

## Control over bodies and territories

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### Insurgent territorial control and sexual violence

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*Despite the popular narrative of ‘rape as a weapon of war’, research shows that only a minority of insurgent groups perpetrate sexual violence in armed conflict. We argue that territorial control is an overlooked factor that can increase the likelihood that a group commits sexual violence for two primary reasons: (1) rebel groups seeking to establish control over territory are more likely to commit sexual violence and (2) groups seeking to maintain territorial control emulate state behavior through violently controlling human, sexual, and reproductive capital, which manifests in forced recruitment and different forms of sexual violence including rape and sexual slavery. We systematically test this argument using the Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict (SVAC) and the Big Allied and Dangerous Insurgent II (BAADI2) datasets. The results provide robust support for the argument. This presents an important addition to our understanding of conflict-related sexual violence and rebel governance.*

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There is a house here where they put all the captured people until their mission was accomplished. So we were put in that house. Men in some rooms, women in some rooms. So all of us that were captured in this area were kept in that house. When they went to central Kabala to fight, they left some rebels in charge of us. These will use us as they want. They will each choose one or two girls they will have sex with while others fight.<sup>2</sup>

The quote is a harrowing example of the reality of civilian abuses in wartime, especially rape. It also is an instructive story casting light on the role of territorial control for conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) that has received little attention in previous research. Chris Coulter's research indicates that a lot of the sexual violence by the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in Sierra Leone did not take place at the front but away from the battle in territory under RUF control.<sup>3</sup> Similar stories of sexual violence in insurgent-held territory emerged in past years in Syria, Iraq, Nigeria, Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire, and Somalia, suggesting a broader pattern connecting territorial control and CRSV. This calls for a systematic investigation of the relationship between groups' territorial control and their propensity to commit CRSV. Accordingly, in this article we explore the question: to what extent does territorial control influence the perpetration of sexual violence?

Sexual violence is often dismissed as a quasi-natural occurrence in armed conflicts. However, sexual violence is not part of every conflict and there is substantial temporal variation within and between conflicts. In the past decade a growing number of studies have examined the observed variation between and within conflicts.<sup>4</sup> What is largely overlooked in these studies is the importance of territorial

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<sup>2</sup> Aminata quoted in Chris Coulter, *Bush Wives and Girl Soldiers. Women's Lives Through War and Peace in Sierra Leone*. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009), 96.

<sup>3</sup> Coulter, *Bush Wives and Girl Soldiers. Women's Lives Through War and Peace in Sierra Leone*.

<sup>4</sup> Dara Kay Cohen, "Explaining Rape during Civil War: Cross-National Evidence (1980–2009)," *American Political Science Review* 107, no. 3 (2013a): 461–77; Dara Kay Cohen, "Female Combatants and the Perpetration of Violence: Wartime Rape in the Sierra Leone Civil War," *World Politics* 65, no.

control. Simultaneously, literature on rebels controlling and governing territory has so far largely overlooked the role of sexual violence and treated rebel governance as benign.<sup>5</sup> Hence, by examining the relationship between territorial control and sexual violence we contribute to the literature on both rebel governance and CRSV. In demonstrating that rebels' sexual violence is part of a governance approach in which insurgents emulate state behavior through exerting control over human, sexual, and reproductive capital we also offer an explanation for why government forces are more often reported to perpetrate sexual violence than rebel forces.

We argue that territorial control is associated with a greater likelihood of sexual violence by insurgents for two main reasons that correspond to two stages of territorial control: (1) Insurgents are likely to resort to violence, including sexual violence, to force cooperation or cleanse the territory of opposing civilians *in the process of establishing control*. (2) *To maintain control and govern the territory* insurgents rely on controlling human, sexual, and reproductive capital, which can manifest in forced recruitment and gang rapes, forced marriages, and sexual slavery. Consequently, we expect that insurgent territorial control is associated with a greater likelihood of perpetrating CRSV.

The rest of the article proceeds as follows. We first review the literature examining when and why armed groups commit CRSV. Then, we discuss the

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3 (2013b): 383–415; Dara Kay Cohen, “The Ties That Bind: How Armed Groups Use Violence to Socialize Fighters,” *Journal of Peace Research* 54, no. 5 (2017): 701–14; Dara Kay Cohen, *Rape During Civil War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2016); Dara Kay Cohen and Ragnhild Nordås, “Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict: Introducing the SVAC Dataset, 1989–2009,” *Journal of Peace Research* 51, no. 3 (2014): 418–28; Karin Johansson and Mehwish Sarwari, “Sexual Violence and Biased Military Interventions in Civil Conflict,” *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 36, no 5 (2019): 469–93; Dara Kay Cohen and Ragnhild Nordås, “Do States Delegate Shameful Violence to Militias? Patterns of Sexual Violence in Recent Armed Conflicts,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 59, no. 5 (2015): 877–98.

<sup>5</sup> Zachariah Cheria Mampilly, *Rebel Rulers: Insurgent Governance and Civilian Life during War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012); Ana Arjona, *Rebelocracy: Social Order in the Colombian Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

literature on territorial control and rebel governance. After which, we present our argument that territorial control is associated with a higher likelihood of CRSV. We systematically test this argument using ordinal logistic regression models to examine which insurgent groups between 1998 and 2012 are more likely to perpetrate sexual violence. Using the Big Allied and Dangerous II Insurgent dataset (BAADI2)<sup>6</sup> and the updated Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict dataset (SVAC) provides us with 867 group year observations.<sup>7</sup> The statistical analysis offers robust support for our theoretical argument that those insurgent groups that control territory are more likely to be reported as perpetrating sexual violence. Last, we discuss the important implications for both research on CRSV and prevention efforts by international advocates and policymakers.

#### WHEN AND WHY DO GROUPS PERPETRATE CRSV?

Since 1990, international human rights activists and advocates have succeeded in drawing attention to CRSV, primarily through the framing of rape as a weapon of war.<sup>8</sup> While succeeding in putting CRSV on the international agenda it also led to an oversimplified narrative that does not reflect the empirical realities that only a minority of rebel groups perpetrate CRSV and that there are multiple reasons why groups and individuals perpetrate CRSV.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Victor Asal, Eric Schoon, and R. Karl Rethemeyer, “Crime, Conflict and the Legitimacy Tradeoff: Explaining Variation in Insurgents’ Participation in Crime,” *Journal of Politics* 81, no. 2 (2019): 399–410.

<sup>7</sup> Cohen and Nordås, “Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict”; Ragnhild Nordås and Robert U. Nagel, “Continued Failure to End Wartime Sexual Violence,” PRIO Policy Brief (Oslo: Peace Research Institute Oslo, 2018).

<sup>8</sup> Kerry F. Crawford, *Wartime Sexual Violence. From Silence to Condemnation of a Weapon of War* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2017); Sara Meger, “The Fetishization of Sexual Violence in International Security,” *International Studies Quarterly* 60, no. 1 (2016): 149–59.

<sup>9</sup> Nordås and Nagel, “Continued Failure to End Wartime Sexual Violence.”

Research shows that rape and other forms of CRSV can emerge as an implicit or explicit policy rooted in organizational and structural factors of armed actors.<sup>10</sup> This can take the form of direct orders, as for example in Bosnia, Rwanda, Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of Congo.<sup>11</sup> Or a group might implement a top-down policy, for example, in 1994-1995 the RUF had a policy of ‘rescuing’ women and forcing them into marriages/sexual slavery that was meant to ‘strengthen the rebel group by increasing its manpower, logistical capacity and fighters’ social well-being.’<sup>12</sup> More recent examples of CRSV as part of a group’s strategy include Boko Haram, Al-Shabaab, and ISIS/Daesh.<sup>13</sup> We contribute to this literature by showing that CRSV plays an important role in two stages of territorial control: (1) as part of a strategy to establish control over territory and (2) as part of a governance strategy exercising it.

Research has demonstrated that group dynamics and social interactions play an important role for CRSV, and particularly gang rape. Dara Cohen’s research shows that gang rape has a socialization function enabling combatants to build social cohesion after they were recruited through abduction or press-ganging.<sup>14</sup> The group-based violence facilitates perpetrators forging trust and bonds of loyalty to replace

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<sup>10</sup> Nordås and Nagel; Cohen and Nordås, “Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict”; Maria Eriksson Baaz and Maria Stern, “Why Do Soldiers Rape? Masculinity, Violence, and Sexuality in the Armed Forces in the Congo (DRC),” *International Studies Quarterly* 53, no. 2 (2009): 495–518; Phoebe Donnelly, “Wedded to Warfare: Forced Marriage in Rebel Groups” (PhD Dissertation, Medford, MA, Tuft University, 2019).

