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Female Fighters: Why And How Do Women Rebel?

Alexandra Giggie
University of Texas at El Paso

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FEMALE FIGHTERS: WHY AND HOW DO WOMEN REBEL?

ALEXANDRA MARIA GIGGIE

Master's Program in Political Science

APPROVED:

_____
Rebecca Reid, Ph.D., Chair

_____
Charles Boehmer, Ph.D.

_____
Maissa Khatib, Ph.D.

_____
Stephen L. Crites, Jr., Ph.D.
Dean of the Graduate School

Dedication

Dedicated to my family: Mom, Dad, Julia, and Christian, and to the strong circle of women

aways encouraging me.

Thank you for your endless love and support.

FEMALE FIGHTERS: WHY AND HOW DO WOMEN REBEL?

by

ALEXANDRA MARIA GIGGIE, B.S.

THESIS

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Women have been active participants in all conflict throughout history and have

composed over 40% of all intrastate war combatants between 1979 and 2009 (Braithwaite and

Ruiz 2018). Intrastate war occurs within a single country, where it is an armed conflict between a

government and non-government party, such as a rebel organization (Loken and Matfess 2022;

Harbom, Melander and Wallensteen 2007). Despite women's significant participation in conflict

as active fighters, until recently most literature overlooked and ignored women's role in conflict

beyond support positions and victimhood. The limited attention existing scholarship does direct

toward women in conflict is frequently gendered with stereotypes and misconceptions driving

inaccurate narratives (Sjoberg, Shair-Rosenfield, Kadera 2018).[1] For example, a common

(stereotypically gendered) narrative and misconception about women is that they are not active

participants in conflict, but are instead relegated to only innocent victims, uninvolved in fighting

and generally in need of protection (Elshaitn 1985). When women are acknowledged as

perpetrators of violence, many rationalize their behavior by arguing that they are a small,

aberrant percentage of women. Specifically, Sjoberg and Gentry (2007) outline how women in

conflict are often placed into three categories: mothers, monsters, or whores. They contend that

people commonly perceive female fighters as mothers fighting due to their maternal instinct to

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[1] Deconstructing these narratives and analyzing women in conflict requires first understanding the difference between gender and sex. Sex refers to physical differences between people who are female, male, or intersex (Mazure 2021). Individuals are typically assigned sex at birth using anatomical markers, such as chromosomal composition and genitalia (Mazure 2021). Unlike sex, gender refers to individual self-identity and is a social construct; therefore, if men and women behave differently, it is a consequence of how they are positioned in society and not because they are inherently different beings (Sjoberg, Shair-Rosenfield, Kadera 2018). The gender binary, or classification of gender as either exclusively male or female, is also socially constructed. This paper recognizes that gender is fluid and nonbinary and that individuals can identify beyond male or female; however, data restrictions limit my empirical research to binary sources and outcomes. The goal of this paper is not to perpetuate the gender binary assumption but to recognize the problematic nature of our data and urge datasets to become more representative of the individuals and situations we study. Having these baseline understandings of sex and gender is essential to critically analyze women in conflict as gender orders and norms historically dominate the narrative.

protect, are psychologically disturbed "monsters", or are whores linking women's violence and hypersexuality (Sjoberg and Gentry 2007). These narratives strip women of their status as an agent of choice and rational decision-maker by arguing that women participate in conflict exclusively because they are either manipulated to do so by external forces (e.g., lovers, family members) or because they struggle with a psychological/sexual condition (Henshaw 2016).

Justifying women's armed participation in conflict as an abnormal phenomenon presents not only a normative issue of perpetuating inaccurate stereotypes, but it also creates a practical problem of presenting inaccurate intelligence of who is considered a combatant and the overall composition of rebel groups (Sjoberg and Gentry 2007; Henshaw 2016). The topic of women in conflict deserves a more realistic and informed discussion, and there has been some recognition of this need with the recent increase in research on the topic. I contribute to the emerging scholarship of women in conflict by examining: 1) the relationship between national environments and individuals' decisions to participate in conflict, particularly how gender (in)equality can enhance or hinder female participation in rebellions, and 2) the conditions that inform rebel groups to decide to include female combatants.

The remainder of this chapter offers a literature review and critique of existing scholarship examining the role of women in intrastate wars and conflict. Chapter 2 quantitatively examines how gender inequalities within a state can motivate women to participate in rebellion. Chapter 3 then investigates how gender inequality and related gendered perceptions impact the likelihood that women participating in rebellion will hold combatant roles specifically. Understanding both the conditions that motivate women to participate in rebellion and the factors which enable or reduce women's participation as combatants are crucial for a more well-balanced understanding of the role of gender in conflict and how and why individuals decide to engage in violence.

WOMEN IN CONFLICT RESEARCH

Despite women in conflict being historically understudied, research on this topic has grown significantly in recent years. Most research is particularly focused on why women rebel, the specific roles female rebels hold within rebel organizations, and the gendered ways in which women experience conflict (MacKenzie, 2012; Viterna, 2013; Parkinson, 2013; Matfess, 2017; Loken 2022; Loken and Matfess 2022). This new research seeks to address previously overlooked aspects of gender and conflict as well as debunk gendered stereotypes.

Why Women Rebel

There are multiple theories attempting to explain why men and women rebel, most falling in two schools of thought: grievance or greed. Greed theories are rooted in economics and posit that individuals conduct a cost-benefit analysis to assess the associated rewards of rebellion (Collier and Hoeffler 2004). The theories of selective incentives and paradoxes of power fall under the larger umbrella of greed as they rely on rationalist assumptions regarding the expectation for individuals to maximize benefits. Specifically, selective incentive theory argues that the promise of public goods alone will not catalyze people to overcome collective action and rebel, but an additional separate incentive will motivate a rational individual into action (Olson 1965).

The paradoxes of power theory offers a compelling insight into how men and women may have differing motivations to rebel. It frames choices in two ways: "devote resources to fighting or to production activity" (Hirshleifer 1991, 180). When women are in a lower economic class, they are facing compounding disadvantages by both simply being a women and having less economic productivity; therefore, a rational individual, when given the choice between rebellion or production, would opt to rebel because it offers a greater opportunity for return (Hirshleifer 1991). This is especially true in a state where women's labor holds less value than their male

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counterparts and where women are denied access to parts of the labor market (Gimenez 1975; Henshaw 2016). The paradoxes of power theory favors the disadvantaged party; therefore, by its logic, women are expected to have greater motivations to rebel than men (Hirshleifer 1995). This theory also highlights the importance of studying the nature of inequality within a state because it can have a direct impact on who rebels and why they chose to.

Both selective incentives theory and the paradoxes of power theory rely on economic models which assume that individuals are self-interested and always seeking to maximize their own returns. Feminist theorists critique this explanation of motivations to rebel questioning the assumption that women are primarily motivated by their interest in public goods (Henshaw 2016, 48). Henshaw (2016) argues that the utility of these theories centers on the risk calculus of an individual being risk adverse or risk acceptant regarding rebellion; however, the above economic theories fail to consider this factor. Madhok and Rai (2012) note that feminist political economists hold risk as central to a decision, where risk is not only the potential for economic loss but also the potential for personal, social, and security loss. Similarly, when considering the different ways men and women engage and participate in both formal and informal markets, Madhok and Rai (2012) question whether economic models of greed accurately capture women's economic realities of choice. Additionally, considering how these models define and set expectations of rational action, Tong (2008) questions whether women behave rationally and if it is desirable for them to make decisions devoid of emotion.

While theories of greed focus on the economics of rebel motivations, theories of grievance center on issues of identity and emotion. Chapter 2 fully dissects grievance theory as it forms the theoretical basis for my empirical model on why women rebel; however, in essence, grievance theory argues that once a level of deprivation is passed, individuals are driven to rebel in an effort

to better their situation (Gurr 1970; Henshaw 2016). Researchers posit that certain types of grievances have greater or smaller impacts on motivations to rebel, focusing particularly on the impacts of political, economic, and ethno-religion grievances. I add to this argument in Chapter 2 by theorizing that, while certain grievances affect people of all genders, there are also overlapping grievances for certain social groups, such as women, that create a compounding effect. More specifically, I contend that as women experience multiple forms of inequality and grievances, they become more motivated to participate in rebellion against their state. Understanding the various motivations women have to participate in rebellion then leads us to investigate how and where women participate once they chose to rebel.

