the risks associated with sexual violence. First, ideologically driven recruits have stronger and more consistent norms against sexual violence than they do other forms of abuses, and they care more about how reputational costs affect the advancement of their ideologies.

Second and relatedly, ideologically committed rebels will be more invested in the success of their groups than their opportunistic counterparts, and thus, will be more likely to obey commands that include restraint in some contexts, but violence in others, when it benefits their groups. Put differently, the strength of command-and-control associated with ideologically driven rebels makes it more likely that such groups perpetrate narrower repertoires of violence.

Third, we expect that because groups that mobilize around ideological appeals tend to be more cohesive, they will derive less utility from sexual violence, which is often a tool used to help foster bonds among cadres (Cohen 2013, 2016). We detail each of these issues below.

Normative Constraints

Rebel groups often use ideology to justify certain forms of violence. Again, this is relevant because (ideological) recruitment appeals attract individuals with certain a priori beliefs about violence and affect their propensity to be socialized to engage in certain forms of violence.

Drake (1998) argues that ideology drives the target selection of militant groups. Specifically, Drake posits that the people and institutions that are perceived to be responsible for the violation of the tenants of militant groups' ideologies are viewed as legitimate targets. Perpetrators use ideology to frame their targets as being deserving of such violence and themselves as innocent of wrongdoing. Thus, ideology plays an important role in efforts to internally and externally justify violence (Drake 1998).

Indeed, various kinds of ideologies are used to justify political violence. Drake (1998, p. 71), for instance, explains that communist ideologies establish a strong sense of moral right and wrong. Drake also notes that this ideology clearly defines people who are considered bad, particularly those from the capitalist ruling class or those who support the ruling class. Eck (2009) describes how the Community Party of Nepal – Maoist (CPN – M) used ideological recruitment and indoctrination to promote and legitimize violence against “class enemies.” Left-wing ideologies that focus on the total transformation of society particularly foster violence (Asal et al. 2013).

Thus, even left-wing ideologies, which are often expected to have a restraining effect on civilian killings (Asal and Rethemeyer 2008; Thaler 2012), are sometimes used to justify violence. While left-wing ideologies might have broad constituencies, anyone who is labeled as an “enemy of the revolution,” or supporters of the capitalist ruling class, can be viewed as a legitimate target. In Colombia, the ELN perpetrated violence against civilians who it labeled as “enemies of the people” (Feldmann 2018, p. 3).

However, left-wing groups view sexual violence in a much different manner. Left-wing ideologies often place strong emphasis on gender equality, and thus, leftist rebel movements often try to restrain their members from engaging in sexual violence (Sarwari 2021). Again, left-

wing groups are typically better at socializing their members to conform to certain behaviors, helping these groups be more restrained in their use of sexual violence (Hoover Green 2016, 2018). While left-wing groups sometimes show restraint in all forms of violence, they also sometimes employ ideological justifications for certain types of violence, such as murder. However, these organizations do not employ ideology to justify sexual violence, and, in fact, have strong ideological reasons to restrain their use of it.

Ethnonationalist ideologies can also spur violence against civilians because of the stark divisions they create between in groups and out groups (e.g., Polo and Gleditsch 2016). The societal divides affected by ethno-nationalist ideologies during civil wars can also contribute to other types of political violence in post-conflict societies (Morrison 2020). Certain ethno-nationalist ideologies have been linked to mass violence as well (Leader Maynard 2019).

However, there is a lack of evidence suggesting that sexual violence is more common in ethnic conflicts (Cohen 2013). Self-determination movements seeking international recognition for their claims of territorial sovereignty may be restrained in their use of sexual violence in order to appear legitimate to the international community (Willis 2023).³ Furthermore, ethnonationalist movements are often more cohesive because they mobilize around shared identities (Weinstein 2005, 2007; Fjelde and Nilsson 2018), and thus, might derive less utility from sexual violence, which is often used to help strengthen group cohesion (Cohen 2013, 2016).

In contrast, groups that mobilize around material incentives often employ wider repertoires of violence and have few to no normative commitments against indiscriminate violence. Recruits

³ This suggests that the reputational cost of sexual violence, and its subsequent impact on international as well as civilian support, and overall group legitimacy, can lead to restraint in sexual violence. This need not be exclusive to ethnonationalism.

in these organizations are interested in amassing private rewards and are not concerned with the long-term success of their organizations. As a result, they perpetrate a variety of abuses, including lethal and sexual violence, because they have little incentive to show substantially more restraint in the use of some types of violence, relative to others (Humphreys and Weinstein 2006). For instance, the RUF in Sierra Leone, and RENAMO in Mozambique (both of whom relied primarily on material incentives for mobilization), engaged in a wide variety of abuses, including sexual violence and murder (e.g., Weinstein 2005, 2007; Revkin and Wood 2021).

It is important to acknowledge that while ideology generally acts to constrain sexual violence, it has also been used to justify it. Religious rebel groups perpetrate higher levels of sexual violence due to ideologies that lack respect for gender equality (Sarwari 2021). The Islamic State (Revkin and Wood 2001) pursued policies that authorized sexual violence against specific out-groups while the perpetration of sexual violence against the Rohingya by the Myanmar military was, in part, driven by ideological exclusion (Alam and Wood 2022). Goldberg (2022) finds that sexual violence within rebel groups takes a variety of forms and is driven by different ideologies. However, in general, ideology prohibits sexual violence and leads to narrower repertoires of violence.

Revkin and Wood (2021) explain that the Islamic State's ideology drove it to use a narrower repertoire of violence than non-ideological groups, such as RENAMO and the RUF, used. While in the case of the Islamic State, their repertoire included sexual violence, ideology often drives rebels to oppose sexual violence. In instances in which militants use ideology to justify sexual violence, it is unlikely that they use ideology to promote restraint in the perpetration of other abuses. Data from the aforementioned RHRV dataset (Walsh, Conrad, and Whitaker 2023) reveal that 173 of the 327 groups in the dataset employed some forms of violence against civilians,

while showing restraint in sexual violence, in at least one year. In contrast, only 10 groups engaged in sexual violence, but not other forms of violence, for at least one year. Thus, we expect that while some rebel groups will use ideology to justify wide repertoires of violence, many will use it to employ narrower repertoires, particularly those that exclude sexual violence.

Moreover, religious groups tend to be more violent overall and often engage in lethal violence at the behest of their ideology (Asal and Rethemeyer 2008; Jasko et al. 2022). In many cases, such groups value lethal violence over sexual violence. For instance, among Boko Haram's actions targeted at women, over 50% were abductions and another 40% were attacks, while approximately 5% of the incidents involved either attacks with remote explosive devices or sexual violence (Matfess 2023, p. 389-90). Thus, while religious groups may be more likely to employ sexual violence, the bulk of their repertoires are still focused on other forms of violence.