<sup>11</sup> Gerald Schneider, Lilli Banholzer, and Laura Albarracin, “Ordered Rape: A Principal–Agent Analysis of Wartime Sexual Violence in the DR Congo,” *Violence Against Women* 21, no. 11 (2015): 1341–63.; Binaifer Nowrojee, “Shattered Lives: Sexual Violence during the Rwandan Genocide and Its Aftermath,” Human Rights Watch Women’s Rights Project (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1996); Jonathan Loeb, “Mass Rape in North Darfur: Sudanese Army Attacks Against Civilians in Tabit” (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2015)

<sup>12</sup> Zoe Marks, “Sexual Violence Inside Rebellion: Policies and Perspectives of the Revolutionary United Front of Sierra Leone,” *Civil Wars* 15, no. 3 (2013): 365.

<sup>13</sup> On the other end of the policy spectrum, some groups and commanders strictly oppose CRSV, which can manifest in explicit or implicit prohibition, as for example in the Liberation Tamil Tigers Elam (LTTE), see Elisabeth Jean Wood “Armed Groups and Sexual Violence: When Is Wartime Rape Rare?.” *Politics & Society* 37(1): 131-161.

<sup>14</sup> Cohen, “Explaining Rape during Civil War”; Cohen, *Rape During Civil War*; Cohen, “The Ties That Bind.”

fear and mistrust stemming from their forced and violent recruitment. The shared act of perpetrating rape in combination with boasting afterwards is a performative act of idealized ‘norms of masculinity, virility, brutality, and loyalty.’<sup>15</sup> Participation thus secures them their place in the gendered hierarchy of the group. In this study we combine work showing that territorial control comes with coercive power over the local population which facilitates forced recruitment<sup>16</sup> and Dara Cohen’s work on gang rape following forced recruitment<sup>17</sup> to demonstrate the link between insurgents controlling territory and perpetrating CRSV. In the next section we discuss how insurgent groups’ control over territory shapes their behavior.

## TERRITORIAL CONTROL

Territorial control and organized violence are deeply intertwined. Geographically concentrated groups pose a greater threat to the state, increase the chances of armed conflict, and territorial conflicts are more difficult to resolve.<sup>18</sup> Geographical concentration facilitates the establishment and maintenance of political, economic, and social networks needed to launch and maintain an insurgency.<sup>19</sup> Meaning, territory itself does not necessarily hold value, its value lies in enabling and

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<sup>15</sup> Cohen, “The Ties That Bind”; Karen Franklin, “Enacting Masculinity: Antigay Violence and Group Rape as Participatory Theater,” *Sexuality Research & Social Policy* 1, no. 2 (2004): 25–40; Meredith Loken, “Rethinking Rape: The Role of Women in Wartime Violence,” *Security Studies* 26, no. 1 (2017): 60–92; Elisabeth Jean Wood, “Conflict-Related Sexual Violence and the Policy Implications of Recent Research,” *International Review of the Red Cross* 96, no. 894 (2014): 457–78.

<sup>16</sup> Yuichi Kubota, “Territorial Control and Recruitment in the Cambodian Civil War, 1970–75: Case Studies in Battambang Province,” *Asian Security* 7, no. 1 (2011): 1–26.

<sup>17</sup> Cohen, “Explaining Rape during Civil War”; Cohen, *Rape During Civil War*.

<sup>18</sup> Monica Duffy Toft, *The Geography of Ethnic Violence Identity, Interests, and the Indivisibility of Territory* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003); Monica Duffy Toft, “Indivisible Territory, Geographic Concentration, and Ethnic War,” *Security Studies* 12, no. 2 (2002): 82–119; David D. Laitin, “Ethnic Unmixing and Civil War,” *Security Studies* 13, no. 4 (2004): 350–65; Nils B. Weidmann, “Geography as Motivation and Opportunity: Group Concentration and Ethnic Conflict,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 53, no. 4 (2009): 526–43.

<sup>19</sup> Toft, *The Geography of Ethnic Violence Identity, Interests, and the Indivisibility of Territory*; Mark Lichbach, *The Rebel’s Dilemma* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1995).

facilitating collective armed action against the state.<sup>20</sup> Territorial control thus offers strategic benefits and influences insurgents' behavior towards both the local population and the state.<sup>21</sup> Consequently, controlling territory is linked to rebel governance, including suppression of dissent through the monitoring of potential defectors and the rewarding of loyal followers,<sup>22</sup> the extraction of resources, including recruits,<sup>23</sup> and abuse (or lack thereof) of local populations.<sup>24</sup>

Territorial control influences belligerents' capacity to extract resources including recruitment because it increases contact with the local population, which facilitates both voluntary and forced recruitment.<sup>25</sup> Key here is that armed actors are able to exert pressure on potential recruits and to increase the costs of non-participation.<sup>26</sup> Insurgents controlling territory have the capacity to fill up their ranks by press-ganging and conscripting locals similar to state governments.<sup>27</sup> Insurgents without territory have to operate clandestinely and have only cursory contact with civilians hampering their recruitment.<sup>28</sup> Fearing repression, displacement, or even killings, members of the local population are more likely to be coerced into fighting

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<sup>20</sup> Weidmann, "Geography as Motivation and Opportunity."

<sup>21</sup> Mampilly, *Rebel Rulers: Insurgent Governance and Civilian Life during War*; Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Logic Of Violence in Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Weidmann, "Geography as Motivation and Opportunity."

<sup>22</sup> Lichbach, *The Rebel's Dilemma*; Mampilly, *Rebel Rulers: Insurgent Governance and Civilian Life during War*; Vera Mironova, *From Freedom Fighters to Jihadists. Human Resources of Non-State Armed Groups* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

<sup>23</sup> Lichbach, *The Rebel's Dilemma*; Kubota, "Territorial Control and Recruitment in the Cambodian Civil War, 1970–75: Case Studies in Battambang Province."

<sup>24</sup> Kalyvas, *The Logic Of Violence in Civil War*; Stathis N. Kalyvas, "Micro-Level Studies of Violence in Civil War: Refining and Extending the Control-Collaboration Model," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 24, no. 4 (2012): 658–68.

<sup>25</sup> Kubota, "Territorial Control and Recruitment in the Cambodian Civil War, 1970–75: Case Studies in Battambang Province"; Charles Tilly, "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime," in *Bringing the State Back*, ed. Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 169–91.

<sup>26</sup> Stathis N. Kalyvas and Matthew Adam Kocher, "How 'Free' Is Free Riding in Civil Wars?: Violence, Insurgency, and the Collective Action Problem," *World Politics* 59, no. 2 (2007): 177–216.

<sup>27</sup> Kubota, "Territorial Control and Recruitment in the Cambodian Civil War, 1970–75: Case Studies in Battambang Province."

<sup>28</sup> Luis de la Calle and Ignacio Sánchez-Cuenca, "Rebels without a Territory: An Analysis of Nonterritorial Conflicts in the World, 1970–1997," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 56, no. 4 (2012): 580–603.

for insurgents.<sup>29</sup> If coercion does not achieve compliance, armed actors may opt to cleanse the territory of opposition.<sup>30</sup>

Territorial control is also fundamental to rebel governance, “which can be viewed as the series of institutions established by an insurgent organization to manage relations with civilians living in the territory under its control”.<sup>31</sup> Insurgents set rules and norms, capture institutions vacated by the state or develop their own, and use them to enforce their rules filling the void left by the formal state government.<sup>32</sup> For example, once Boko Haram controlled territory, the group established Qur’anic schools, officiated weddings, and provided food to residents.<sup>33</sup> Some groups like the Liberation Tamil Tigers Elam (LTTE) benefit from both geographical concentration and pre-existing structures in establishing and delivering governmental services.<sup>34</sup> Failure to develop functioning governance structures undermines insurgents’ ability to hold territory, impedes their war efforts, and diminishes a group’s long-term sustainability.<sup>35</sup> Territorial control therefore both incentivizes and enables insurgent governance. In this article we connect insurgents’ CRSV to two stages of territorial control: (1) the process of establishing it and (2) efforts to maintain it.

## ESTABLISHING CONTROL

Before governing territory, rebels first need to gain territory and need to establish control over it. This first stage of establishing territorial control frequently entails

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<sup>29</sup> Kalyvas and Kocher, “How ‘Free’ Is Free Riding in Civil Wars?”

<sup>30</sup> Jessica A. Stanton, *Violence and Restraint in Civil War. Civilian Targeting in the Shadow of International Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

<sup>31</sup> Mampilly, *Rebel Rulers: Insurgent Governance and Civilian Life during War*, 51.