The Roles Female Rebels Hold

Theoretically, women can fulfill any position within rebel organizations, but not all women chose to, and others are not granted the opportunity. Central to understanding the roles women hold within rebel groups is acknowledging which concepts of gender dominate within the organization and within the state—and if these concepts are shared or differ (Henshaw 2016). Chapter 3 discusses this topic further as it assumes that a rebel organization's conceptualization of gender is either consciously or unconsciously practiced and has a direct impact on the roles men and women hold within the organization. While there are various roles women can hold within rebel groups, most literature categorizes the choices into either a combatant or noncombatant position. Framing women's role in conflict in such a dichotomous way is met with resistance, as MacKenzie (2017) argues that it recognizes problematic myths concerning combat roles, such as the belief that combat roles serve to "legitimize male privilege" by presenting men who fulfill combat duties as elite while simultaneously strengthening the narrative that the exclusion of women is necessary (MacKenzie 2017, 53; Henshaw 2016). Additionally, MacKenzie (2012)

argues that the combatant/noncombatant dichotomy is inaccurate because it frames the roles as mutually exclusive; when in reality, women often fulfill both roles. Griset and Mahan (2002) advocate for research to pivot away from combatant/noncombatant terminology and instead use other descriptors, such as "warriors." Despite these criticisms, majority of current research on women's participation in rebellion still relies on this classification.

Along with the debate surrounding the binary framing of combatants and noncombatants, a similar debate exists concerning the definitions of such concepts. Broadly accepted definitions hold combatants as anyone exposed to regular front-line conflict and noncombatants as individuals who are not regularly exposed to front-line conflict (Parkinson 2013; Alison 2004). Those who are considered noncombatants often fulfill support related roles, such as outreach, logistics, community management, and governance (Loken 2022; Turshen and Twagiramariya 1998). There is also the debate of how to classify women who offer support in more intimate ways, such as wives, lovers, sex slaves, and prostitutes, and if women who serve in this capacity should be considered members of rebel groups (Turshen and Twagiramariya 1998; Henshaw 2016). Griset and Mahan (2002) argue that women fulfilling these roles should be considered active members because they provide emotional support and are often placed into the same dangerous circumstances as all other members of the rebel organization. Additionally, Griset and Mahan (2002) find that many women provide additional non-intimate services, such as cooking, cleaning, and transporting supplies.

Henshaw (2016) takes a slightly different approach to categorizing the role of women in conflict by creating a technical chart that combines combatant or noncombatant position attributions and accounts for officers, rank and file members, and forced recruitment memberships. When framed in this context, the connection between women holding combat roles and then

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holding leadership (officer) positions emerges. This connection highlights the traditional masculine prestige and honor that is associated with combat experience, and how being a combatant can grant women greater recognition and respect from their male counterparts, thereby resulting in increased opportunity to hold leadership positions (Griset and Mahan 2002; MacKenzie 2017).

Most of recent research concerning how and where women participate in rebel organizations has been qualitative in nature and conducted at the single case or small N (Henshaw 2016). This is mostly due to the lack of datasets on women in conflict, with the majority of quantitative data focused on women participating in government-sponsored militaries as opposed to rebel organizations or regime opposition groups. This was the case until 2017, when Wood and Thomas (2017) released the Women in Armed Rebellion (WARD) dataset. These data are the first dedicated to female rebel combatants, and it includes a categorical variable for female combatants within rebel organizations. The WARD dataset stood alone until September 2022 when Loken and Matfess (2022) released the Women's Activities in Armed Rebellion (WAAR) dataset, which provides data on female rebels who serve in supportive and auxiliary roles along with combatant roles. While qualitative research certainly has value, the addition of quantitative data expands the scope and generalizability of research on this topic.

The Gendered Experience of Conflict

The relationship between conflict and gender is complex, with men and women having both similar and different experiences of conflict and its aftermath. Most gendered consequences of conflict, however, are not new but instead built upon preexisting forms of discrimination. This relationship is illustrated by the direct and indirect challenges conflict and instability create for civilians. For example, during times of conflict, government militarization rates increase, often

causing spending on other government expenditures, such as health care, to decrease. When essential health care availability reduces, this affects the entire population; however, research finds that infant and maternal mortality rates increase during armed conflict, highlighting compounding health issues for women during conflict (Mamkherzi et al. 2022; Plumper and Neumayer 2006). There is also an increase in obstacles facing access to education during conflict (Ishlyama and Breuning 2012). During conflict, if women are choosing not to fight, they often assume greater household and caregiving responsibilities. Women and girls might also need to participate in the labor force to increase both the state's economic status and their household income (Dunlop and King 2021). These additional tasks and burdens limit women's availability to continue schooling. Additionally, the loss of housing and land is common during conflict and can affect women disproportionally due to the absence of property rights for example—thus illustrating how conflict can exasperate preexisting forms of discrimination (Ibanez and Velasquez 2009).

In addition to larger structural challenges, sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) typically increases during and after conflict due to a breakdown in rule of law, increased access and dissemination of small arms, and the disruption of social and familial structure (Tiessen and Thomas 2014). Examples of SGBV include forced marriages, sex work, female genital mutilation, forced abortion or sterilization, physical violence, psychological violence, and sexual harassment (Kimkung and Espinosa-Heywood 2012). Due to high rates of SGBV, women and girls are also significantly more likely to become infected with sexually transmitted infections (STI), including HIV/AIDS. A recent post-conflict study found that the STI infection rate is four times higher in adolescent girls than boys directly highlighting the disproportional impact SGBV has on women and girls (Bouta, Frerks, and Bannon 2005). This issue also intensifies when we consider the overall decline in healthcare services during and immediately after conflict. While women's

experiences with SGBV tend to dominate the narrative, men are also victims of such violence, especially in contexts of detention centers and prisoner of war camps (Kimkung and Espinosa-Heywood 2012; United Nations 2022). Despite the global denunciation of SGBV, the long-term effects of SGBV are rarely recognized with little to no reconciliation and rehabilitation efforts provided to survivors (Rezwana and Pain 2020).

The threat of human trafficking also intensifies both during and after conflict due to the general breakdown of political, social, and economic structures within the state. Risk of trafficking increases with high numbers of refugees and internally displaced peoples fleeing the conflict and ensuing violence (Farhan 2017). Individuals are most commonly trafficked for sexual exploitation and slavery, forced marriage, forced labor, and forced participation into armed groups (Akee et al. 2010). While men and women can both be trafficked, women have increased vulnerabilities to such crimes, especially as the demand for sexual services increase (Akee et al. 2010).

Despite the various ways in which women experience conflict, they are commonly excluded from conflict prevention efforts and post-conflict resolutions. Not only is women's full and meaningful participation important for broadening perspectives and highlighting previously overlooked topics of consideration, but studies have also shown that peace last longer when women are included in post-conflict resolutions compared to when they are prohibited from participating (De la Rey 2005; Krause and Bränfors 2018). Consequently, researching women's various roles in conflict, the conditions which motivate women to participate, and how gender intersects with experiencing conflict and its aftermath is a meaningful pursuit essential for understanding the multifaced impacts of conflict.

Chapter 2: Grievance Theory and the Motivation to Rebel

Existing literature on the relationship between a nation-state's level of gender equality and the presence of women in rebel groups is contradictory. Some scholars argue that more equal states generate greater numbers of female participation in rebel organizations (Thomas and Wood 2018; Thomas and Bond 2015), while others maintain that states with less gender equality facilitate increased female participation (Henshaw 2016; Henshaw 2017; Cragin and Daly 2009).