Command and Control

We also expect that ideologically committed rebels will be less likely to be insubordinate, making it easier for leaders to direct them towards desired violent strategies. Again, given the reputational and physical risks associated with sexual violence, rebel leaders often have the incentive to try to restrain their subordinates' behavior on this dimension. Ideologically motivated recruits are less likely to be insubordinate for at least two reasons.

First, ideologically motivated recruits, relative to their materially driven counterparts, are more inclined to engage in behavior that benefits the group, not just themselves. This logic has been used to argue that, because violence against civilians can alienate potential civilian supporters, ideologically motivated recruits will be less likely to engage in indiscriminate and

unsanctioned violence against these populations (e.g., Humphreys and Weinstein 2006; Weinstein 2005, 2007).

In the same way, we expect that ideologically committed recruits will be more likely to aid in the perpetration of any repertoire that is considered to be for the good of the group. This includes a willingness to show restraint in some areas but violence in others. In contrast, because materially driven recruits value personal enrichment over pro-group behaviors, it will be more difficult to convince them to employ restraint in some areas but not others. Thus, a materialistic recruit might engage in both sexual violence and murder for their own benefit and is less likely to be persuaded to employ some types of violence more than others.

Second, rebel groups have a variety of tools, including recruitment and indoctrination, to socialize combatants to behave in specific ways (Hoover Green 2017). Hoover Green (2016) explains that rebel groups can engage in political indoctrination to better align the preferences of the rank-and-file with those of the leadership. This increases the likelihood that cadres behave in ways that are consistent with the preferences of rebel leaders. Consequently, Hoover Green finds that left-wing militant organizations, who are typically effective at indoctrinating recruits, are better able to restrain their members' use of sexual violence. Relatedly, armed groups that suffer from significant command-and-control problems are more likely to perpetrate sexual violence (Sawyer, Bond, and Cunningham 2021; Park and Sim 2022). Political training that emphasizes restraint also reduces the rate at which armed groups kill civilians (Oppenheim and Weintraub 2017).

Additionally, while ideological indoctrination can sometimes restrain the behavior of rebel soldiers, it can also be used to radicalize members and make them more willing to employ violence (Cantin 2021). Likewise, criminal organizations sometimes use ideology to socialize

members into embracing violent norms and practices (Rodgers 2017). Thus, ideologically driven recruits might be particularly willing and able to carry out forms of violence that are less costly than sexual violence. We expect that ideologically committed recruits will be more amenable to such socialization because they place greater value on benefiting the group and because they already (at least partially) buy into the ideology of their groups. Tying these together, the greater obedience of ideologically motivated recruits enables rebel leaders to promote restraint in costly sexual violence but encourage more ideologically motivated forms of violence.

Cohesion

Finally, we expect that the levels of cohesion among the rank-and-file will also shape their repertoires of violence. Cohen (2013, 2016) posits that because groups that employ forced recruitment are more likely to suffer from low cohesion among the rank-and-file, these organizations tend to be more permissive of sexual violence as such brutal acts of performative violence help foster bonds among the perpetrators. Thus, Cohen argues that for groups struggling from low levels of cohesion, the benefits of sexual violence outweigh the reputational and physical risks. Other mobilization practices that lead to lower levels of cohesion are also associated with increased sexual violence by rebel organizations, including the recruitment of foreign fighters (Doctor 2021) and child soldiers (Faulkner and Welsh 2022).

Rebel organizations that mobilize around ideological appeals are more likely to be cohesive (Weinstein 2005, 2007), and thus, should derive less utility from sexual violence. Indeed, groups that rely more heavily on ideological appeals for recruitment are less likely to engage in multi-perpetrator rape because they do not need to resort to this form of violence to foster cohesion (Soules 2023). Cohen (2017) expects that sexual violence, relative to other forms of abuses, will

be particularly effective at fostering bonds, as sexual violence sends stronger signals of masculinity and power. Thus, if a function of sexual violence in civil wars is to build bonds among members, then the utility of sexual violence, relative to other forms of violence, is lower for rebels that recruit with ideological appeals, as these organizations tend to have higher levels of internal cohesion.

Testable Implication

To summarize, building off prior work (Gutiérrez-Sanín and Wood 2017), we argue that rebel recruitment strategies affect variation in violent repertoires, not just the decision to use restraint or violence. We expect that ideologically motivated groups and recruits will derive greater utility from some forms of violence over others. Relative to other forms of violence, we expect that the reputational and physical risks of sexual violence often incentivize ideologically motivated groups to show restraint in this type of abuse. We posit that greater reliance on ideological appeals, relative to material incentives, for recruitment, makes rebel organizations both more willing and able to employ repertoires of violence that involve some forms of civilian victimization, but display restraint in the use of sexual violence. We then offered three reasons that groups will constraint their use of sexual violence compared to other forms of violence, including normative commitments, command and control, and cohesion.

For these three reasons, we expect that rebel groups that rely more on ideological appeals, relative to material incentives, will be more likely to employ repertoires of violence that involve some abuses but restraint in sexual violence. An important caveat is that we are not arguing that ideological rebels are more likely than materially driven recruits to perpetrate other forms of abuse, such as murder or force displacement. Rather, we are arguing that ideologically motivated

recruits are more likely to wield narrower repertoires of violence that involve restraint in sexual violence, but not other types of civilian victimization. This leads to our core hypothesis that:

H1: Rebel groups that rely more on ideological appeals, relative to material incentives, for recruitment, will be more likely to employ repertoires of violence that involve restraint in the use of sexual violence, but perpetration of other types of abuses.

Research Design

Dependent Variable

To capture civilian abuses by rebel groups, we rely on data from the Rebel Human Rights Violations (RHRV) dataset (Walsh, Conrad, and Whitaker 2023a). The RHRV dataset builds off existing datasets on the killing of civilians (e.g., Eck and Hultman 2007) and sexual violence (e.g., Cohen and Nordås 2014; Dumaine et al. 2022), by providing information on a variety of types of human rights abuses perpetrated by rebel organizations.