<sup>32</sup> Mampilly, *Rebel Rulers: Insurgent Governance and Civilian Life during War*; Arjona, *Rebelocracy: Social Order in the Colombian Civil War*; Christine Cheng, *Extralegal Groups in Post-Conflict Liberia: How Trade Makes the State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

<sup>33</sup> Hilary Matfess, *Women and the War on Boko Haram. Wives, Weapons, Witnesses*. (London: Zed Books, 2017), 24.

<sup>34</sup> Mampilly, *Rebel Rulers: Insurgent Governance and Civilian Life during War*, 93–128.

<sup>35</sup> Mampilly, 212.

coercion and expulsions. Armed actors have a repertoire of violence that they can draw on to achieve this including low-casualty killings, targeted massacres, forced expulsions, deliberate bombings of civilians, and CRSV.<sup>36</sup> For example, in Guatemala and Peru the respective governments perpetrated sexual violence as part of both targeted repression and generalized terror.<sup>37</sup> We argue that, similar to governments such as the Guatemalan and Peruvian, insurgents can use CRSV as part of a repertoire of violence to force compliance or displace local populations in the process of establishing territorial control.

Particularly in conflicts that draw on ethnic-based mobilization, insurgents might rely on CRSV to terrorize and expel civilians as part of ethnic cleansing campaigns. In Bosnia, Serbian combatants held Bosnian women in concentration camps and routinely raped them, which led to international reporting coining the term ‘rape camps.’<sup>38</sup> There is a wide consensus that these mass rapes were part of an ethnic cleansing campaign.<sup>39</sup> In addition to camps, Serbian fighters also used other locations such as restaurants, hotels, hospitals, schools, and factories as rape sites.<sup>40</sup> Stiglmeier stresses that all sides in the conflict established rape camps and that as

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<sup>36</sup> Stanton, *Violence and Restraint in Civil War. Civilian Targeting in the Shadow of International Law*; Adam G. Lichtenheld, “Explaining Population Displacement Strategies in Civil Wars: A Cross-National Analysis,” *International Organization*, 2020, 1–42, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818320000089>; Cheryl Benard, “Rape as Terror: The Case of Bosnia,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 6, no. 1 (1994): 29–43.

<sup>37</sup> Michele L. Leiby, “Wartime Sexual Violence in Guatemala and Peru,” *International Studies Quarterly* 53, no. 2 (2009): 445–68.

<sup>38</sup> Inger Skjelsbaek, *The Political Psychology of War Rape. Studies from Bosnia and Herzegovina* (London: Routledge, 2012), 63 Although the exact number is uncertain, Allen *Rape Warfare: The Hidden Genocide in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia* (Minneapolis, MI: University of Minnesota Press, 1996). and Vranic *Breaking the Wall of Silence: The Voices of Raped Bosnia* (Zagreb: Anti Barbarus, 1996) both identify six camps, however, in different parts of the country.

<sup>39</sup> Cheryl Benard, “Rape as Terror: The Case of Bosnia,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 6, no. 1 (1994): 29–43.

<sup>40</sup> Beverley Allen, *Rape Warfare: The Hidden Genocide in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia* (Minneapolis, MI: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 65.

soon as a camp was identified, it was dissolved, and a new one set up in a location less accessible to outsiders.<sup>41</sup>

Rwanda, Bangladesh, and in recent years Myanmar, are other examples of ethnic cleansing campaigns involving CRSV.<sup>42</sup> The majority of these examples are state forces committing CRSV. We argue that this is not a coincidence, but that governments' inherent territorial control is a structural factor that is intertwined with the use of CRSV. In line with this, we contend that insurgents use CRSV as part of a strategy of establishing territorial control through coercion and cleansing. Hence, we expect that else being equal there is a statistically significant association between territorial control and CRSV.<sup>43</sup>

*Hypothesis 1:* Insurgent groups controlling territory in a given year are more likely to perpetrate sexual violence.

## EXERCISING CONTROL OVER BODIES AND TERRITORIES

### *Coercive power*

Once insurgents have established territorial control it enables them to voluntarily and forcibly recruit fighters because it gives insurgents both access to and coercive power over the local population.<sup>44</sup> Put differently, territorial control also gives them control

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<sup>41</sup> "The Rapes in Bosnia-Herzegovina," in *Mass Rape: The War Against Women in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, ed. Alexandra Stiglmayer (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 115.

<sup>42</sup> Lisa Sharlach, "Rape as Genocide: Bangladesh, the Former Yugoslavia, and Rwanda," *New Political Science* 22, no. 1 (2000): 89–102; Ariel I. Ahram, "Sexual Violence and the Making of ISIS," *Survival* 57, no. 3 (2015): 57–78; Rick Gladstone, "Rohingya Were Raped Systematically by Myanmar's Military, Report Says," *The New York Times*, November 16, 2017.

<sup>43</sup> Group differences regarding resources, capabilities, goals, and ideologies all are likely to interact with territorial control and influence perpetration of CRSV. We generalize across these factors to focus on and explain how territorial control shapes groups' propensity to commit CRSV. We revisit the question of ideologies in the robustness checks.

<sup>44</sup> Kubota, "Territorial Control and Recruitment in the Cambodian Civil War, 1970–75: Case Studies in Battambang Province"; Tilly, "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime."

over human capital. Some fighters may join out of normative commitment as for example in the case of FMLN combatants in El Salvador and already subscribe to the ideology of the group and willingly take part in formal political and ideological training that limits civilian abuses.<sup>45</sup> Other groups such as the RUF, NPFL, or Uganda's Lord Resistance Army (LRA) rely heavily on coercion, which can range from social or psychological pressures to violent abductions.<sup>46</sup>

The violent nature of forced recruitment instills fear and mistrust amongst the recruits. 'The process of being abducted is frequently violent for the recruit and may involve beating, forced labor, rape, and other forms of sexual violence.'<sup>47</sup> Forcibly recruited combatants are less committed to the group and more likely to abandon it, making them militarily less effective and imposing additional costs on the group by requiring internal policing.<sup>48</sup> To ameliorate these problems forcibly recruited insurgents need to build social cohesion. As a result, combatants often create informal and violent socialization processes that emerge out of social group dynamics.<sup>49</sup> These socialization processes mean recruits learn to embrace the prevailing norms by seeing them enacted, experiencing them personally, and participating in them.

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<sup>45</sup> Elisabeth Jean Wood, *Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Francisco Gutiérrez Sanín and Elisabeth Jean Wood, "Ideology in Civil War: Instrumental Adoption and Beyond," *Journal of Peace Research* 51, no. 2 (2014): 213–26; Amelia Hoover Green, "The Commander's Dilemma: Creating and Controlling Armed Group Violence," *Journal of Peace Research* 53, no. 5 (2016): 619–32; Amelia Hoover Green, "Armed Group Institutions and Combatant Socialization: Evidence from El Salvador," *Journal of Peace Research* 54, no. 5 (2017): 687–700; Amelia Hoover Green, *The Commander's Dilemma. Violence and Restraint in Wartime* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2018).

<sup>46</sup> Kristine Eck, "Coercion in Rebel Recruitment," *Security Studies* 23, no. 2 (2014): 364–98; Humphreys and Weinstein, "What the Fighters Say: A Survey of Ex-Combatants in Sierra Leone June-August 2003"; Humphreys and Weinstein; Bernd Beber and Christopher Blattman, "The Logic of Child Soldiering and Coercion," *International Organization* 67, no. 1 (2013): 65–104.

<sup>47</sup> Cohen, "The Ties That Bind," 702.

<sup>48</sup> Eck, "Coercion in Rebel Recruitment."

<sup>49</sup> Cohen, "Explaining Rape during Civil War"; Cohen, *Rape During Civil War*; Cohen, "The Ties That Bind"; Wood, "Rape as a Practice of War: Toward a Typology of Political Violence."