Those who argue that states with greater gender inequality generate more female involvement in rebel groups largely rely on grievance theory, which holds grievance as an influential factor pushing individuals into conflict. Grievance is defined as a cause of complaint or protest especially because of unfair treatment. Grievance theory specifically argues that once a threshold of deprivation is passed, individuals will be driven to participate in conflict in order to change their livelihood and well-being (Henshaw 2016; Henshaw 2017). Everyone's threshold of deprivation is ultimately individually determined; however, Siroky et al. (2020) suggests that consistent relative deprivation, or a frustration due to a gap between what an individual or group has compared to what it feels it deserves, increases the probability that deprived groups will engage in conflict. As a result, grievance theorists maintain that states with greater gender inequality are likely to have more women participating in rebellion.

Other scholars contend, however, that greater gender equality will produce greater numbers of women participating in rebellion, specifically as combatants (Thomas and Wood 2018; Thomas and Bond 2015). This outcome is driven by a multitude of factors that combine to improve women's individual agency and weaken gendered assumptions related to women's inability to fulfill nontraditional roles, such as combatant positions. States with greater gender equality also provide women with more opportunities to participate in political, social,

educational, and economic institutions, which lowers their barrier of entry to join rebel organizations.

This literature is contradictory because it explains two different, distinct facets or processes related to the role of inequality with rebellion: 1) factors that influence women's motivation to join opposition and rebel movements, and 2) the factors that enable women to join rebel groups as combatants. My research contributes to this topic because it is the first to identify this theoretical differentiation and represent it through two different empirical models. I specifically break female rebel participation into two models. The first model focuses on factors that motivate women to join rebel groups, specifically highlighting how gender inequality generates additional grievances for women compared to men. The second model investigates conditions that make rebel leaders more likely to place or allow females rebels into combatant positions by identifying how perceptions of women and unequalness impact how women are incorporated into rebel organizations. Differentiating these two processes is critical theoretically and empirically, where the role of gender (in)equality likely has contradictory effects across these two mechanisms.

This paper specifically contributes to existing literature by arguing that women's motivations to join rebel groups do not necessarily translate into female rebel combatant presence because, in order for women to become rebel combatants, they not only have to be motivated to join, but rebel group leaders (who are most often men) must also permit women into those positions. Previous literature has yet to highlight this important distinction between motivation and participation, likely leading to the contradicting conclusions regarding the relationship between gender inequality and women's participation in rebellion. This paper theorizes that increased gender inequality, expressed through specific compounding grievances

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women experience, are primary motivators for women to join rebel groups; however, increased gender equality, expressed through greater integration of women into the labor force and secondary educational institutions, can positively influence rebel leaders into allowing women into the organization and to hold combatant roles.

More specifically, when holding the assumption that rebel leaders act as gatekeepers into the organization and are influential in distributing positions across members, female combatants are only observable when rebel leaders explicitly decide to employ, train, arm, and deploy women into combat roles (Wood 2019). Consequently, when investigating the relationship between gender inequality and female combatant presence in rebel organizations, it is important to highlight rebel leaders' gender perceptions and how such perceptions are influenced by the status of gender inequality in the state within which rebel groups operate. Rebel leaders and their assumptions regarding gender norms explain when and how women are placed in combatant positions; however, such information is not as useful in understanding why women would be motivated to join rebel groups in general (Wood and Ramirez 2018). Grievance theory provides reasoning for women's motivation to rebel and is the main topic of consideration throughout Chapter 2.

Theory

I begin by investigating the motivations for women to join rebel groups as a whole, and I do so by thoroughly analyzing grievance theory. As stated above, grievance theory argues that rebellion occurs when grievances become sufficiently acute that people are motivated to engage in violence (Collier and Hoeffler 2004; Murshed 2002). Grievance is a cause of complaint or protest especially because of unfair treatment, and all societies have groups with grievances with some issues affecting everyone and other issues impacting one group more than others (Davis

2013; Collier and Hoeffler 2004). While there are various types of grievances, previous literature

has found that economic inequality, ethnic or religious persecution, and the lack of political

rights are the grievances which cause the greatest sources of violence for men and women alike

(Davis 2013; Humphreys and Weinstein 2008; Collier 2007; Collier and Hoeffler 2004).

While these grievances affect people of all genders, there are also overlapping or

intersecting grievances for certain social groups that create a compounding effect. For example,

Caprioli (2005) considers how political grievances might motivate women to join rebel groups

finding that women face two overlapping forms of discrimination: they are marginalized for

being members of an excluded political group and further marginalized as a result of their

gender. This research supports the argument that certain social groups, such as women, face

intersecting forms of grievances that other social groups, such as their male counterparts, do not

face. Similarly, Gurr (1970) underscores the complex interaction between grievance and

rebellion in predicting intrastate violence by finding that it is not inequality and diversity alone

that incites violence, but also the added layer of systemic discrimination. Gurr (1970) considers

how relative deprivation, or the idea that a person or group is not receiving the treatment they

believe they deserve, breeds aggression thus providing the motivation for collective action

through violence to rectify the situation (Davies 1962). This concept of overlapping grievances is

illustrated by the systemic gender inequalities women often face in addition to the general

grievances that people of all genders face. I argue that these added grievances women face

increase women's motivation to join rebellions and opposition groups as a means of either

rectifying or escaping their circumstances.

Henshaw (2016) studies specifically why women rebel, finding that men and women both

join rebel groups as a means of fleeing and resolving grievances. Henshaw (2016) also concludes

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that women are motivated by specific additional grievances based on her findings that women are more likely to participate in rebel groups that campaign to remedy economic grievances or focus on ethnic or religious issues. These findings suggest that women are motivated to rebel due to economic or religious grievances. Henshaw (2016) also finds that rebel groups' promise for greater political rights has an insignificant relationship to the presence of female rebels, thus suggesting that women do not join rebel groups to attain greater political rights. Henshaw (2016), however, notes data limitations and urges future researchers to further explore this topic. Overall, Henshaw (2016) contributes to the literature by implying that the grievances women face, in addition to the general grievances everyone faces, are primary motivators for women to rebel. In this paper, I expand upon Henshaw (2016) to test for the relationship between additional grievances women face and regime opposition group size.

This chapter is not attempting to investigate the relationship between gender inequality and the presence of female rebel combatants (which is a topic more deeply explored in Chapter 3), but instead considers how gender inequality, expressed through additional grievances women face compared to men, influences women's motivations to join rebel groups. With a substantial majority of grievance theory literature supporting the finding that economic, religious or ethnic, and political grievances are the greatest sources of violence for people of all genders, I use them in my model to capture the general grievances everyone faces (Davis 2013; Humphreys and Weinstein 2008; Collier 2007; Collier and Hoeffler 2004). To capture the additional grievances women face, I focus on three main factors: 1) political power distributions by gender to capture political grievances, 2) women's property rights to capture economic grievances, and 3) women's ability to participate in civil society organizations (CSO) to capture social grievances. Overall, I argue that women are motivated to participate in rebellion when they are faced with

grievances specific to women in addition to general grievances everyone faces. In other words, gender inequality increases the likelihood that women are motivated to rebel. Specifically, I argue that regime opposition groups should increase in size when gender-related grievances (i.e., gender inequality) are high. Increases in regime opposition, while a blunt measure for female participation due to data limitation, indicates that women are (more than likely) joining these groups. These expectations are summarized in the following hypothesis:

 H1: States with greater gender inequality will experience greater regime opposition group size.

Data and Methods

To properly evaluate my theory and hypotheses, I rely on three datasets: Quality of Governance (QoG) (Teorell et al. 2022), Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) (Coppedge, et al. 2022), and Women in Armed Rebellion (WARD) (Wood and Thomas 2022). I merged the Quality of Governance and Varieties of Democracy datasets and manually input female combative data from WARD in order to conduct a large-n comparative analysis. My timeframe of analysis is 1946 to 2021, and the unit of analysis is state-year.