This dataset contains information on groups that were active across the world during the period of 1990 to 2018. It includes information on rebel dyad-years for groups derived from the Uppsala Conflict Data Program's (UCDP) dyadic conflict dataset (Harbom, Melander and Wallensteen 2008). Thus, this dataset allows users to not only examine differences in behavior across rebel groups, but differences within these movements over time. The RHRV dataset draws information from U.S. State Department and Amnesty International human rights reports to measure the prevalence of eight types of human rights abuses: sexual violence, arbitrary killings, torture, detention, forced recruitment, forced displacement, restriction of movement, and property destruction.⁴ These variables are measured on a scale between no (0), occasional or

⁴ For our purposes we code the maximum value from these two sources for each rebel-group year.

infrequent (1), and frequent or systematic (2). This allows us to compare sexual violence to a wide variety of other abuses. The RHRV codes sexual violence as any instance of rape, sexual assault, genital or breast mutilation, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, sexual abuse/exploitation, and/or forced abortion (Walsh, Conrad, and Whitaker 2023b).

The core hypothesis is concerned with groups that show restraint in the use of sexual violence but employ other forms of civilian abuses. To capture this, we use the above measures to create a binary indicator of whether a group *did not* employ sexual violence in a given year *but did* employ at least one form of lethal or non-lethal, non-sexual violence (i.e., any form of violence in the RHRV besides sexual violence). Put differently, this variable measures whether groups show restraint in the use of sexual violence but not in the overall use of violence against civilians.⁵ This repertoire of violence is employed in approximately 47% of the observations and 137 of the 224 groups in the overlapping sample (~61%) employ this repertoire in at least one year. Given the dependent variable is dichotomous, we employ logistic regression analysis to test the hypothesis.

There are a few additional points about this measure to consider. First, the question may arise as to why we compare sexual violence to all other forms of abuse in the RHRV dataset. We do this, because as discussed throughout the paper and in existing literature, there is a significant claim that sexual violence is distinct from other forms of violence, including in its reputational and physical costs (e.g., Cohen 2016, 2017).

⁵ We did not include forced recruitment in these initial measures, and instead, used it as a control variable. We did so because forced recruitment is a strong predictor of both sexual (Cohen 2013, 2016) and lethal (Davis and Jang 2018) violence, and thus, it is important to control for. However, as a robustness check, we construct an alternative version of the dependent variable that includes forced recruitment. We then drop forced recruitment as a control variable. Even with this alternative measure, we continue to find strong support for the hypothesis (**Table A8**).

First, in the RHRV dataset sexual violence is a separately coded subset of torture. Said differently, essentially all instances of sexual violence are also coded as torture. This includes abuses such as rape and forced abortion, which are distinguished from “sexual torture” in other data (Dumaine et al. 2022). However, not all torture is coded as sexual violence. A group that commits forms of torture (or any other abuse) that are *not* sexual, are coded as 1, while a group that commits any form of sexual violence specified earlier, is coded as a 0. Thus, while there is overlap in types of abuses, our measures distinguish between abuses that have at least some sexual dimension from those that do not.

Second, the RHRV dataset does not contain all conceivable forms of violence. It also does not contain other common measures of civilian victimization in civil wars, including one-sided violence (e.g., Eck and Hultman 2007) and terrorism (e.g., Fortna, Lotito, and Rubin 2018). However, the RHRV dataset, to the best of our knowledge, does provide the most comprehensive resource on the variety of types civilian abuses perpetrated by rebel organizations. This is important because prior literature maintains that ideological recruitment strategies are associated with restraint in a wide variety of types of violence (Weinstein 2005, 2007; Humphreys and Weinstein 2006).

Third, data on human rights abuses in conflict are highly biased due to a variety of factors, including difficulties related to the quality of reporting in high-conflict areas (e.g., Davies and True 2018; Hoover Green 2018; Nagel and Doctor 2020). Acknowledging the limitations of these data is important. However, in line with previous work (e.g., Nagel and Doctor 2020), we use binary measures of whether these abuses occurred, rather than the ordinal measures, in which there is more subjectivity in delineating between levels of intensity.

Independent Variable

Theories of civilian victimization often focus on the degree to which groups rely on material incentives or ideological appeals for recruitment. High quality data exist on both the material resources available to groups (Walsh et al. 2018) and their ideologies (e.g., Polo and Gleditsch 2016; Wood and Thomas 2017; Braithwaite and Cunningham 2020; Keels and Wiegand 2020; Basedau Deitch and Zellman 2022). However, rebels' material and ideological resources should not be conflated with their recruitment strategies (Herbst 2000; Soules 2023). Furthermore, these variables do not measure the degree to which groups rely on ideological appeals *relative to* material incentives.

Instead, we employ data from the Rebel Appeals and Incentives Dataset (RAID) (Soules 2023). RAID contains several measures of rebel organizations' recruitment practices, including a five-point ordinal indicator measuring the degree to which groups rely on ideological appeals, relative to material incentives, for recruitment. This variable indicates whether a group recruits entirely with ideological appeals (4), mostly with ideological appeals and some material incentives (3), a relatively even mixture of ideological and material appeals (2), mostly with material incentives and some ideological appeals (1), or entirely with material incentives (0). This variable allows us to assess the conventional wisdom that greater reliance on material incentives for recruitment is associated with more abuses against civilians.

This variable was constructed using detailed, qualitative narratives on the recruitment practices of rebel organizations that were written to accompany RAID. The measure is based on evidence of both the specific types of recruitment appeals groups employ, as well as the relative frequency at which they employ them (Soules 2023). Due to difficulties associated with gathering detailed information on rebels' recruitment, the measure of reliance on ideological

appeals is time invariant. This is a limitation of the data, as some rebel organizations shift their recruitment strategies overtime. However, to the best of our knowledge, it is the only dataset that captures the extent to which militant organizations rely on ideological appeals, relative to material incentives, for recruitment.

The groups in RAID are taken from the list of actors, that were active between 1989 and 2011, in the Non-State Actor (NSA) dataset (Cunningham, Gledistch, and Salehyan 2013), which itself is based off groups in the UCDP dyadic dataset. RAID is neither left nor right censored, and thus, groups enter and exit the dataset when they are born and die. They were simply active during this period (Soules 2023). 224 of the 232 groups in RAID are also found in the RHRV dataset, providing substantial overlap to leverage for the analysis. The measure of reliance on ideological appeals is included for all years for each of the 224 groups in the RHRV dataset, not just for the years 1989 to 2011, as the data in RAID are intended to cover the entire lifespans of groups (Soules 2023).