Perpetrating violence such as CRSV, particularly gang rape, is an especially effective way to integrate new recruits and maintain hierarchies.<sup>50</sup> It is a performance of masculinity through which perpetrators prove themselves to co-perpetrators.<sup>51</sup> They display their idealized notions of brutal masculinity to an audience of victims and co-perpetrators, which creates bonds and increases mutual respect among perpetrators.<sup>52</sup> Committing the act together and boasting about it to each other afterwards the perpetrators communicate idealized ‘norms of masculinity, virility, brutality, and loyalty’, which enables them to forge ties to each other and replace fear and mistrust.<sup>53</sup> Hence, groups that rely on forced recruitment are more likely to perpetrate sexual violence during wartime.<sup>54</sup>

We argue that territorial control facilitates both forced recruitment and the subsequent perpetration of CRSV. Insurgents in control of territory have coercive power over local populations enabling them to press-gang recruits like state governments. The resulting low cohesion means recruits are more likely to commit CRSV to prove their masculinity and forge missing ties between each other. Controlling territory further facilitates this as it provides individuals with access to locals and thus more opportunities to commit CRSV without retribution from state

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<sup>50</sup> Macartan Humphreys and Jeremy M. Weinstein, “Who Fights? The Determinants of Participation in Civil War,” *American Journal of Political Science* 52, no. 2 (2008): 436–55; Beber and Blattman, “The Logic of Child Soldiering and Coercion.”

<sup>51</sup> Cohen, “Explaining Rape during Civil War”; Cohen, *Rape During Civil War*; Cohen, “The Ties That Bind.”

<sup>52</sup> Franklin, “Enacting Masculinity: Antigay Violence and Group Rape as Participatory Theater”; David J. Wilkinson, Luke S. Bearup, and Tong Soprach, “Youth Gang Rape in Phnom Penh,” in *Sex Without Consent: Young People in Developing Countries*, ed. Shireen Jejeebhoy, Iqbal Shah, and Shyam Thapa (London: Zed Books, 2005), 158–68; Peggy R. Sanday, *Fraternity Gang Rape: Sex, Brotherhood, and Privilege on Campus* (New York: New York University Press, 2007); Rachel Jewkes and Yandisa Sikweyiya, “Streamlining: Understanding Gang Rape in South Africa,” in *Handbook on the Study of Multiple Perpetrator Rape: A Multidisciplinary Response to an International Problem*, ed. Miranda A H Horvarth and Jessica Woodhams (New York: Routledge, 2013), 116–31.

<sup>53</sup> Cohen, “The Ties That Bind,” 704.

<sup>54</sup> Cohen, “Explaining Rape during Civil War”; Cohen, *Rape During Civil War*; Cohen, “The Ties That Bind.”

forces. The coercive power that is associated with territorial control therefore enables both forced recruitment and subsequent CRSV.

The example of the Forces Nouvelles in the Côte d'Ivoire conflict illustrates the interwoven dynamic of territorial control, forced recruitment, and CRSV. From 2002 until 2010 Ivorian rebel groups coalescing under the umbrella of Forces Nouvelles (FN) held control of Côte d'Ivoire's north and most of the west. Even after the fighting mostly stopped in 2004, the FN took advantage of their territorial control to continue extracting resources, including forcibly recruiting from different local ethnic groups,<sup>55</sup> and abusing civilians leading to 'continuing accounts of armed robbery, looting and rape in areas controlled by the Forces Nouvelles'.<sup>56</sup> In line with this, Amnesty International reported that FN combatants were 'responsible for rapes, forced recruitment and sexual slavery in the areas in which they operated.'<sup>57</sup>

### *Governing bodies and territories*

States and rebel groups are formal institutions that are implicitly and explicitly gendered as they are 'defined, conceptualized, and structured in terms of a distinction between masculinity and femininity.'<sup>58</sup> State-building and governance are also deeply gendered processes that rely on patterns of sexual stratification that ensure men's

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<sup>55</sup> HRW, "Trapped between Two Wars: Violence against Civilians in Western Côte d'Ivoire" (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2003); HRW, "Côte d'Ivoire: Ex-Child Soldiers Recruited for War" (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2005); HRW, "Afraid and Forgotten. Lawlessness, Rape, and Impunity in Western Côte d'Ivoire."

<sup>56</sup> HRW, "Briefing on Côte d'Ivoire to the 60th Session of the UN Commission on Human Rights" (New York: Human Rights Watch, January 29, 2004); HRW, "Trapped between Two Wars: Violence against Civilians in Western Côte d'Ivoire"; HRW, "Côte d'Ivoire: Ex-Child Soldiers Recruited for War"; HRW, "Afraid and Forgotten. Lawlessness, Rape, and Impunity in Western Côte d'Ivoire"; HRW, "'My Heart Is Cut'. Sexual Violence by Rebels and Pro-Government Forces in Côte d'Ivoire" (New York: Human Rights Watch, August 2007).

<sup>57</sup> Amnesty International, "Côte d'Ivoire: Targeting Women: The Forgotten Victims of the Conflict," Special Report (London: Amnesty International, 2007).

<sup>58</sup> Dana M. Britton, "The Epistemology of the Gendered Organization," *Gender and Society* 14, no. 3 (2000): 419; Laura Sjoberg, *Gendering Global Conflict. Toward a Feminist Theory of War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013); J. Ann Tickner, *Gender in International Relations. Feminist Perspectives on Achieving Global Security*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992).

power over women.<sup>59</sup> States and other institutions with coercive power such as clans or tribes regulate reproductive capital through laws and practices that govern economic and sexual relationships. This control over and subordination of women and their sexuality is core to their masculine identity. Coercive power and violence are integral to this because they shape access to sexual relations, reproduction, lineage, and inheritance.<sup>60</sup> This manifests in formal ways such as marriage certificate and legislation regulating access to abortions, contraceptives, and LGBTQ rights,<sup>61</sup> as well as in informal practices of dowry and bride price.<sup>62</sup> Control over sexual capital thus is a distinct form of social power.<sup>63</sup> Rebels' ability to govern rests in the ability to translate their coercive power into human, economic, and social capital. Sexual violence in the form of forced marriage and sexual slavery fulfil this crucial role in enabling rebel control over (re-)production and resources, including women's labor.<sup>64</sup>

Territorial control is the prerequisite for insurgents to replace the state and become the governing entity. Even when aiming to replace the state, insurgents often draw on the legacies of the ousted state emulating and replicating its behavior in the process of establishing their governance.<sup>65</sup> Insurgent sexual violence then must be

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<sup>59</sup> Ariel I. Ahram, "Sexual Violence, Competitive State Building, and Islamic State in Iraq and Syria," *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 13, no. 2 (2019): 180–96; Nira Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation* (London: Sage, 1997), 37.

<sup>60</sup> Ahram, "Sexual Violence, Competitive State Building, and Islamic State in Iraq and Syria," 183.

<sup>61</sup> Victor Asal, Udi Sommer, and Paul G. Harwood, "Original Sin: A Cross-National Study of the Legality of Homosexual Acts," *Comparative Political Studies* 46, no. 3 (2013): 320–51; Victor Asal, Mitchell Brown, and Renee Gibson Figueroa, "Structure, Empowerment and the Liberalization of Cross-National Abortion Rights," *Politics & Gender* 4, no. 2 (2008): 265–84.

<sup>62</sup> Valerie M. Hudson and Hilary Matfess, "In Plain Sight: The Neglected Linkage between Brideprice and Violent Conflict," *International Security* 42, no. 1 (2017): 7–40; Valerie M. Hudson, Donna Lee Bowen, and Perpetua Lynne Nielsen, "Clan Governance and State Stability: The Relationship between Female Subordination and Political Order," *American Political Science Review* 109, no. 3 (2015): 535–55.

<sup>63</sup> Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation*, 37.

<sup>64</sup> Jacqui True, *The Political Economy of Violence Against Women* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 121.

<sup>65</sup> Mampilly, *Rebel Rulers: Insurgent Governance and Civilian Life during War*; Ariel I. Ahram, "Sexual Violence, Competitive State Building, and Islamic State in Iraq and Syria," *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 13, no. 2 (2019): 180–96.

understood in the context of the prevailing social and structural power relations.<sup>66</sup>

Ahram, for example, argues that ISIS's use of sexual violence in its state-building and governance efforts was rooted in legacies of sexual violence by government forces in Iraq and Syria.<sup>67</sup>

Controlling access to women is a form of social power that enables insurgents to maintain control and govern by securing group members' loyalty. For example, ISIS fighters, particularly foreign fighters, demanded sexual benefits, which resulted in "ISIS [...] enslaving Yazidi females in large numbers in 2014, two years after ISIS had begun and the supply of eligible local females had significantly decreased."<sup>68</sup> We argue that asserting and exercising control over women's bodies, their sexuality, and their economic and reproductive capital is key to governance efforts associated with prolonged territorial control.