There is limited data capturing the total number of female rebels in each rebel organization; therefore, to capture the overall influx of women into rebel organizations, my dependent variable is *Regime Opposition Group Size*. I hypothesize that women are participating in rebellion when women's lack of rights and additional grievances are significant in predicating rebel group size. Rebel groups and regime opposition groups are used interchangeably throughout this paper. *Regime Opposition Group Size* originates from the Varieties of Democracy database, where a regime is defined as "the set of formal and/or informal rules that are essential for choosing political leaders and/or maintaining political leaders in power" (Coppedge, et al. 2022, 140). A regime opposition group is defined as " a group of individuals

who both want and could, under favorable circumstances, be able to remove the existing political regime" (Coppedge, et al. 2022, 138). *Regime Opposition Group Size* specifically considers the total number of members within regime opposition groups that both oppose the regime and "pose a non-negligible threat to the regime" (Coppedge, et al. 2022, 138).[2] Individuals who are members of more than one opposition group classification are only counted once, and *Regime Opposition Group Size* reports the share of the adult population (above the age of 18) which are members of regime opposition groups (Coppedge, et al. 2022, 138).[3] The variable is ordinal converted to interval with an increase representing an increase in the share of the domestic adult (ages 18 and above) population that opposes the current political regime (Coppedge, et al. 2022). From my sample data, *Regime Opposition Group Size*'s mean is -0.277, standard deviation is 1.29, and ranges from -2.809 to 2.802.

My main independent variables of interest include *Power Distribution by Gender, Female Property Rights,* and *Female CSO Participation* as they represent additional, gendered grievances that women encounter in conjunction with the general grievances everyone faces. *Power Distribution by Gender* captures politically related grievances, and it originates from the Varieties of Democracy database (Coppedge, et al. 2022). *Power Distribution by Gender* asks the question, "is political power distributed according to gender?" with lower values indicating no political power for women and "men having near-monopoly on political power", and higher

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[2] The specific regime opposition groups composing this variable include: "the aristocracy, including high status hereditary social groups and castes, agarin elites, including rich peasants and large landowners, party elites (of the party or parties that control the executive, business executives, the state bureaucracy, the military, an ethnic or racial group(s), a religious group(s), local elites, including customary chiefs, urban working class, including labor unions, urban middle class, rural working class (e.g., peasants), and rural middle class (e.g., family farmers)" (Coppedge, et al. 2022, 138).

[3] Coppedge et al. (2022) provide an example for such a scenario on page 140. They write, "For example, if the two relevant opposition groups are (4) civil servants, which total about 5% of the population, and all of them belong to a particular ethnic group (6) also coded as a relevant, the overall total size of the opposition groups is still 5% (presuming that there are no other members of that ethnic group who oppose the regime)."

values indicating men and women have roughly equal political power (Coppedge, et al. 2022, 205). *Power Distribution by Gender* is continuous, and from my sample data, the mean is 0.662, standard deviation is .0789, and ranges from -2.133 to 2.09. An increase in *Power Distribution by Gender* represents more equal political power among men and women.

Female Property Rights captures economic grievances women specifically face, and it is a continuous variable from the Varieties of Democracy database (Coppedge, et al. 2022). This variable asks, "do women enjoy the right to private property?" where lower values indicate no women enjoy property rights of any kind and higher values indicating all women enjoying all property rights (Coppedge, et al. 2022, 185). Private property encompasses "the right to acquire, possess, inherit, and sell private property, including lands" (Coppedge, et al. 2022, 185). From my data, *Female Property Rights* has a mean of 0.408, standard deviation of 1.04, and ranges from -1.638 and 4.707. An increase in *Female Property Rights* represents a greater number of women enjoying property rights per state year.

Female CSO Participation captures social grievances specific to women. This variable originates from the Varieties of Democracy database, and it investigates if women are prevented from participating in civil society organizations (CSO) (Coppedge, et al. 2022). Lower values of *Female CSO Participation* indicate that women are almost always prevented from participating in CSO, whereas higher values indicate that women are almost never prevented from participating in CSO (Coppedge, et al. 2022, 195). Consequently, an increase in *Female CSO Participation* represents an increase in women able to participate in CSO per state-year. From my data, *Female CSO Participation* has a mean of 0.908, standard deviation of 0.892, and ranges from -1.637 to 2.585.

In addition to my main independent variable of interest, I include several controls, including: *GDP per capita (log), Equal Distribution of Resources, Regime Type, Freedom of Religion,* and *Unemployment.* To control for a country's level of development, I include GDP per capita measured in constant 2010 U.S. dollars. Development levels are important to control for because lower economic development and resources can create increased scarcity, competition, deprivation, and violence (Stewart 2002). GDP per capita is derived from the World Development Indicator database, and due to its highly skewed nature, I take the log of *wdi_gdpcapcon2010* to generate my variable *GDP per capita (log)* (Teorell et al. 2022). *GDP per capita (log)* is a continuous variable , and, from my sample data, has a mean of 8.043, standard deviation of 1.019, and ranges from 5.186 to 10.43. An increase in this variable represents increased GDP per capita per state-year.

To capture the general grievances both men and women face, this paper controls for the equal distributions of resources within countries using a variable taken from the Varieties of Democracy database (Coppedge, et al. 2022). *Equal Distribution of Resources* measures "the extent to which resources – both tangible and intangible – are distributed in society," and it includes measures for poverty levels, distribution of public goods and services, the extent to which the public has guaranteed access to high quality basic education, and the extent to which the public has guaranteed access to high quality basic healthcare (Coppedge, et al. 2022). An increase in *Equal Distribution of Resources* represents more equal distribution, and a decrease represents less equal distribution. From my data, the mean is 0.662, standard deviation is 0.789, and ranges from -2.133 to 2.09.

Individual freedom of religion is controlled for because it represents the general religious grievances all people face, regardless of gender. *Freedom of Religion* originates from the

Characteristics of National Constitutions database and is a categorical variable (Elkins and Ginsburg 2021). This variable measures if a state constitution protects freedom of religion, where a value of 0 indicates that freedom is not protected, 1 indicates that only certain freedoms are protected, and 2 indicates that freedom is protected (Elkins and Ginsburg 2021).[4] From my sample data, the min is 1, max is 3, observations is 1,211, mode is 1 (frequency 1,045), and standard deviation is 0.602.

Total unemployment is included as a control because it represents another general grievance people of all genders face. *Unemployment* originates from the World Development Indicator database and is measured as a total percentage of unemployment in the labor force. Unemployment refers to the "share of the labor force that is without work but available for and seeking employment," and it is included as a control because it represents general economic grievances for all genders (Teorell et al. 2022, 622). *Unemployment* is a continuous variable, and from my sample data, has a mean of 7.89, standard deviation of 5.333, and ranges from 0.17 to 31.84. An increase in *Unemployment* represents an increase in the total percentage of unemployment in the labor force per state-year. *Unemployment* is the limiting variable in my model, and, with only 354 observations, is responsible for the decrease in observations between the dataset and my model.

A state's regime type is controlled for using the *Regime Type* variable, which is derived from the Unified Democracy Scores database (Melton, Meserve, and Pemstein 2010). *Regime Type* is continuous, and, from my sample data, the mean is 0.132, standard deviation is 0.626, and ranges from -1.248 to 1.662. *Regime Type* measures the level of democracy each state

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[4] These measures are recoded from the original values of 1 = freedom of religion is protected; 2 = freedom of religion is not protected; 3 = only certain religions are protected in the constitution (Elkins and Ginsburg 2021). I recoded to ensure that increases in value also indicate increases in *Freedom of Religion*.

reflects, where an increase represents more democratic regimes and a decrease represents less democratic regimes. Regime type of a state is a valuable control as it is often an indicator for likelihood of conflict (Halkia et al. 2020). For example, Dixon (2009) finds that anocracies are more susceptible to civil war than both pure dictatorships and democracies. Regime types are also often linked to state capacity with high-capacity states tending to be more capable of monitoring and responding to opposition group activity compared to weaker, decentralized, low-capacity states (Müller-Crepon, Hunziker, and Cederman 2021).