Control Variables

We also control for potentially confounding variables. First, using data from RAID, we control for a binary indicator of whether a group has a multi-ethnic membership, as social heterogeneity affects both groups' recruitment tactics and their treatment of civilians (e.g., Weinstein 2005, 2007; Humphreys and Weinstein 2006). We also hold constant the broader ideologies of rebel groups to better ensure that we are capturing the effects of recruitment tactics specifically, not just broader ideologies. We include three separate binary indicators for three different ideologies: nationalist, left-wing, and radical Islamist. These variables are built by combining data from the Women in Armed Rebellion Dataset (WARD) (Wood and Thomas

2017) and the Foundations of Rebel Group Emergence (FORGE) dataset (Braithwaite and Cunningham 2020).

Rebels' strength affects their recruitment strategies (Herbst 2000; Sawyer and Andrews 2020) and their treatment of civilians (e.g., Hultman 2007; Polo and Gleditsch 2016). Thus, using data from the NSA dataset, we included a simplified version of the variable measuring rebel groups' strength, relative to the governments they are fighting. We include a three-point ordinal indicator of whether the group is much weaker, weaker, or at parity or stronger.⁶ Relatedly, territorial control also influences militants' mobilization strategies (de la Calle and Sánchez-Cuenca 2012) and their treatment of civilians (e.g., Kalyvas 2006; Asal and Nagel 2021). Thus, with a binary indicator from the NSA dataset, we account for whether a group controls territory.

Natural resource wealth also shapes groups' recruitment strategies (Weinstein 2005, 2007) as well as their treatment of civilians (e.g., Wood 2014; Fortna, Lotito, and Rubin 2018). Using data from the Rebel Contraband Dataset (Walsh et al. 2018), we include a dichotomous measure of whether groups profit from lootable natural resources in a given year. We also control for whether a group receives any support from a foreign state, using data from the NSA dataset, as such support affects both rebel's recruitment tactics (Weinstein 2005, 2007) and their treatment of civilians (Salehyan, Siroky, and Wood 2014).

Rebel groups with clear and effective command-and-control structures can better regulate the use of violence by the rank-and-file (Wood 2009). Thus, with information from the NSA dataset, we include a binary indicator of whether a group has a clear central command. We also include a

⁶ We collapse the three highest categories of this variable together—parity, stronger, and much stronger—because they comprise only about 8.5% of all observations in the analysis. However, as a robustness check, we rerun the main analysis, using the untransformed version of this variable (**Table A9**). We continue to find support for our core hypothesis.

binary indicator of whether a group employs forced recruitment, using data from the RHRV dataset. Rebels that rely on material incentives are more likely to turn to coercive recruitment (Weinstein 2007) and groups that forcibly recruit are also more likely to perpetrate sexual violence (Cohen 2013, 2016). Again, this measure of forced recruitment is not built into the dependent variable, however, we conduct alternative tests in which it is, and the results remain consistent. We also control for a group's age in a given year, as rebels' longevity affects their treatment of civilians and ability to mobilize them (Eck 2014).

We also hold constant conflict and country-level factors. We include the UCDP's binary measure of conflict intensity (whether there were a 1,000 or more battle-related deaths in a given year) (Harbom, Melander, and Wallensteen 2008), as the overall intensity of conflicts affects both rebels' recruitment tactics (Herbst 2000) and their treatment of civilians (Walsh, Conrad, and Whitaker 2023). We also employ the Polity Project's 21-point ordinal measure of regime type in the country in which the conflict is occurring (Marshall and Gurr 2021), as press freedom and government repression affect the quality of information available on human rights abuses (Davies and True 2017) and rebels' violence against civilians (e.g., Stanton 2013). Finally, with data from the World Bank, we include a logged measure of a country's per capita GDP, as wealth and state capacity affect groups' mobilization strategies and patterns of violence (e.g., Herbst 2000; Sobek 2010).

Results

The results are displayed in **Table 1**. The standard errors are clustered on the rebel group. Control variables are added gradually to each model to ensure that resulting missing observations are not driving the findings. A positive value for the coefficient of the main independent variable

indicates that greater reliance on ideological recruitment appeals is associated with a greater probability of employing some forms of abuses against civilians but showing restraint in the use of sexual violence.

In support of the core hypothesis, the results in **Table 1** show that more ideologically driven groups and recruits will be more likely to wield repertoires of violence that show restraint in the use of sexual violence, but not other forms of abuse. Said differently, groups that mobilize recruits around ideological issues tend to employ narrower repertoires of violence. Thus, contrary to the conventional wisdom, ideological-based mobilization does not appear to have a uniform effect on the reduction of different types of violence. Instead, such recruitment strategies are associated with repertoires of violence that involve the perpetration of some abuses, but restraint in other types of violence.

Table 1: Reliance on Ideological Appeals and Mixed Repertoires of Violence

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Ideological Recruitment	0.228** (0.0971)	0.213* (0.119)	0.267** (0.115)
Multi-Ethnic Rebels		-0.270 (0.274)	-0.136 (0.320)
Nationalist		0.361 (0.269)	0.346 (0.321)
Left-Wing		0.693** (0.294)	0.436 (0.302)
Radical Islamist		0.583** (0.278)	0.241 (0.344)
Relative Rebel Strength		0.156 (0.196)	0.318 (0.217)
Territorial Control		0.0924 (0.256)	0.223 (0.272)
Lootable Resources		0.698*** (0.244)	0.500** (0.246)
External Support		-0.644*** (0.241)	-0.600** (0.273)
Central Command		0.191 (0.432)	0.351 (0.418)
Forced Recruitment		-0.0700 (0.274)	-0.210 (0.300)
Group Age		-0.00908 (0.0120)	-0.0181 (0.0137)
Conflict Intensity			0.488* (0.263)
Polity2			0.0642*** (0.0232)
per capita GDP (Logged)			0.256*** (0.0977)
Constant	-0.789*** (0.299)	-1.454** (0.711)	-4.164*** (0.935)
Observations	1,269	1,056	911

Robust standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Figure 1 displays the marginal effects of reliance on ideological recruitment appeals, with the control variables held at their mean values. Groups that rely exclusively on material incentives have only approximately a 29% probability of employing a repertoire of violence that involves the use of some abuses but restrain in sexual violence in a given year. In contrast, when a group relies on only ideological appeals for recruitment, it has about a 54% chance of perpetrating this specific repertoire.