The case of Al-Shabaab in Somalia also illustrates how territorial control incentivizes groups to govern through control over sexual capital in the form of forced marriages. Phoebe Donnelly's research shows that Al-Shabaab created a decentralized system of forced marriages as part of a strategy of fortifying its territorial control, fostering linkages with the local population, and gaining legitimacy.<sup>69</sup> The group frames forced marriages as a commitment to the group, rather than between men and women, which deepens members' ties to the group and implies that women would be still tied to the group even after their men's death.<sup>70</sup> Relatedly and in line with Somali practices of alliance building, these marriages bind families to Al-Shabaab. This

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<sup>66</sup> Sara Meger, *Rape Loot Pillage. The Political Economy of Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

<sup>67</sup> Ahram, "Sexual Violence, Competitive State Building, and Islamic State in Iraq and Syria."

<sup>68</sup> Mironova, *From Freedom Fighters to Jihadists. Human Resources of Non-State Armed Groups*, 149.

<sup>69</sup> Phoebe Donnelly, "Wedded to Warfare: Forced Marriage in Rebel Groups" (PhD Dissertation, Medford, MA, Tuft University, 2019).

<sup>70</sup> Donnelly.

strengthens Al-Shabaab while taking power away from traditional authorities. Al-Shabaab further enforces this dynamic by abolishing bride price payments and promoting male dominance and power.<sup>71</sup> Considering the linkages between bride price and violent conflict,<sup>72</sup> we consider Al-Shabaab's use of forced marriages and abolition of bride price part of a governance strategy. We therefore contend that rebel groups draw on CRSV such as forced marriages and sexual slavery to govern and maintain territorial control for extended periods of time.

In sum, we argue that insurgent groups that hold territory for consecutive years are more likely to commit CRSV. In maintaining and exercising control over territory insurgents have coercive power which they use to control human, sexual, and reproductive capital. This manifests in different forms of sexual violence such as forced marriages and sexual slavery as part of governance efforts, and gang rape following forced recruitment. Importantly, we do not argue that territorial control causes insurgents to perpetrate sexual violence, but that it enables and incentivizes them. Based on the discussion above we derive a second hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 2: Insurgent groups controlling territory for consecutive years are more likely to perpetrate sexual violence.*

We would expect that the two hypothesized mechanisms – establishing territorial control vs maintaining it and governing – are likely associated with different types of CRSV. As the examples of Al-Shabaab and ISIS show, CRSV as part of a strategy to govern and maintain territorial control is likely to take the form of

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<sup>71</sup> Donnelly.

<sup>72</sup> Valerie M. Hudson and Hilary Matfess, "In Plain Sight: The Neglected Linkage between Brideprice and Violent Conflict," *International Security* 42, no. 1 (2017): 7–40.

forced marriages and sexual slavery, whereas CRSV as part of an ethnic cleansing campaign to establish territorial control is likely associated with the use of rape and sexual torture. Unfortunately, the SVAC dataset aggregates the different types of CRSV and has a yearly structure. Therefore, the data do not allow for a more nuanced temporal analysis and a more fine-grained analysis of what forms of CRSV take place at which stage and under what conditions of territorial control.

## DATA AND METHODS

We use the Big Allied and Dangerous II Insurgent dataset (BAADI2) as a base to analyze the factors that make insurgent organizations more or less likely to commit sexual violence in a given year.<sup>73</sup> The BAADI2 dataset consists of data on 140 organizations yearly from 1998 to 2012 with the selection of the organizations based on the code-able organizations that met the 25 battle death criteria of the Uppsala Armed Conflict Data Program's dataset (using the UCDP Battle-Related Deaths Dataset (v.5-2013)).

Organizations if they appear in UCDP for one year are coded for the entire time period covered by BAADI2 even if they only pass the UCDP 25-battle death threshold once. Although the temporal scope of BAADI2 is limited compared to the Non-State Actor dataset,<sup>74</sup> the BAADI2 has the benefit of yearly coding rather than conflict episode coding, which enables us to capture yearly changes in territorial control (and other control variables) and subsequently allows for a more fine-grained analysis.

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<sup>73</sup> Asal, Schoon, and Rethemeyer, "Crime, Conflict and the Legitimacy Tradeoff: Explaining Variation in Insurgents' Participation in Crime."

<sup>74</sup> David E. Cunningham, Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, and Idean Salehyan, "Non-State Actors in Civil Wars: A New Dataset," *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 30, no. 5 (2013): 516–31.

The dependent variable – sexual violence - is coded as a three-point ordinal variable. For this we rely on the updated version of the Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict (SVAC) dataset.<sup>75</sup> Based on the UCDP dyadic dataset (v.17.1) the updated SVAC dataset covers all governments and non-state actors in all conflicts from 1989 to 2015. The dataset codes seven distinct forms of sexual violence: rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, forced sterilization/abortion, sexual mutilation, and sexual torture. Based on the UCDP data, the SVAC dataset includes data on all active conflict years and the first five inactive years following an active conflict year. The original dataset has four prevalence scores (0-3) based on the three sources, State Department reports (SD), Amnesty International reports (AI), and Human Rights Watch reports (HRW). We combine the three sources into one scale and collapse the two highest prevalence levels of the original dataset into one category, i.e. ‘3’ is re-coded as ‘2’.<sup>76</sup> Accordingly, we have a three-point ordinal variable, which takes on the highest reported prevalence level of the three sources: 0 - no sexual violence; 1 - some sexual violence; 2 – widespread/systematic. For example, in Rwanda in 2009 the three prevalence scores for the FDLR are different (SD = 2, AI = 1, HRW = 3); in such cases our dependent variable adopts the highest possible value of our scale: 2.

Reporting of CRSV is inherently uncertain as fears of stigmatization often lead to underreporting and low estimates of CRSV, while human rights organizations are incentivized to emphasize reports of such incidents to raise awareness and

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<sup>75</sup> Cohen and Nordås, “Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict”; Nordås and Nagel, “Continued Failure to End Wartime Sexual Violence.”

<sup>76</sup> We combine the two categories of widespread and systematic to enable a meaningful statistical analysis. The conservative coding approach of the SVAC project means that widespread or systematic rebel SVAC is relatively rare to begin with. In the time period between 1998 and 2012 there are only 66 observations in the complete SVAC dataset in which a rebel group is either coded as widespread (2) or systematic (3) in one of the three sources.

funding.<sup>77</sup> To mitigate this uncertainty we run a robustness check using a binary variable.

We should note that SVAC only covers years ‘active’ UCDP conflict years (> 25-battle related deaths) and the first five years of ‘inactivity’ following an ‘active’ year. As a result, when we merged the SVAC dataset with the 1,386 yearly observations of the BAADI2, only 920 of those organizational years could be matched. In 790 of these 920 coded years (or 85.57%) there are no reports of sexual violence by insurgents, in 77 (8.37%) there are reports of some sexual violence, and in 53 (5.76%) there are reports of insurgents committing widespread or massive sexual violence.

### *Independent Variables*

Our first variable of interest territorial control, which we use to test hypothesis 1, is a binary variable drawn from the BAADI2 dataset indicating if the insurgent group controls territory in a given year.<sup>78</sup> This is coded as a one if the organization is able to control movement into, out of, or within the given territory for at least one week in a calendar year. The territory must be a substantial area (city, region, etc.) and not just the temporary occupation of one or multiple buildings. In some instances, it also includes the performance of functions and/or provision of services, similar to that of a legitimate government. Territory may be controlled by threat or use of force or if the government grants the organization the authority to do so. In measuring the yearly

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<sup>77</sup> Dara Kay Cohen and Amelia Hoover Green, “Dueling Incentives: Sexual Violence in Liberia and the Politics of Human Rights Advocacy,” *Journal of Peace Research* 49, no. 3 (2012): 445–58; Sara E. Davies and Jacqui True, “The Politics of Counting and Reporting Conflict-Related Sexual and Gender-Based Violence: The Case of Myanmar,” *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 19, no. 1 (2017): 4–21.

<sup>78</sup> Asal, Schoon, and Rethemeyer, “Crime, Conflict and the Legitimacy Tradeoff: Explaining Variation in Insurgents’ Participation in Crime.”

change in territorial control, the data currently present the best opportunity to analyze the effects of changing territorial control on rebel group behavior.

Our second variable of interest used to test hypothesis 2 in a separate regression is a measure of continued territorial control for every year an organization controls territory. In the first year an organization controls territory it is coded as a one and the next year as a two and so on. If an organization loses all its territory, it returns to zero. If an insurgency regains territorial control the variable starts again as a one.