To test for potential collinearity issues within my independent variables I conduct pairwise correlations. None of the variables are highly correlated (r > |0.8|) with each other with the highest correlation of 0.61 between *Regime Type* and *Power Distribution by Gender.* All other correlations are less than |0.55| with most showing little to no correlation.[5] Because my dependent variable of regime opposition size is continuous, I conduct an OLS regression with robust standard errors clustered by state-year.

Results

I hypothesize that states with greater gender-related grievances (i.e., gender inequality) will experience larger regime oppositions groups. I infer that regime opposition size grows because women are motivated to join. As Table 1.1 illustrates, all independent variables are statistically significant except for *GDP per capita (log)* and *Freedom of Religion*. For the statistically significant variables, however, I reject the null hypotheses that these variables' relationship with *Regime Opposition Group Size* is due to random chance. Overall, my model has

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[5] Variables with correlation above |0.5| but below |0.54| indicating moderate correlation within my dataset include *Female CSO Participation* and *Power Distribution by Gender* (0.55), *Regime Type* and *Female Property Rights* (0.55), *GDP per capita (log)* and *Equal Distribution of Resources* (0.53), *GDP per capita (log)* and *Equal Distribution of Resources* (0.53), *Equal Distribution of Resources* and *Female Property Rights* (0.52), *Regime Type* and *Female CSO Participation* (0.51).

354 observations, is statistically significant with a prob > f value of 0.000, and has a R^2 of 0.3188.

Table 1.1: Gendered Grievances and Regime Opposition Size

Variables	Coeff.	Std. Err.	P>|t|
Power Dist. by Gender	0.201	0.107	0.063*
Female Property Rights	-0.297	0.141	0.036**
Female CSO Part.	-0.484	0.079	0.000**
Equal Dist. of Resources	1.26	0.401	0.002**
GDP per capita (log)	-0.131	0.097	0.179
Regime Type	-0.375	0.181	0.039**
Freedom of Religion	-0.193	0.122	0.113
Unemployment	0.033	0.011	0.004**
N	354		
Prob>F	0.000		

* $p \leq 0.10$
**$p \leq 0.05$
Note: Robust standard errors are clustered by state-year.

As shown in Table 1.1, my main independent variables of interest have a statistically significant relationship with *Regime Opposition Group Size.* While not significant at the 0.05 alpha level, *Power Distribution by Gender* is significant at the 0.10 alpha level with a p-value of 0.063. *Power Distribution by Gender*'s significance at a 0.10 alpha level and borderline significance at the 0.05 alpha level suggests that its relationship with *Regime Opposition Group Size* relationship is actually present. *Power Distribution by Gender*'s significance provides interesting results as its relationship with *Regime Opposition Group Size* is opposite of hypothesized with a coefficient of 0.20. This indicates that as political power distribution between men and women becomes more equal, *Regime Opposition Group Size* increases. I

expected the opposite as it would indicate that political grievances motivated women to join regime opposition groups. These results, however, provide preliminary evidence supporting the notion that separating women's role in rebellion into two modes with one model capturing the motivations to rebel and the other model capturing admittance into the rebel organization is an appropriate distinction. Table 1.1's results support the argument presented in Chapter 3 that as women obtain more (political) power and inequality decreases, women have greater access to opportunities that increase their skills and widen their social network thus increasing their attractiveness as potential members to rebel group leaders. *Power Distribution by Gender*'s relationship with *Regime Opposition Size* highlights the importance of studying how the perception of inequality, instead of inequality itself, can impact participation in rebellion – a topic discussed in Chapter 3.

As hypothesized, *Female Property Rights* has a coefficient of -0.297 meaning that as more women enjoy property rights, *Regime Opposition Group Size* decreases. In other words, as less women enjoy property rights, *Regime Opposition Group Size* increases. These results support my hypothesis, and I can infer that economic grievances specific to women are significant motivating factors for joining regime opposition groups. Similarly, *Female CSO Participation* has a coefficient of -0.484 meaning that as more women are able to participate in CSO, *Regime Opposition Group Size* decreases. In other words, as more women are prevented from participating in CSO, *Regime Opposition Group Size* increases. These results support my hypothesis, and I can infer that social grievances specific to women are significant motivating factors for joining regime opposition groups.

Overall, these results support the idea that some gender related grievances motivate women to join regime opposition groups. Specifically, when countries have greater social and

economic gender inequality (grievances specific to women), they experience larger regime opposition groups. Political grievances specific to women, however, are found to have an opposite effect of what was hypothesized, where greater political grievances aimed toward women lead to smaller regime opposition groups. This result indicates the complicated relationship between inequality and rebellion, which is further explored in Chapter 3. When considering Table 1.1's results altogether, I conclude that social and economic grievances specific to women are statistically significant motivators for women to participate in rebellion and join regime opposition groups.

In addition to my main model, I also ran another clustered OLS regression, which is exactly the same as the original; however, it also includes three interaction variables for the female specific grievances and regime type. I include these interaction terms in an effort to address concerns regarding how gender inequality factors may be driven by regime types or have differing effects across different regimes. Table 1.2 demonstrates the results of the interaction model.

Table 1.2: Gendered Grievances and Regime Interaction Terms

Variables	Coeff.	Std. Err.	P>|t|
Power Dist. by Gender	0.145	0.111	0.197
Female Property Rights	-0.301	0.145	0.038**
Female CSO Part.	-0.395	0.078	0.000**
Power Dist. by Gender & Regime Type	-0.319	0.167	0.059*
Female Property Rights & Regime Type	-0.253	0.166	0.128
Female CSO Part. & Regime Type	-0.183	0.098	0.063*
Equal Dist. of Resources	1.622	0.353	0.000**
GDP per capita (log)	-0.111	0.105	0.294

Regime Type	0.311	0.261	0.234
Freedom of Religion	-0.325	0.110	0.003**
Unemployment	0.022	0.011	0.042**
N	354		
Prob>F	0.000		

* p≤0.10
**p ≤0.05
Note: Robust standard errors are clustered by state-year.

As Table 1.2 illustrates, the interaction terms are all statistically insignificant at the 0.05 alpha level. The constituent variables, however, provide additional but limited insight. More specifically, *Female Property Rights* has a negative and significant (at the 0.05 alpha level) effect on the size of regime opposition groups when *Regime Type* is an anocracy (at its mean). In other words, increasing *Female Property Rights* in anocracies reduces regime opposition group membership. Additionally, *Female CSO Participation* has a negative and significant (at the 0.05 alpha level) effect on the size of regime opposition groups when *Regime Type* is an anocracy. Tables 1.1 and 1.2 indicate that gender inequality, particularly economic and social inequities experienced by women, can lead to more regime opposition as these grievances motivate women to join these opposition groups. Table 1.2 indicates, however, that this impact is likely mediated by regime type.

The next chapter investigates how gender (in)equalities can inform rebel group decisions of allowing women combatants. I argue that gender inequality can motivate women to join rebel organization, but women's desire to join regime opposition groups does not necessitate their ability to join these groups or fill combatant roles. For example, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) was a militant group concentrated in northeastern Sri Lanka and composed of mostly Tamils. The LTTE began with small scale acts of violence against the Sinhalese Sri

Lankan government with a main goal of establishing an independent state for Sri Lankan Tamils; however, in the 1970s, violence escalated into a civil war spanning from 1983-2009 (De Silva 2012). Tension between the Tamil ethnic minority and Sinhala ethnic majority had existed since 1948, when Sri Lanka gained independence from Britain. The Sinhalese majority immediately consolidated political power and introduced legislation aimed at marginalizing the Tamils (Yass 2014). More specifically, the Sinhalese government declared Sinhala as the official language despite the fact that over two million of Tamils are not fluent and established Buddhism as the official religion, which is predominantly practiced by the Sinhalese (Yass 2014).