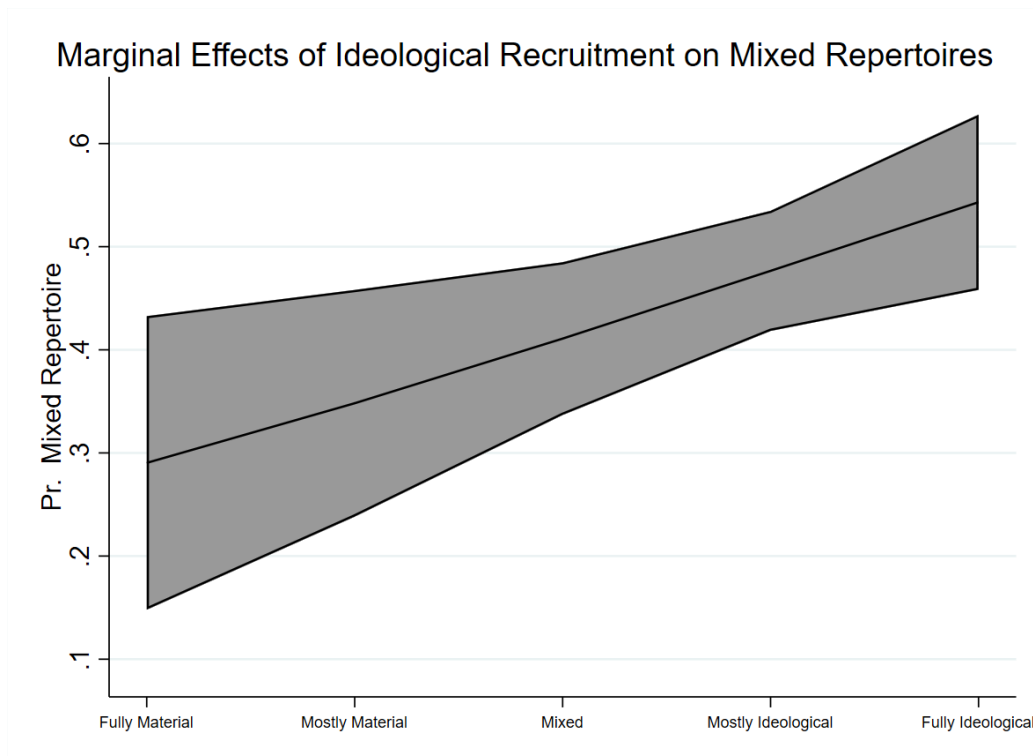


Figure 1: Marginal Effects of Ideological Recruitment on Mixed Repertoires of Violence

Thus, the substantive effects of ideological recruitment on the probability that rebel groups engage in this specific repertoire of violence are fairly large. These effects further challenge the conventional wisdom, which maintains that reliance on ideological recruitment appeals should substantially reduce the probability that a rebel group abuses civilians.

Robustness Checks

We employ a variety of robustness checks to assess the consistency of our findings. The results are available in the appendix.

Disaggregated Dependent Variables

As a further test of the uniqueness of sexual violence, we analyze how reliance on ideological appeals affects each of the disaggregated types of abuses present in the RHRV dataset. Specifically, we employ binary indicators of every individual abuse in the RHRV dataset and conduct a series of logistic regression analyses, using the same set of control variables from the main analysis.⁷ Said differently, each type of violence (e.g., arbitrary killings, forced detention, torture, etc.) is its own dependent variable in this set of tests (**Table A1**).

Greater reliance on ideological appeals has a negative and statistically significant association with sexual violence, providing further support for existing work which argues that such appeals will reduce the probability that groups use sexual violence (e.g., Humphreys and Weinstein 2006; Cohen 2013, 2016). Reliance on ideological appeals has a statistically insignificant association with most of the rest of the dependent variables, and even has a positive association with some of

⁷ We also analyze the effects of ideological recruitment on the probability that groups employ forced recruitment, another measure in the RHRV dataset. For this model, we exclude forced recruitment as a control variable.

them, including arbitrary killings. The one exception is that there is a positive and statistically significant association between reliance on ideological appeals and the probability that groups engage in the forced restriction of the movement of civilian populations.

Thus, there is an absence of evidence that greater reliance on ideological recruitment appeals reduces a wide array of human rights abuses perpetrated by rebel groups. However, there is evidence that heavier reliance on ideological appeals does reduce the probability of engaging in sexual violence.

Analyzing Only Abusive Groups

Another potential issue with the main dependent variable is that values of zero can take two different forms. Specifically, a zero can indicate either that the group does employ sexual violence or that it employs no type of violence at all. However, the theory is primarily concerned with comparing groups with wide and narrow repertoires of violence, not those that refrain completely from violence against civilians.

To ensure that groups that do not engage in any violence against civilians are not driving the results, we rerun the main analysis, excluding all observations in which a rebel group did not engage in any of the human rights abuses detailed in the RHRV dataset (**Table A2**). Across all models, we continue find support for the core hypothesis. Thus, even when we only compare groups that engage in at least some abuses against civilians, we still find support for the argument that groups that recruit with ideological appeals will show restraint in sexual violence but not other forms of civilian victimization.

We also run a Heckman selection model to account for the potential that groups that select into civilian victimization are qualitatively different from those that do not (**Table A3**). In the first stage we estimate whether groups select into the use of any of the forms of civilian victimization in the RHRV. As predictors in the first stage we include the recruitment strategies of groups, whether groups espouse left-wing or radical Islamist ideologies, rebel strength, territorial control, reliance on lootable resources, reliance on external support, and whether a group has central command. In the second stage we utilize the same models shown in the main results. We still find support for our main argument.

In addition, we use a multinomial logit where the outcome variable is coded as no civilian victimization (0), unrestrained violence (1), and restraint in sexual violence (2) (**Table A4**). We treat unrestrained violence (i.e., broad repertoires including both sexual violence and other forms of violence) as the reference category. The results suggest that groups that are more reliant on ideological appeals are more likely to perpetrate no civilian victimization compared to unrestrained violence (consistent with the conventional wisdom) and are more likely to restrain their use of sexual violence while still perpetrating other forms of violence (consistent with the theory proposed in this paper).

Analyzing Non-Abusive Groups

Another related issue is that while reliance on ideological recruitment appeals may encourage narrower repertoires of violence over broader ones, it might have an even greater effect on total restraint. Said differently, if the conventional wisdom is correct that ideological-based mobilization has a comprehensive restraining effect on violence, then such groups might be less likely to employ any abuses at all.

In response to this, we create a binary variable in which a value of one indicates that a group engaged in none of the civilian abuses in a given year while a zero value indicates that they perpetrated at least one (**Table A5**). Across all models, reliance on ideological appeals does not have a statistically significant association with the probability that a group refrains from all forms of civilian abuse in a given year. Thus, we continue to not find evidence for the conventional wisdom that ideological mobilization reduces many types of civilian abuses.