Groups that kill civilians are likely to also commit sexual violence against them. To account for this relationship between fatalities and sexual violence we used two measures drawn from the Global Terrorism Database (GTD)<sup>79</sup> – one that measures the number of civilian fatalities inflicted by an organization and one that measures the number of security personnel recorded by the GTD in a year. GTD often codes attacks that are directed at both security personnel and civilians. Because of this, the variable coded for security personnel codes all attacks where security personnel were attacked though there may have also been civilians attacked as well. The civilian variable is for those attacks that only attacked civilians and not police or military. To measure the involvement in battles and an organization’s battle-related deaths in a given year we use the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) battle deaths dataset.<sup>80</sup>

Forced recruitment plays an important role for CRSV<sup>81</sup> and we argue that territorial control is intertwined with forced recruitment and CRSV. To account for

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<sup>79</sup> Gary LaFree and Laura Dugan, “Introducing the Global Terrorism Database,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 19, no. 2 (2007): 181–204.

<sup>80</sup> Therése Pettersson and Peter Wallensteen, “Armed Conflicts, 1946–2014,” *Journal of Peace Research* 52, no. 4 (2015): 536–50.

<sup>81</sup> Cohen, *Rape During Civil War*; Cohen, “Explaining Rape during Civil War.”

the effects of forced recruitment and ensure any relationship between territorial control and perpetration of CRSV is not driven by forced recruitment we include a control for forced recruitment based on Dara Cohen's data.<sup>82</sup> In a robustness check we examine the empirical relationship between territorial control and forced recruitment.

CRSV is often explicitly linked to ethnic and secessionist conflicts and some scholars argue that sexual violence as a tactic is used in ethnic conflicts as a means of humiliation, terrorization, and ethnic cleansing.<sup>83</sup> Our first hypothesis follows a similar logic but focuses on the aspect of territorial control rather than ethnicity. To control for the possibility that it is ethnic mobilization rather than territorial control that leads to CRSV, we include a binary measure that indicates if the insurgent group is an ethnic organization or not.

Our use of the examples of Al-Shabaab and ISIS might suggest that groups with religious ideologies are more likely to perpetrate CRSV. Amelia Hoover Green's research suggests that groups with a leftist ideology are better equipped to restrain members' abuses through political education and training.<sup>84</sup> To control for these potential impacts of ideologies we include two binary variables capturing a group's ideology: religious or not and leftist or not.

Foreign state funding can lead to civilian abuse.<sup>85</sup> To control for this we use a binary variable drawn from the BAADI2 dataset that captures if the organization in

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<sup>82</sup> Cohen, *Rape During Civil War*; Groups that could not be matched with Cohen's data were coded manually using academic articles, INGO reports, and news media publication.

<sup>83</sup> Cheryl Benard, "Rape as Terror: The Case of Bosnia," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 6, no. 1 (1994): 29–43; Kathryn Farr, "Extreme War Rape in Today's Civil-War-Torn States: A Contextual and Comparative Analysis," *Gender Issues* 26, no. 1 (2009): 1–41; Thomas Plümper and Eric Neumayer, "The Unequal Burden of War: The Effect of Armed Conflict on the Gender Gap in Life Expectancy," *International Organization* 60, no. 3 (2006): 723–754; Sharlach, "Rape as Genocide."

<sup>84</sup> Hoover Green, "The Commander's Dilemma"; Hoover Green, *The Commander's Dilemma. Violence and Restraint in Wartime*.

<sup>85</sup> Idean Salehyan, David Siroky, and Reed M. Wood, "External Rebel Sponsorship and Civilian Abuse: A Principal-Agent Analysis of Wartime Atrocities," *International Organization* 68, no. 3 (2014): 633–61.

question is getting external funding. Recent research shows that funding from natural resource extraction is associated with CRSV.<sup>86</sup> To further account for the role of funding sources, we use an ordinal variable in the BAADI2 dataset that captures if the organization is involved in crime including drug smuggling, robbery, kidnapping and extortion. The variable ranges from zero to three and a higher value indicates more criminal activities.

Groups that have a political party or govern through the provision of social services might be less likely to resort to violence to exercise control. Hence, we include binary variables to control for political parties and social service provision. Conflict dynamics and the balance of power between insurgents and the state can also shape the perpetration of CRSV.<sup>87</sup> Hence, we use count variables for the number of alliances and rivalries an organization has to account for this.

Longevity and size of an organization can indicate its credibility and robust support among local populations.<sup>88</sup> To control for this we include a count variable for age and an ordinal variable that captures the size of the organization and is coded “...as 1 if the number of members is 0-100 or unknown, 2 if it is 100-999, 3 if 1000-9999, and 4 if it has 10,000 or more members.”

Leadership and organizational structures are important aspects shaping CRSV.<sup>89</sup> Hence, we include an ordinal variable (0-4) which is coded from a zero if

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<sup>86</sup> Beth Elise Whitaker, James Igoe Walsh, and Justin M Conrad, “Natural Resource Exploitation and Sexual Violence by Rebel Groups,” *Journal of Politics* 81, no. 2 (2019): 702–6.

<sup>87</sup> Johansson and Sarwari, “Sexual Violence and Biased Military Interventions in Civil Conflict.”

<sup>88</sup> Levente Szentkirályi and Michael Burch, “An Umbrella of Legitimacy: Rebel Faction Size and External Military Intervention,” *International Political Science Review* 39, no. 4 (2018): 515–30.

<sup>89</sup> Christopher K. Butler, Tali Gluch, and Neil J. Mitchell, “Security Forces and Sexual Violence: A Cross-National Analysis of a Principal—Agent Argument,” *Journal of Peace Research* 44, no. 6 (2007): 669–87; Robert U. Nagel and Austin C. Doctor, “Conflict-Related Sexual Violence and Rebel Group Fragmentation,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002719899443>.

the organization is leaderless (though there are no leaderless organizations in the insurgency dataset) all the way to a four if the organization has one sole leader.

Political context and the degree to which there is a permissive environment for abuses is an important aspect shaping CRSV.<sup>90</sup> Thus, we use the Polity 2 measure<sup>91</sup> to control for regime type of the country in which the insurgency is occurring. In table 1 you can see the descriptive statistics for the variables we use in the analysis.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Observations	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Prevalence of Sexual Violence	920	0.199	0.524	0	2
Age	1,386	17.436	14.358	0	65
Territorial control	1,386	0.247	0.431	0	1
Years of Territorial control	1,386	1.065	2.598	0	15
Criminal Involvement	1,386	0.492	0.878	0	3
Forced Recruitment	1,328	0.459	0.498	0	1
Civilian fatalities in GTD	1,386	22.711	110.717	0	2807
Security fatalities in GTD	1,386	12.715	68.797	0	1676
UCDP Battle Deaths	1,386	219.328	825.214	0	14716
Political Party	1,386	0.232	0.422	0	1
Social Service Provision	1,386	0.098	0.298	0	1
Size	1,386	2.688	0.705	1	4

<sup>90</sup> Wood, "Rape as a Practice of War: Toward a Typology of Political Violence"; Cohen and Nordås, "Do States Delegate Shameful Violence to Militias?"

<sup>91</sup> Monty G. Marshall and Keith Jagers, "Polity IV Annual Time-Series, 1800–2013," 2014.

Religious ideology	1,386	0.346	0.476	0	1
Ethnic Organization	1,386	0.543	0.498	0	1
Leftist ideology	1,386	0.212	0.409	0	1
Polity II	1,315	2.697	5.742	-9	10
Rivalries	1,386	0.325	0.640	0	4
Alliances	1,386	0.818	1.596	0	15
Leadership Structure	1,386	2.892	0.494	1	4
Foreign State Support	1,386	0.082	0.274	0	1

### *Methods and analysis*

Our dependent variable is an ordinal variable for reported level of sexual violence in a particular year by an organization, thus our analysis is an ordinal logistic regression.

We rely on STATA for our analysis. We include yearly fixed effects to control for the potential effects of specific years such as for example when the United Nations Security Council adopted resolutions addressing CRSV.<sup>92</sup> We have also clustered our analysis by organization. Because logistic regression coefficients do not offer information on how substantive the impact of a statistically significant association is, we use Table 3 and Table 5 to present the changes in predicted probability for the two levels of CRSV when switching the statistically significant independent variables in our analysis from their minimum to maximum value.<sup>93</sup>

To test H1 – we run our model using the binary variable indicating territorial control in a given year. Table 2 presents the ordinal logistic regression results and

<sup>92</sup> Specifically, UNSCR 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009); 1889 (2010); 1960 (2011)

<sup>93</sup> We use Long and Freese's *prchange* command see *Regression Models for Categorical Dependent Variables Using Stata*, 3rd ed. (College Station, TX: Stata Press, 2014).

Table 3 presents the percent change in the predicted probability for those variables that are statistically significant.