Five main rebel organizations existed in Sri Lanka leading into the war; however, the LTTE emerged as the only remaining rebel group in 1983 after destroying the others (Cronin-Furman and Arulthas 2021). The LTTE was founded in 1976 by Velupillai Prabhakaran, who lead the group until his death in 2009. The organization was composed of a military and political wing along with multiple subgroups, such as a naval fleet, an airborne wing, and an intelligence unit (Cronin-Furman and Arulthas 2021). The group is known for carrying out high-profile political assassinations and attacks, suicide bombings, and intense sustained conflict with the Sri Lankan government. Consequently, over 33 countries, including the United States, India, and Canada, designated the LTTE as a terrorist organization (De Silva 2012). After several failed ceasefires and over 100,000 deaths, the civil war came to an end with the Sri Lankan government's forces decisively defeating the LTTE forces and the death of Prabhakaran.

After gaining independence in 1948, Sri Lanka crafted a new constitution establishing a constitutional republican government with the Sinhalese at the helm. Sri Lanka, both before and after its civil war, ranked low on the global gender equality indices with women experiencing limited freedoms compared to their male counterparts. Specifically in Tamil society, views on

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women and men are derived from the Laws of Manu, holding women as chaste, limited to the domestic sphere, and submissive to their husbands or fathers, and men as unchaste, dominant in the public sphere, and the decision maker for families (Hrdlickova 2008). The gender inequality within Sri Lanka is caused by a multitude of compounding factors, including a preference for male children, lower wages for equal work to their male counterparts, limited access to credit, unequal access to jobs, and limited ability to make political and economic decisions (Goodkind 1996; Jayatilaka and Amirthalingam 2015; Malhotra and DeGraff 1997). As a result of limited freedoms and opportunities, it is evident that Sri Lankan women experience additional grievances compared to their male counterparts. As the above quantitative analysis illustrates, such grievances can motivate women to rebel. Alison (2003) supports this notion as she interviews female members of the LTTE and classifies women's main motivations into three main categories: suffering and oppression (female-specific grievances), Tamil self-determination (supporting the LTTE cause), and women's emancipation. More specifically, Alison's (2003) findings offer a supportive example of Chapter 2's theory that greater gender-related grievances (i.e., gender inequality) are primary motivators for women to participate rebellion.

While ranking low on the global gender equality indices, Sri Lanka sits higher compared to other southeast Asia countries. Wijetunge and Alahakoon (2009) credit this ranking to Sri Lanka's heavy emphasis on ensuring free access to basic education and healthcare for all citizens. As a result, Sri Lanka has the highest literary rate and relatively low maternal mortality rates out of all southeast Asian countries. Additionally, reports find that Sri Lankan women are just as, and sometimes even more, likely than men to attain a secondary education (UNDP 2015). Women's increased integration into the education structure can aid in normalizing their presence

in security institutions and increasing likelihood that Prabhakaran and other high level LTTE

leaders would consider women as suitable rebel combatants (Thomas and Wood 2018).

In particular, Alison (2004) finds that, even though Tamil women were actively

participating and contributing to the political fight for Tamil interests, the LTTE did not permit

women into its military force and combatant positions until late 1983—a full eleven years after

the LTTE's inception. Before women were allowed into military combat units, they only

occupied supportive roles within the LTTE, such as fundraising, recruitment, medical care,

gathering intelligence, spreading propaganda (Dissanayake 2017). Three years after women were

allowed to fill combatants positions, the LTTE created an all-female unit called the Female

Fighter of the Liberation Tigers. Women also occupied combatant positions within the LTTE's

naval and airborne units, and, while there is no exact percentage, it is approximated that women

composed over 25% of all LTTE combatants (Alison 2004). Alison (2004) concludes that the

LTTE decided to permit female combatants because it had a strategic need for more fighters, the

"ideological need to demonstrate the LTTE was an all-encompassing mass social movement",

and the LTTE was pressured by Tamilian women wanting to participate (453).

Tamilian women wanting to participate as combatants and pressuring the LTTE to allow

such participation highlights the complex relationship between inequality, motivation to rebel,

and actual participation in rebellion. Specifically, women are motivated (at least partially) to

rebel as a result of suffering and oppression (female-specific grievances); however, women must

also have access to enough freedoms to advocate for their inclusion in rebellion. Such a detailed

differentiation emphasizes the need for two separate models testing two different, but related

theories. Moreover, the delayed inclusion of women into combat units illustrates how

motivations to join do not always equate to participation because rebel leaders, such as

Prabhakaran, act as gatekeepers into the organization setting standards for when and how women are allowed to participate. Overall, by understanding the status of gender equality within Sri Lanka, we are able to better understand why women would be motivated to join the LTTE and the conditions which made Prabhakaran's decision to allow women to hold combatant positions more likely.

Chapter 3: Gender Equality and Female Rebel Combatants

While Chapter 2 explores how gender inequality can motivate women to participate in rebellion, this chapter investigates the relationship between the level of gender inequality within a nation-state and the presence of female combatants in rebel organizations within that state. I define rebel organizations as "antigovernment opposition groups using armed force, which may include groups involved in civil war, rebellion, guerrilla war, insurgency, or terrorist campaigns" and female combatants as "women and girls who participated in armed conflicts as active combatants using arms" (Wood 2019, 33; Wood and Thomas 2017, 45). Female combatant positions include frontline combat, suicide bombing, and armed auxiliaries. Studying gender equality of the state in which a rebel group resides is valuable as rebel organizations are embedded within a larger society which has its own institutionalized notions of gender. A rebel group and its leader learns and internalizes a framework of gender from the state within which they operate, consequently impacting how the rebel group interacts and operates (Henshaw 2016). Rebel leaders act as gatekeepers into the rebel organization by setting standards for admission into the group and dictating assignments for members. Consequently, recognizing rebel leaders' gendered perceptions and identifying how prevailing societal gender orders and norms impact those perceptions is paramount when researching women's participation in rebellion as combatants.

Multiple scholars more generally argue that the central basis for understanding women's involvement in rebel groups is knowing how gender norms and "gender order(s)" operate within the societies in which rebel groups are embedded (Henshaw 2016; Thomas and Wood 2018). Gender order refers to the social hierarchies and organizations based on assumptions of values linked to femininities and masculinities that order gendered political and social relations (Sjoberg et al. 2018). Gender order is context dependent, as different societies at different times and places

have changing gender expectations. There is a baseline gender order, however, that reflects what men and women are expected to do in times of peace. During times of conflict, these expectations can vary, "but the pining of expectations to sex and gender do not change" (Sjoberg et al. 2018, 270). Even if gendered expectations do evolve during conflict, the theory of conflict gender order argues that at the conclusion of conflict, society will retreat back to baseline gender order expectations (Sjoberg 2009). I thus contend that prevailing societal gender orders and norms exert a significant impact on women's opportunities to participate in rebel organizations as well as the positions they hold within the organization.

THEORY

As previous chapters have indicated, motivation to participate in rebel or opposition groups does not always equate to permitted membership and holding a desired position within the group. Consequently, there can be a disconnect in theory and results as women seem to be motivated to rebel, but are not reflected within rebel groups or are holding undesired position. This chapter attempts to bridge that gap by recognizing the role rebel leaders hold as gatekeepers into the rebel organization, and how gender inequality and associated perceptions of gender norms can produce diverging effects on motivations to rebel and actual participation in rebellion. I identify three specific processes that outline how gender inequality and related gender perceptions within a state are connected to the presence of female combatants within rebel organizations.

The first process contends that when women are actively participating in educational institutions, they gain skillsets and knowledge valued by the rebel organizations. All else equal, rebel leaders seek to recruit and retain rebels with the skills and knowledge most beneficial for their movement (Benmelech and Berrebi 2007; Kaufman 2006). Previous studies find that rebel groups are more likely to recruit and employ women into combatant positions in countries where

women have higher educational and economic statuses (Dalton and Asal 2011; Krueger and Maleckova 2003). For example, El Salvador's FMLN made efforts to recruit literate women who possessed medical training skills, technical and mechanical knowledge, or experience in political organizations and commonly deployed those women into combatant positions (Viterna 2013; Kampwirth 2002). More generally, Neuburger and Valentini (1996) finds a positive relationship between support for political violence and educational levels, highlighting the likely influence of education levels on rebel recruits and female combatants. Hence, when given the option, rebel leaders select recruits with higher human capital. Krueger and Maleckova (2003) suggest that by selecting more educated recruits, rebel groups are better equipped to successfully fulfill more sophisticated and efficient missions. For example, Benmelech and Berrebi (2007) study suicide bombers and find that terrorist organizations are more likely to assign more educated bombers (regardless of gender) with higher valued targets because the bombers are thought to have a greater chance of success. Considering these observations, I expect that states with greater gender equality, as expressed through higher levels of female educational attainment rates, to have a greater presence of female combatants in rebel groups.