Accounting for Time

We also consider the effects of time. First, given the possibility that reporting standards on human rights changed systematically over time, we reconduct the main models, including dummy variables for each year (**Table A6**). We continue to find consistent evidence supporting the hypothesis. Second, to account for potential temporal dependencies, we follow the recommendation of Carter and Signorino (2010) for dealing with temporal dependency issues in models with binary dependent variables. Specifically, we include the time, time squared, and time cubed since the group last wielded a repertoire involving restraint in sexual violence but not other forms of abuse (**Table A7**). The results remain consistent in both the simple bivariate model, as well as the model with the full set of control variables but drop just below traditional levels of statistical significance ($p \sim 0.17$) in the second model. Overall, across a variety of alternative tests, we continue to find strong support for our central hypothesis.

Discussion and Conclusion

There is a strong, conventional wisdom that rebel groups will show more restraint in their treatment of civilians when they rely more on ideological appeals, relative to material incentives, for recruitment. However, such theories often overlook how rebel recruitment tactics affect the combinations of violence they employ, not just the presence or absence of abuses against civilians. In particular, there are many rebel groups who are extremely abusive on some dimensions, but then show restraint in the use of sexual violence. Furthermore, there has been a lack of systematic, cross-group, quantitative analysis testing the implications of these arguments.

To remedy this, we use novel data on the persuasive recruitment practices of rebel groups to investigate how these mobilization strategies affect their repertoires of violence. Specifically, we are interested in analyzing why some rebel groups show restraint in the perpetration of sexual violence, but not other abuses. We argue that groups that rely more on ideological appeals, relative to material incentives, for recruitment, will be more willing and able to employ this specific repertoire of violence. This is because ideologically committed recruits affect groups norms, the strength of command-and-control, and cohesion in ways that are conducive to this specific repertoire. We find strong support for our argument that greater reliance on ideological recruitment appeals increases the probability that rebels employ repertoires of violence that involve restraint in sexual violence but not other forms of abuse.

There are several potential avenues for future research. First, scholars could examine how rebel recruitment tactics affect the segments of the population (e.g., ethnic or religious groups) they choose to attack. Relatedly, future quantitative analysis could more clearly distinguish between the effects of recruitment practices on indiscriminate versus discriminate violence. Second, researchers could investigate how recruitment tactics affect other types of violence employed by rebel groups, such as mass casualty events. Third, scholars could explore factors that condition the relationship between recruitment tactics and civilian victimization. For example, how might external support affect the willingness of ideologically and materially driven groups to abuse civilians?

The ways in which rebel groups recruit appear to have a significant influence on how they treat civilians. This paper contributes to our understanding of how and why rebel groups victimize civilians. We challenge the conventional wisdom by showing that rebel recruitment strategies affect the combinations of violence groups employ, and that their impact is more complex than just completely restraining, or completely incentivizing, abuses against civilians.

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Appendix – Rebel Recruitment and Repertoires of Violence

Table A1: Reliance on Ideological Appeals and Types of Violence Against Civilians

	(1) Sexual Violence	(2) Killings	(3) Torture	(4) Property	(5) Displacement	(6) Detention	(7) Restrict Movement	(8) Forced Recruitment
Ideological Recruitment	-0.400** (0.165)	0.0927 (0.135)	-0.0357 (0.137)	0.0802 (0.109)	-0.0579 (0.197)	-0.0288 (0.116)	0.352** (0.177)	-0.0339 (0.147)
Multi-Ethnic Rebels	0.461 (0.489)	0.0286 (0.390)	-0.108 (0.373)	-0.0846 (0.322)	-0.707 (0.509)	-0.234 (0.394)	0.140 (0.595)	0.452 (0.395)
Nationalist	-0.576 (0.450)	-0.0951 (0.376)	-0.344 (0.318)	-0.732** (0.314)	-0.578 (0.490)	-0.383 (0.287)	-0.112 (0.472)	-0.142 (0.395)
Left-Wing	-0.614 (0.435)	0.0215 (0.322)	-0.224 (0.403)	-0.101 (0.342)	0.475 (0.503)	-0.352 (0.348)	-0.231 (0.528)	0.331 (0.492)
Radical Islamist	0.0380 (0.551)	0.354 (0.422)	-0.0430 (0.451)	-0.307 (0.331)	0.645 (0.655)	0.464 (0.424)	-0.0284 (0.583)	0.287 (0.479)
Relative Rebel Strength	-0.175 (0.354)	0.269 (0.225)	0.194 (0.287)	0.736*** (0.216)	-0.463 (0.347)	0.465* (0.274)	0.711* (0.392)	0.695*** (0.213)
Territorial Control	0.728 (0.524)	0.619** (0.288)	1.593*** (0.354)	0.380 (0.284)	0.839* (0.505)	1.141*** (0.320)	0.903** (0.443)	0.576* (0.313)
Lootable Resources	-0.157 (0.312)	0.369 (0.274)	0.338 (0.302)	-0.156 (0.298)	1.077*** (0.358)	0.363 (0.271)	0.810** (0.384)	0.376 (0.335)
External Support	0.566 (0.475)	-0.340 (0.290)	-0.189 (0.335)	-0.479* (0.256)	1.014* (0.523)	-0.358 (0.303)	0.901 (0.566)	-0.478 (0.309)
Central Command	-2.002*** (0.696)	-0.716 (0.499)	-1.756*** (0.619)	-0.425 (0.464)	-1.488* (0.774)	-0.536 (0.685)	2.575** (1.268)	1.239* (0.708)
Forced Recruitment	2.922*** (0.352)	2.476*** (0.319)	2.817*** (0.302)	1.579*** (0.256)	1.804*** (0.304)	2.609*** (0.286)	1.850*** (0.321)	
Group Age	0.0195 (0.0195)	-0.00279 (0.0157)	-0.0241 (0.0178)	0.0214 (0.0137)	0.0155 (0.0176)	-0.00545 (0.0149)	0.0142 (0.0223)	0.0425*** (0.0130)
Conflict Intensity	0.316 (0.382)	1.126*** (0.315)	0.214 (0.250)	0.936*** (0.245)	1.945*** (0.319)	1.115*** (0.316)	1.572*** (0.373)	1.172*** (0.329)
Polity2	0.0655 (0.0400)	0.123*** (0.0261)	0.0574* (0.0321)	0.0803*** (0.0252)	0.0145 (0.0421)	0.143*** (0.0299)	0.0155 (0.0398)	0.0173 (0.0374)
per capita GDP (Logged)	-0.403** (0.175)	0.0843 (0.100)	-0.169 (0.164)	0.0562 (0.113)	0.0320 (0.167)	0.134 (0.131)	0.300 (0.209)	0.0821 (0.131)
Constant	1.714 (1.620)	-2.325** (1.137)	0.0187 (1.494)	-3.868*** (1.021)	-4.493** (1.836)	-4.090*** (1.530)	-13.17*** (2.264)	-6.300*** (1.304)
Observations	911	911	911	911	911	911	911	911