To test H2 – we run our model using the count variable for the number of years an organization controls territory. Table 4 presents the ordinal logistic regression results and Table 5 presents the percent change in the predicted probability for those variables that are statistically significant.

Table 2: Ordinal Logistic Regression with binary territorial control measure

Variable	Coef.	Robust Std. Err.	z	P>z	[95% Conf. Interval]	
Age	0	0.013	-2.420	0.016	-0.055	-0.006
Territorial control	1	0.360	4.130	0.000	0.779	2.188
Criminal Involvement	0	0.227	1.710	0.087	-0.057	0.834
Forced Recruitment	2	0.572	2.700	0.007	0.423	2.665
Civilian fatalities in GTD	0	0.002	2.110	0.035	0.000	0.007
Security fatalities in GTD	0	0.003	-0.950	0.342	-0.008	0.003
UCDP Battle Deaths	0	0.000	-1.120	0.261	-0.001	0.000
Political Party	0	0.419	-0.940	0.349	-1.214	0.429
Social Service Provision	0	0.383	-0.020	0.982	-0.760	0.742
Size	0	0.251	1.450	0.146	-0.127	0.858
Religious ideology	0	0.778	-0.280	0.777	-1.745	1.305
Ethnic Organization	1	0.465	1.280	0.2	-0.316	1.509
Leftist ideology	0	0.660	0.170	0.867	-1.183	1.404
Polity II	0	0.040	-1.550	0.122	-0.142	0.017
Rivalries	0	0.293	0.390	0.693	-0.458	0.689
Alliances	0	0.247	-1.190	0.232	-0.780	0.189
Leadership Structure	0	0.248	-0.510	0.608	-0.614	0.359
Foreign State Support	0	0.378	-0.990	0.321	-1.116	0.366
Year 1999	0	0.448	0.940	0.347	-0.456	1.299
Year 2000	0.318	0.579	0.55	0.583	-0.816	1.452
Year 2001	0.683	0.398	1.72	0.086	-0.096	1.463
Year 2002	1.073	0.638	1.68	0.093	-0.178	2.325
Year 2003	0.893	0.561	1.59	0.111	-0.206	1.992
Year 2004	0.411	0.662	0.62	0.535	-0.886	1.707
Year 2005	0.271	0.573	0.47	0.636	-0.852	1.393
Year 2006	-0.379	0.554	-0.68	0.494	-1.465	0.707
Year 2007	-0.465	0.605	-0.77	0.442	-1.650	0.721
Year 2008	-1.142	0.712	-1.6	0.109	-2.538	0.254
Year 2009	-0.208	0.643	-0.32	0.746	-1.468	1.051

Year 2010	-0.057	0.741	-0.08	0.939	-1.509	1.395
Year 2011	0.124	0.701	0.18	0.86	-1.250	1.498
Year 2012	-0.192	0.753	-0.26	0.799	-1.668	1.284
/cut1	4.043	1.249			1.595	6.492
/cut2	5.308	1.216			2.924	7.691
Number of obs = 867	Prob > chi2 = 0.0000					
Wald chi2(32) = 257.07	Pseudo R2 = 0.2379					

Table 3: Change in probabilities for statistically significant variables with binary territorial control measure

Variable	Average change	If DV=0	If DV=1	If DV=2
Age	6.463%	9.695%	-6.674%	-3.022%
Territorial control	8.552%	-12.827%	8.548%	4.280%
Criminal Involvement – one tailed	6.913%	-10.370%	6.924%	3.446%
Forced Recruitment	6.808%	-10.212%	6.945%	3.267%
Civilian fatalities in GTD	32.084%	-48.126%	24.742%	23.384%

Table 4: Ordinal Logistic Regression with count territorial control measure

Variable	Coef.	Robust Std. Err.	z	P>z	[95% Conf. Interval]	
Age	-0.048	0.017	-2.8	0.005	-0.081	-0.014
Years of Territorial control	0.230	0.075	3.07	0.002	0.083	0.376
Criminal Involvement	0.449	0.238	1.88	0.060	-0.019	0.916
Forced Recruitment	1.621	0.564	2.88	0.004	0.516	2.726
Civilian fatalities in GTD	0.003	0.002	1.85	0.064	0.000	0.007
Security fatalities in GTD	-0.002	0.003	-0.6	0.549	-0.007	0.004
UCDP Battle Deaths	0.000	0.000	-0.94	0.346	-0.001	0.000
Political Party	-0.439	0.422	-1.04	0.298	-1.266	0.388
Social Service Provision	-0.204	0.480	-0.43	0.671	-1.144	0.736
Size	0.330	0.280	1.18	0.239	-0.219	0.879
Religious ideology	-0.360	0.756	-0.48	0.634	-1.841	1.121
Ethnic Organization	0.547	0.456	1.2	0.230	-0.346	1.439
Leftist ideology	0.159	0.662	0.24	0.810	-1.138	1.457
Polity II	-0.062	0.039	-1.6	0.110	-0.139	0.014
Rivalries	0.186	0.299	0.62	0.533	-0.400	0.773
Alliances	-0.225	0.246	-0.91	0.361	-0.707	0.258
Leadership Structure	-0.131	0.248	-0.53	0.597	-0.617	0.355
Foreign State Support	-0.268	0.423	-0.63	0.526	-1.096	0.560
Year 1999	0.234	0.411	0.57	0.570	-0.571	1.039
Year 2000	0.135	0.542	0.25	0.803	-0.927	1.198
Year 2001	0.395	0.393	1	0.315	-0.376	1.166
Year 2002	0.747	0.546	1.37	0.172	-0.324	1.817
Year 2003	0.511	0.528	0.97	0.333	-0.524	1.546
Year 2004	0.011	0.626	0.02	0.986	-1.216	1.237
Year 2005	-0.386	0.588	-0.66	0.512	-1.539	0.767
Year 2006	-0.803	0.589	-1.36	0.173	-1.958	0.351
Year 2007	-0.898	0.560	-1.6	0.109	-1.995	0.199
Year 2008	-1.661	0.665	-2.5	0.012	-2.964	-0.358
Year 2009	-0.900	0.632	-1.42	0.155	-2.138	0.339
Year 2010	-0.625	0.683	-0.92	0.360	-1.963	0.713
Year 2011	-0.664	0.742	-0.89	0.371	-2.119	0.791
Year 2012	-0.897	0.708	-1.27	0.205	-2.284	0.490
/cut1	3.094	1.334			0.481	5.708
/cut2	4.351	1.287			1.827	6.874
Number of obs=867	Prob > chi2		=0			
Wald chi2(32)=244.73	Pseudo R2		=0.2324			

Table 5: Change in probabilities for statistically significant variables with count territorial control measure

Variable	Average change	If DV=0	If DV=1	If DV=2
Age	9.537%	14.306%	-9.713%	-4.593%
Years of Territorial control	39.024%	-58.536%	26.631%	31.904%
Criminal Involvement – one tailed	8.440%	-12.659%	8.352%	4.308%
Forced Recruitment	7.210%	-10.815%	7.319%	3.497%
Civilian fatalities in GTD– one tailed	29.074%	-43.610%	23.348%	20.263%

## DISCUSSION

Table 2 and Table 4 indicate that the same five variables have an impact on the likelihood of an organization to engage in CRSV. In line with our theoretical expectations, territorial control has a substantial impact on a group’s propensity to commit CRSV. As Table 3 shows a group that controls territory in a given year is 8.6% more likely to perpetrate some sexual violence and a little more than 4% more likely to commit widespread sexual violence.

Table 5 shows that an organization that does not control territory at all is 58% less likely to be engaged in sexual violence than a group that has held territory over a number of years. When changing years of territorial control from minimum to maximum, the probability that a group commits some CRSV increases by 27%, and the probability that a group commits widespread CRSV increases by 32%. These results illustrate the substantial effects that territorial control has on groups’ perpetration of sexual violence. This offers strong support for the argument that

insurgents holding territory for consecutive years rely on CRSV as part of a governance strategy.

In both our models we find that organizations that kill many civilians are also much more likely to commit some or widespread CRSV. In line with Dara Cohen's work and our expectations, the results show that organizations engaged in forced recruitment are more likely to commit CRSV. Importantly, the relationship between territorial control and CRSV remains robust to the inclusion of this variable. This indicates that the significant and substantial relationship between territorial control and CRSV is not due to a missing variable and independent of forced recruitment.