The second process maintains that pre-war socialization lowers the barrier of entry for women to become more active participants in educational and occupational institutions and influences male rebel leadership's inclination to accept women into rebel groups by altering their gender expectations, particularly regarding the duties women are perceived as competent to undertake (Wood and Thomas 2017). Moreover, if women are viewed as mothers, caregivers, and wives in society before war, they are likely to be assigned similar, support style jobs within rebel organizations; however, if men work alongside women in educational and occupational contexts pre-war, they are more likely to view women as equal and able to contribute to rebel

organizations in a similar manner as men. Studies support this claim finding that well-educated women and men are more likely to support liberal ideas concerning women's role in society (Blaydes and Linzer 2008; Kabeer 2005). More generally, sociologists find support for the argument that increased interaction between men and women in typically male-dominated sectors challenges restrictive stereotypes which illustrate women as less physically and mentally resilient, more sensitive, and more pacifistic than their male counterparts (Tabassum and Nayak 2021; Elacqua et al 2009; Thomas and Wood 2017). Tetreault (2000) finds that this effect intensifies when men and women participate in physically demanding or risky activities together, citing women's participation in protests and strikes as helping to erase the image of women as apolitical, risk adverse caregivers. Beyond education, working together in a more gender-diverse environment can similarly challenge sexist stereotypes as there is greater cross-gender interaction, and men are forced to challenge any explicit or implicit assumption they hold regarding traditional gender roles (Thomas and Reed 2017).

The third process argues that as women are more integrated into the workforce and reach higher education levels, they have more exposure to networking channels and political opportunities that can facilitate their entry into rebel organizations. In addition to expanding connections simply through meeting co-workers or classmates, secondary and tertiary educational institutions are hubs for political activism, motivation, and radicalization (Hillygus 2005). Similarly, employment environments are often linked to labor unions, which can galvanize and politicize workers who otherwise might have limited political exposure (Wiebel and Admasie 2019). Previous research outlines how women's involvement in pre-existing networks influences their propensity to engage in political and social activism. Specifically, both informal networks, such as families and friendships, and formal connections, such as social

institution memberships, are strong predictors for female activism (Klandermans and Oegema 1987). Additionally, McAdam (1986) finds that as individuals expand political and social networks, they become more likely to participate in costly collective action, such as becoming a fighter for rebel organizations. As a result, the research suggests that as women become more involved in both the labor force and educational institutions, they are more likely to participate in political activism. Opportunities for women to become more involved in educational and occupational institutions are more available in states with greater gender equality, subsequently linking gender equality to political activism and potentially political violence.

These three processes highlight how gender equality of a state relates to the presence of female combatants in rebel groups. Overall, I argue that greater levels of gender equality, as expressed through higher levels of female educational attainment and labor force participation, increases the likelihood that states will have greater female combatant presence in rebel groups. This expectation is summarized in the following hypothesis:

H2:. States with greater female labor force participation and female secondary educational attainment experience higher rates of female combatants in rebel groups.

DATA AND METHODS

To properly evaluate my theory and hypothesis, I rely on three datasets: Quality of Governance (QoG) (Teorell et al. 2022), Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) (Coppedge, et al. 2022), and Women in Armed Rebellion (WARD) (Wood and Thomas 2022). I merged the Quality of Governance and Varieties of Democracy datasets and manually input female combative data from WARD in order to conduct a large-n comparative analysis. I also conducted my own research on rebel organization variables, such as organization ideology, leadership, forced membership, and rebel group size, and created associated variables, which I then

manually coded into Stata. The unit of analysis for the merged dataset is state-year, and my

timeframe of analysis is 1970 to 2012.

My dependent variable is the level of female combatant participation in rebel groups,

measured using the WARD dataset (*cat4_prevalence_best*), which provides data on the presence

and prevalence of female fighters in rebel organizations (Wood and Thomas 2022). *Female*

Combatants is a categorical variable covering 440 rebel movements active between 1946 and

2021. WARD relies on the UCDP Dyadic Dataset (version 1-2015) to generate its base sample of

armed groups and gather information on the years rebel groups are active (Harbom, Melander

and Wallensteen 2007). I manually converted WARD's rebel group per conflict unit of analysis

to fit Quality of Governance and Varieties of Democracy's state-year unit of analysis by using

UCDP's time frame data and matching it to the countries WARD's rebel groups are fighting

within and against.

Female Combatants is the most conservative estimator of female combatant presence in

rebel groups within WARD as it relies on a stricter interpretation of what constitutes a fighter

compared to other female combatant variables. More specifically, *Female Combatants* relies on

direct evidence of participation in conflict instead of secondary or tertiary sources. Direct

evidence of female combatant contributions include employing arms in combat, operating

artillery or anti-aircraft weapons against enemies, detonating mines or explosives, conducting

assassinations, and conducting suicide bombings (Wood and Thomas 2022).[6] Female combatant

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[6] When using *Female Combatants* as my dependent variable, I am making a couple notable assumptions. In particular, *Female Combatants* forces me to analyze states already suffering from at least minimal rebel activity; therefore, there is already a baseline level of distain within each nation-state that generates rebel group existence and activity. Thus, I assume a baseline level of opportunity exists for women to join rebel groups, that there is a possibility of willingness or motivation for women to join, and that rebel leaders may accept women into their rebel groups and place them into combatant positions. As a result of these assumptions, my model largely operates as one that predicts what conditions increase rebel groups (and leaders) likelihood to accept and employ female combatants.

prevalence in rebel groups is ranked from categories 0 to 3, with 0 representing no evidence of female combatant prevalence (0%), 1 representing low prevalence ($< 5\%$), 2 representing moderate prevalence (5-20%), and 3 representing high prevalence ($> 20\%$) (Wood and Thomas 2022). Increasing values of *Female Combatants* thus indicates more female combatants present within rebel organizations. This variable has a mode of 0 (frequency 608) with 1 closely flowing (with a frequency of 585), median is 1, and standard deviation is 1.061.

My main two independent variables of interest are *Female Labor Force Participation* and *Female Educational Attainment. Female Labor Force Participation* is represented as a percentage of females in the labor force over the ages of 15. This variable originates from the World Development Indicators database (*wdi_lfpfne15*) (Teorell, Jan, et al. 2022). *Female Labor Force Participation* is a continuous variable and, from my sample data, has a mean of 42.078, standard deviation is 19.140, and ranges from 4.36 to 94. *Female Labor Force Participation* is the limiting variable for this model, and, with only 529 observations, is responsible for the decrease in observations between the dataset and my model. Increasing values of *Female Labor Force Participation* indicate an increasing percent of women (over the age of 15) present in the labor force.

Female Educational Attainment is represented as the gross percentage of women enrolled in secondary educational institutions within a country (Teorell, Jan, et al. 2022). This variable is pulled from the World Development Indicators (wdi_gersf). *Female Educational Attainment* is a continuous variable covering and, from my sample data, has a mean is 62.440, standard deviation is 29.497, ranges from 3.064 to 106.5145. Increasing values of *Female Educational Attainment* reflects an increasing percentage of women enrolled in secondary educational institutions.

I also control for *GDP per capita (log)*, representing a country's level of development, but also serving as a proxy for state capacity as higher levels of GDP per capita indicating states have greater capacity and lower GDP per capita levels indicating states have lower capacity. This variable is derived from the World Development Indicators' *wdi_gdpcapcon2010* variable, and due to the highly skewed nature of the variable and in an effort to follow the standards within the literature, I take its log. *GDP per capita (log)* is a continuous variable covering 196 countries from 1960 to 2019 (Teorell et al. 2022).