Robust standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table A2: Reliance on Ideological Appeals and Mixed Repertoires (Excluding Non-Abuses)

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Ideological Recruitment	0.484*** (0.135)	0.464*** (0.178)	0.490*** (0.188)
Multi-Ethnic Rebels		-0.229 (0.473)	-0.200 (0.560)
Nationalist		0.586 (0.419)	1.026** (0.503)
Left-Wing		0.845** (0.413)	0.898* (0.485)
Radical Islamist		0.683 (0.465)	0.0514 (0.561)
Relative Rebel Strength		0.234 (0.333)	0.378 (0.372)
Territorial Control		-0.698 (0.484)	-0.618 (0.542)
Lootable Resources		0.173 (0.322)	0.346 (0.353)
External Support		-0.739* (0.413)	-0.814* (0.472)
Central Command		2.356*** (0.830)	2.028*** (0.691)
Forced Recruitment		-2.468*** (0.359)	-2.465*** (0.399)
Group Age		-0.00563 (0.0163)	-0.0320 (0.0210)
Conflict Intensity			-0.0115 (0.373)
Polity2			-0.0168 (0.0381)
per capita GDP (Logged)			0.539*** (0.188)
Constant	-0.323 (0.412)	-1.315 (1.445)	-4.761*** (1.820)
Observations	807	680	596

Robust standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table A3: Heckman Selection Model – Violent versus Non-Violent Repertoire Selection

	Model 2		Model 3			
	1 st Stage	2 nd Stage	1 st Stage	2 nd Stage		
Ideological Recruitment	0.0690*** (0.0170)	0.101** (0.0417)	0.0802*** (0.0177)	0.0981** (0.0427)		
Multi-Ethnic Rebels	-0.0337 (0.0404)		-0.0137 (0.0456)			
Nationalist	0.0694* (0.0381)		0.115*** (0.0421)			
Left Wing	0.167*** (0.0447)	0.290** (0.118)	0.182*** (0.0488)	0.327*** (0.121)		
Radical Islamist	0.128*** (0.0411)	0.204** (0.103)	0.0418 (0.0498)	0.0867 (0.110)		
Relative Rebel Strength	0.0413 (0.0267)	0.140* (0.0730)	0.0453 (0.0298)	0.0914 (0.0773)		
Territorial Control	-0.0582 (0.0370)	0.139 (0.100)	-0.0610 (0.0409)	0.0753 (0.106)		
Lootable Resources	0.0985*** (0.0344)	0.492*** (0.0940)	0.121*** (0.0375)	0.490*** (0.0979)		
External Support	-0.147*** (0.0330)	-0.303*** (0.0888)	-0.153*** (0.0354)	-0.292*** (0.0926)		
Central Command	0.245*** (0.0581)	-0.828*** (0.174)	0.173*** (0.0618)	-0.904*** (0.174)		
Forced Recruitment	-0.212*** (0.0371)	1.754*** (0.147)	-0.181*** (0.0414)	1.805*** (0.152)		
Group Age	-0.000923 (0.00150)	-0.00602 (0.00429)	-0.00393** (0.00173)	-0.00487 (0.00444)		
Conflict Intensity			0.0139 (0.0420)			
Polity2			-0.00175 (0.00344)			
per capita GDP (Logged)			0.0556*** (0.0145)			
athrho			0.937*** (0.0948)	0.903*** (0.113)		
Insigma			-0.873*** (0.0348)	-0.876*** (0.0389)		
Constant	0.148 (0.114)	0.147 (0.254)	-0.229 (0.156)	0.242 (0.260)		
Observations	1,058	1,058	1,058	974	974	974

Standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table A4: Multinomial Logit – Reliance on Ideological Appeals with Unrestrained Violence as Reference Category

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	No-Violence	No Sexual Violence	No-Violence	No Sexual Violence	No-Violence	No Sexual Violence
Ideological Recruitment	0.315** (0.144)	0.439*** (0.125)	0.309* (0.165)	0.457*** (0.156)	0.294 (0.189)	0.481*** (0.173)
Multi-Ethnic Rebels			-0.0890 (0.484)	-0.272 (0.401)	-0.316 (0.551)	-0.275 (0.481)
Nationalist			0.0721 (0.455)	0.419 (0.377)	0.710 (0.505)	0.808* (0.448)
Left Wing			-0.0285 (0.471)	0.652* (0.379)	0.581 (0.500)	0.706* (0.429)
Radical Islamist			-0.00594 (0.545)	0.584 (0.482)	-0.330 (0.606)	-0.0214 (0.539)
Relative Rebel Strength			-0.116 (0.318)	0.0967 (0.311)	-0.117 (0.365)	0.313 (0.355)
Territorial Control			-0.958** (0.456)	-0.634 (0.448)	-1.244** (0.532)	-0.667 (0.528)
Lootable Resources			-0.724** (0.324)	0.145 (0.292)	-0.287 (0.339)	0.292 (0.318)
External Support			0.0323 (0.445)	-0.592 (0.419)	-0.131 (0.484)	-0.686 (0.467)
Central Command			2.739*** (0.868)	2.196*** (0.726)	2.115*** (0.772)	1.912*** (0.637)
Forced Recruitment			-4.685*** (0.412)	-2.366*** (0.330)	-4.629*** (0.497)	-2.358*** (0.362)
Group Age			0.00250 (0.0205)	-0.00522 (0.0163)	-0.0189 (0.0237)	-0.0260 (0.0193)
Conflict Intensity					-1.172*** (0.432)	-0.0872 (0.363)
Polity2					-0.150*** (0.0417)	-0.0311 (0.0380)
per capita GDP (Logged)					0.291 (0.181)	0.492*** (0.169)
Constant	-0.0821 (0.438)	-0.195 (0.380)	-0.104 (1.332)	-0.863 (1.082)	0.0217 (1.788)	-3.978*** (1.476)
Observations	1,269	1,269	1,056	1,056	911	911

Robust standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table A5: Reliance on Ideological Appeals and No Abuses of Civilians