Previous research shows that sexual violence is neither exclusive to ethnic conflicts, nor more prevalent in them.<sup>94</sup> Similarly, our results also show no statistically significant association between ethnic organizations and CRSV. On one hand this indicates that all else equal ethnic organizations are no more or less likely than other organizations to commit CRSV. On the other hand, it also suggests that cleansing campaigns involving CRSV might take a place in conflicts that are not necessarily ethnically motivated. We revisit the question of how different types of ideology (ethnic, religious, leftist) might interact with territorial control to influence CRSV in the robustness check section.

Interestingly, organizational age is statistically significant. The older an organization gets the less likely it is to engage in CRSV. This relationship between organizational longevity and civilian abuse poses the question if it is the lack of abuse that enables a group to garner popular support to sustain itself for a long duration or if it is popular support that negates the need for abusive tactics. It could also indicate

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<sup>94</sup> Cohen, "Explaining Rape during Civil War"; Cohen, *Rape During Civil War*; Cohen and Nordås, "Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict."

that as insurgencies mature, they find ways to exercise power in less overtly violent ways, for example through the enforcement of social norms and formal rules similar to state laws. This presents an opportunity for future research.

Finally, as expected based on Whitaker et al.'s recent work, the criminal activity variable also has a statistically significant and positive association with CRSV.<sup>95</sup> Though we should note that in both models its  $P > z$  value is one tailed unlike all other significant variables that are two tailed.

### *Robustness checks*

To mitigate the uncertainty surrounding reports of CRSV and its prevalence, we run a robustness check using a binary outcome variable. This variable combines the two categories of 'some' and 'widespread' CRSV into one category. Using a logistic regression model the main findings remain robust: territorial control (both variations of the variable) shows a statistically significant association with CRSV. We present the full results of the logistic regression models in the appendix.

Part of the causal chain in our argument is that territorial control facilitates forced recruitment, which builds on previous work linking territorial control and recruitment.<sup>96</sup> To offer more empirical support for this claim we run a bivariate logistic regression using forced recruitment as the dependent variable and territorial control as the independent variable. As expected, we find a positive, strong, statistically significant association between the two variables. Further exploration of this dynamic is beyond the scope of this article but presents an avenue for future research.

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<sup>95</sup> Whitaker, Walsh, and Conrad, "Natural Resource Exploitation and Sexual Violence by Rebel Groups."

<sup>96</sup> Tilly, "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime"; Kubota, "Territorial Control and Recruitment in the Cambodian Civil War, 1970–75: Case Studies in Battambang Province."

When an ethnic group is concentrated in a territory it facilitates the establishment and maintenance of political, economic, and social networks needed to launch and maintain an insurgency.<sup>97</sup> This means geographically concentrated ethnic groups might start out with an advantage regarding territorial control negating the need to engage in cleansing operations. Moreover, pre-existing geographical concentration might lead to further self-selection and a homogenization process of the local population when violence erupts. Under such conditions, groups might prohibit and seek to prevent CRSV because victims would be primarily co-ethnics and it would erode local support. Thus, ethnic groups controlling territory might (a) have no need for CRSV and (b) actually consider it detrimental to their continued territorial control, thereby making it less likely. We would expect this pattern to be even stronger when such groups' control over territory lasts for multiple years.

Leftist groups traditionally have stronger institutional structures that provide political education and training that limit abuse.<sup>98</sup> Hence we would expect that when such groups control territory, they would seek to govern through a political wing and social service provisions and limit the perpetration of CRSV.

The impact of religious ideologies is less straightforward. Similar to ethnic groups, there might be dynamics of self-selection and homogenization at play when groups with a religious ideology control territory. That would make CRSV as part of cleansing operations unnecessary while also enabling governing strategies that are less overtly violent, i.e. formalized religious rules governing the sexual and reproductive capital similar to state laws. On the other hand, groups with religious

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<sup>97</sup> Toft, *The Geography of Ethnic Violence Identity, Interests, and the Indivisibility of Territory*; Lichbach, *The Rebel's Dilemma*; Weidmann, "Geography as Motivation and Opportunity."

<sup>98</sup> Hoover Green, "The Commander's Dilemma"; Hoover Green, "Armed Group Institutions and Combatant Socialization"; Hoover Green, *The Commander's Dilemma. Violence and Restraint in Wartime*.

ideologies that also control territory such as Boko Haram, ISIS, and Al-Shabaab are notorious for perpetrating CRSV on a large scale.

To test these potential impacts, we run robustness checks in which we interact territorial control with ethnic, religious, and leftist ideologies respectively. For ethnic and religious groups, the interaction term is negative and statistically significant indicating that ethnic organizations and organization with a religious ideology that control territory are less likely to be reported as committing CRSV. We find the opposite effect for leftist ideology, i.e. a positive statistically significant association between CRSV and territorial control by a leftist group. Contrary to our expectations leftist groups that control territory are more likely to perpetrate sexual violence.

When examining the interaction between duration of territorial control and different ideologies we find the same pattern. This means as time of territorial control increases, ethnic groups or groups with a religious ideology are becoming less likely to perpetrate CRSV. On the other hand, the longer groups with a leftist ideology control territory, the more likely they are to be reported as committing CRSV.

These results suggest that the popular narrative that CRSV is more prevalent in ethnic conflicts needs to be treated with more nuance. Ethnic groups that control territory are actually less likely to commit CRSV and the longer they control territory the smaller the chance of CRSV. Similar nuance is required when discussing religious organizations. Contrary to what the notorious examples of Boko Haram, ISIS, and Al-Shabaab suggest, religious insurgencies that control territory are actually less likely to commit CRSV, with the same pattern over time as ethnic groups. Leftist groups that control territory, however, are more likely to perpetrate CRSV, which stands in stark contrast to previous research on potential mitigate effects of institutional factors such as political training and education. Overall, this presents an important contribution to

our understanding of how territorial control, ideology, and time can interact to influence insurgents' violence.

## CONCLUSION

This article addresses a gap in our understanding of insurgent group violence, particularly sexual violence, by focusing on how territorial control shapes groups' propensity to commit CRSV. Previous research highlighted the role of group and battlefield dynamics, recruitment and socialization processes, and state-building for sexual violence.<sup>99</sup> We contribute to this literature by examining insurgent groups active in the period 1998-2012 and finding that there is a strong and significant relationship between groups controlling territory and CRSV. This aligns with previous research that demonstrates that territorial control is an important factor shaping violence against civilians.<sup>100</sup>

We argue that there are two stages – establishing control over a territory and governing it – in which insurgents are likely to use different forms of CRSV. Rebel groups seeking to establish control over territory are more likely to rely on CRSV as part of a cleansing campaign. Groups that hold territory over longer durations are more likely to use CSRV as part of a governance strategy. Through forced marriages and sexual slavery insurgents regulate and control human, sexual, and reproductive capital ensuring members' loyalty and exercising social power. Territorial control endows groups with coercive power over local populations to implement these

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<sup>99</sup> Cohen, "Explaining Rape during Civil War"; Cohen, *Rape During Civil War*; Cohen, "The Ties That Bind"; Hoover Green, "Armed Group Institutions and Combatant Socialization"; Johansson and Sarwari, "Sexual Violence and Biased Military Interventions in Civil Conflict"; Marks, "Sexual Violence Inside Rebellion"; Ahram, "Sexual Violence, Competitive State Building, and Islamic State in Iraq and Syria."

<sup>100</sup> Kalyvas, *The Logic Of Violence in Civil War*; Megan A. Stewart and Yu-Ming Liou, "Do Good Borders Make Good Rebels? Territorial Control and Civilian Casualties," *The Journal of Politics* 79, no. 1 (2017): 284–301.

strategies. Additionally, it facilitates forced recruitment, which increases the likelihood of CRSV in the form of gang rapes. This offers an important contribution to the literature on rebel governance that frequently treats it as benign.

At the same time, this finding does not apply to all insurgents equally. Ethnic groups and groups with religious ideologies that control territory are less likely to be reported as committing CRSV whereas leftist groups controlling territory are more likely. This adds important nuance to discussions about the role of ideologies and territorial control.

The findings also offer a potential explanation for the discrepancy between reports of sexual violence by government forces and rebel forces. Governments have de jure and de facto territorial control, which grants their forces access to and coercive control over populations enabling and facilitating CRSV.

The findings are also policy relevant. The results further underscore the importance that territorial control can play in protecting civilian populations and suggest that denying a group territorial control can also help mitigate the prevalence of rebel sexual violence. This is important for governments facing insurgents, but also for potential diplomatic and military interventions seeking to protect civilians. Taking back territory from insurgents can be crucial in efforts to protect civilians from them. However, our findings on the role of ideologies caution against treating all groups equally as civilians in territories of ethnic and religious insurgencies might be less likely to suffer from CRSV.

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