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Ideological Recruitment	0.00668 (0.110)	-0.0839 (0.124)	-0.0960 (0.129)
Multi-Ethnic Rebels		0.142 (0.325)	-0.0547 (0.378)
Nationalist		-0.310 (0.316)	-0.0213 (0.374)
Left-Wing		-0.591* (0.358)	-0.00739 (0.334)
Radical Islamist		-0.508 (0.323)	-0.340 (0.398)
Relative Rebel Strength		-0.194 (0.199)	-0.370* (0.213)
Territorial Control		-0.394 (0.261)	-0.645** (0.267)
Lootable Resources		-0.836*** (0.276)	-0.521* (0.273)
External Support		0.537** (0.257)	0.421 (0.274)
Central Command		0.919* (0.534)	0.568 (0.469)
Forced Recruitment		-2.957*** (0.345)	-2.938*** (0.405)
Group Age		0.00805 (0.0146)	0.00376 (0.0153)
Conflict Intensity			-1.064*** (0.336)
Polity2			-0.122*** (0.0260)
per capita GDP (Logged)			-0.125 (0.0975)
Constant	-0.577* (0.343)	0.0873 (0.858)	2.698** (1.092)
Observations	1,269	1,056	911

Robust standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table A6: Reliance on Ideological Appeals and Mixed Repertoires (Including Year Dummies)

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Ideological Recruitment	0.233** (0.0987)	0.205* (0.121)	0.263** (0.115)
Multi-Ethnic Rebels		-0.249 (0.279)	0.0494 (0.333)
Nationalist		0.360 (0.266)	0.388 (0.325)
Left-Wing		0.646** (0.307)	0.139 (0.326)
Radical Islamist		0.733** (0.298)	0.345 (0.372)
Relative Rebel Strength		0.150 (0.196)	0.323 (0.219)
Territorial Control		0.0829 (0.272)	0.192 (0.293)
Lootable Resources		0.715*** (0.252)	0.483* (0.260)
External Support		-0.720*** (0.249)	-0.692** (0.286)
Central Command		0.213 (0.473)	0.403 (0.463)
Forced Recruitment		-0.0207 (0.273)	-0.0252 (0.314)
Group Age		-0.00487 (0.0127)	-0.0117 (0.0145)
Conflict Intensity			0.406 (0.265)
Polity2			0.0763*** (0.0231)
per capita GDP (Logged)			0.400*** (0.115)
Constant	-0.429 (0.388)	-1.048 (0.753)	-4.563*** (1.047)
Observations	1,269	1,056	911

Robust standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table A7: Reliance on Ideological Appeals and Mixed Repertoires (Including Cubic Polynomial Approximation)

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Ideological Recruitment	0.178** (0.0789)	0.126 (0.0910)	0.184** (0.0906)
Multi-Ethnic Rebels		-0.202 (0.230)	-0.0972 (0.261)
Nationalist		0.317 (0.225)	0.330 (0.262)
Left-Wing		0.475* (0.249)	0.318 (0.257)
Radical Islamist		0.504** (0.222)	0.220 (0.276)
Relative Rebel Strength		0.110 (0.150)	0.224 (0.172)
Territorial Control		0.0473 (0.200)	0.110 (0.225)
Lootable Resources		0.596*** (0.197)	0.442** (0.201)
External Support		-0.400** (0.187)	-0.339 (0.214)
Central Command		0.176 (0.323)	0.276 (0.302)
Forced Recruitment		-0.0327 (0.235)	-0.0736 (0.262)
Group Age		0.0115 (0.00967)	0.00168 (0.0109)
Conflict Intensity			0.383* (0.229)
Polity2			0.0510** (0.0202)
per capita GDP (Logged)			0.195*** (0.0743)
t	-0.925*** (0.101)	-0.908*** (0.113)	-0.817*** (0.131)
t ²	0.0966*** (0.0207)	0.0904*** (0.0213)	0.0756*** (0.0236)
t ³	-0.00279*** (0.000919)	-0.00249*** (0.000883)	-0.00196** (0.000927)
Constant	-0.0335 (0.256)	-0.787 (0.569)	-2.916*** (0.716)
Observations	1,269	1,056	911

Robust standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table A8: Reliance on Ideological Appeals and Mixed Repertoires (Including Forced Recruitment)

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Ideological Recruitment	0.243*** (0.0944)	0.222* (0.115)	0.282** (0.112)
Multi-Ethnic Rebels		-0.221 (0.260)	-0.0938 (0.308)
Nationalist		0.359 (0.264)	0.388 (0.316)
Left-Wing		0.555** (0.277)	0.302 (0.284)
Radical Islamist		0.565** (0.265)	0.231 (0.335)
Relative Rebel Strength		0.122 (0.188)	0.267 (0.210)
Territorial Control		0.125 (0.246)	0.247 (0.266)
Lootable Resources		0.672*** (0.242)	0.494** (0.241)
External Support		-0.557** (0.235)	-0.521* (0.271)
Central Command		0.267 (0.433)	0.395 (0.419)
Group Age		-0.00603 (0.0120)	-0.0153 (0.0138)
Conflict Intensity			0.378 (0.260)
Polity2			0.0580** (0.0225)
per capita GDP (Logged)			0.235** (0.0968)
Constant	-0.783*** (0.293)	-1.538** (0.683)	-3.980*** (0.933)
Observations	1,269	1,056	911

Robust standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table A9: Reliance on Ideological Appeals and Mixed Repertoires (Alternative Measure of Rebel Strength)

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Ideological Recruitment	0.228** (0.0971)	0.213* (0.118)	0.264** (0.114)
Multi-Ethnic Rebels		-0.276 (0.273)	-0.148 (0.319)
Nationalist		0.364 (0.269)	0.341 (0.320)
Left-Wing		0.703** (0.295)	0.443 (0.303)
Radical Islamist		0.595** (0.280)	0.250 (0.344)
Relative Rebel Strength		0.193 (0.185)	0.327 (0.208)
Territorial Control		0.0817 (0.254)	0.228 (0.268)
Lootable Resources		0.700*** (0.244)	0.501** (0.246)
External Support		-0.649*** (0.242)	-0.604** (0.274)
Central Command		0.195 (0.430)	0.348 (0.417)
Forced Recruitment		-0.0794 (0.273)	-0.212 (0.299)
Group Age		-0.00870 (0.0120)	-0.0181 (0.0137)
Conflict Intensity			0.481* (0.263)
Polity2			0.0647*** (0.0232)
per capita GDP (Logged)			0.256*** (0.0978)
Constant	-0.789*** (0.299)	-1.519** (0.698)	-4.161*** (0.926)
Observations	1,269	1,056	911

Robust standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1