Additionally, I control for a country's regime type using the Unified Democracy Scores' continuous *uds_mean* variable, which I renamed *Regime Type* (Melton, Meserve, Pemstein 2017). This variable measures the level of democracy each state reflects, and an increase in *Regime Type* represents more democratic regimes and a decrease represents less democratic regimes. When analyzing female combatant involvement in rebel organizations, regime type of the state the rebel group resides is important to consider as regime type is often cited as an indicator for likelihood of conflict (Halkia et al. 2020). For example, Dixon (2009) finds that anocracies are more susceptible to civil war than both pure dictatorships and democracies. In my sample data, *Regime Type* has a mean of 0.203, standard deviation of 0.690, and ranges from -1.467 to 1.662.

I also control for several rebel group factors, based upon WARD as well as additional research. The WARD dataset provides information on 440 rebel organizations from most major regions of the world, with the highest concentration of rebel groups throughout Africa, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia. I include multiple variables specific to the 440 rebel organizations found within the WARD dataset.[7]

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[7] I control for rebel group leadership (*Rebel Leadership*), which is a dichotomous variable, indicating if rebel groups have a centralized or decentralized leadership system. Rebel groups with centralized leadership are those where

Specifically, I control if a rebel organization has forced membership with a dichotomous *Forced Membership* variable. Forced participation in rebellion does not solely affect women; therefore, a rebel group is considered to force membership if they abduct, coerce, or practice impressment for men or women, recruit and allow child soldiers, do not provide an opt-out opportunity, and/or conduct acts which make individual's return to previous life impossible (Henshaw 2015). *Forced Membership* is dichotomous with a value of zero indicates no forced membership while a value of one indicates that the rebel group engage in forced membership tactics. *Forced Membership* has a mode of 0 with a frequency of 83.92%, meaning approximately 16% of rebel organizations were found to have forced membership. Whether or not a rebel organization forces members into its ranks it vital to control for as forcing people into becoming members inherently devalues their agency and value as individuals, which is directly associated to perceptions of gender inequality.

I also control for the rebel organization's ideology with *Rebel Ideology* variables. Each rebel group falls under one of six ideological categories: nationalism, democracy, communism,[8] Islamism, rebel interests, or other. The category of *Rebel Interests* includes rebel groups fighting for autonomy from their state government as well as any campaigns for their community rights and beliefs. The *Other* category encompasses the rebel groups that do not fit within the other five

decision-making is concentrated in a few leaders at the top of the organization and those individuals have hierarchal control over the miliary and distribution of benefits (Joo and Mukherjee 2021, 321). Rebel groups with decentralized leadership are those where decision making is delegated to lower-level individuals within the organization (Joo and Mukherjee 2021). *Rebel Leadership* was independently researched by rebel organization(s) identified in WARD and was manually input into Stata. It covers 66 countries from 1946-2021. A value of 0 indicates a centralized leadership system, and a 1 indicated a decentralized system. *Rebel Leadership* has a mode of 0, with 98.95% frequency meaning the overwhelming majority of rebel groups were found to have centralized leadership systems. Rebel organization leadership is valuable to consider because my theory suggests that rebel leaders act as gatekeepers into the organization and primary distributors of rebel positions, thus setting the rules and norms within the rebel organization. This has a direct impact on the inclusion of women into the organization and where they are utilized once permitted in (Wood 2019). As a result of the lack of variation within the *Rebel Leadership* data, this variable is not included in the regression.

[8] The communism category also includes socialism, as they are interrelated economic ideologies.

categories, such as theocracy and federalism. 33% of rebel groups in fall within the rebel group interests category: 20% fall in *Communism*, 17% for *Islamism*, 14% for *Nationalism*, 8% for *Democracy*, and 8% for *Other*. I use *Rebel Ideology – Rebel Interests* as my omitted baseline upon which the other categories are compared. A rebel group's ideology should be considered as they often align with the organization's goals, which can impact the admittance of women into the organization as well as women's attraction towards the organization (Henshaw 2015).

I also control for a rebel group's size by creating both a continuous and ordinal variable. I utilize the ordinal variable (*Rebel Group Size*) in my regression model because continuous data emphasizes the individual more than the ordinal version, which can introduce potential bias by over or underestimating the individual's impact. As a result, I use *Rebel Group Size (Ordinal)* because it limits this bias and allows for more flexibility within the data as some reported information on rebel membership may be less reliable than others. In my sample data, *Rebel Group Size (Ordinal)* has a mean of 3.630, standard deviation of 2.713, and ranges from 0 to 11.[9] Additionally, the average rebel group size is approximately 18,000 members with the smallest group of 500 members and the largest of 266,000 members.

Translating Units of Analysis

In order to merge datasets, I was required to translate WARD's rebel group-conflict unit of analysis to Quality of Governance and Varieties of Democracy's country-year unit of analysis.[10] For countries with just one active rebel organization, the translation was simple as that one rebel group's variables were applied to the state and the years the rebel group was active. I differentiate between the years rebel groups were active versus their general dates of operation

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[9] The Rebel Group Size ordinal categories are: 0 = less than 1k; 1 = 1k to 3k; 2 = 4k to 6k; 3 = 7k to 9k; 4 = 10k to 12k; 5 = 13k to 15k; 6 = 16k to 18k; 7 = 19k to 25k; 8 = 26k to 30k; 9 = 31k to 50k; 10 = 51k to 99k; 11 = 100k+

because rebel groups can exist before committing acts of violence. Consequently, I only consider the years in which rebel groups are active and participating in violence.

For countries with multiple active rebel groups in overlapping years, I had multiple decision rules for how to translate the units of analysis while maintaining the integrity of the data. For *Forced Membership*, *Rebel Leadership*, and *Rebel Ideology* I used the modal category as my decision rule, and for *Rebel Group Size (Continuous)*, I used the median value. For example, Algeria in 1992, there were three rebel groups active. Two had a zero *Forced Membership* value and one group had a one *Forced Membership* value. Zero is the modal category; therefore, Algeria 1992 is coded a zero to indicate no forced membership. Additionally, all three rebel groups had centralized leadership systems, so *Rebel Leadership* for Alegria 1992 is coded as a zero. All rebel groups have Islamic ideology, so Alegria 1992 is coded in Stata to reflect as much. The three rebel groups have a size of 2000, 7000, and 100, so I take the median (2000) for Algeria 1992. To translate *Rebel Group Size (Continuous)* into *Rebel Group Size (Ordinal)*, the number coded into Stata represents the median value which fell within the categories. For example, Algeria 1992 has a *Rebel Group Size (Continuous)* value of 2000. For *Rebel Group Size (Ordinal)*, Algeria 1992 is coded as a 1 because 2000 falls within the range of 1000 to 3000.

If there was a tie in the modal category, I choose the option with the larger rebel group size value. For example, Argentina in 1971 had two active rebel groups, one with a centralized leadership structure and the other with decentralized leadership structure. Since the modal category is not informative, I look to the individual rebel group size as the tie breaker. In Argentina 1971, the rebel group with a decentralized leadership structure had 7000 members

whereas the rebel group with a centralized leadership structure had only 5000. Consequently, *Rebel Leadership* for Argentina 1971 is coded as a one to represent a decentralized system.

To test for potential collinearity issues, I conduct pairwise correlations. None of the variables have high levels of collinearity (with an r > |0.8|), and the majority of variables show low or no sign of correlation with only three variables illustrating moderate correlations. Because my dependent variable is ordinal, I conduct an ordered logistic regression with clustered robust standard errors by state-year to evaluate my hypothesis that states with greater gender equality, as expressed through higher female labor force participation rates and increased amounts of females with secondary educations, have higher rates of female combatants in rebel groups.

RESULTS

Based on my research, I hypothesize that states with greater female labor force participation and female secondary educational attainment experience higher rates of female combatants in rebel groups. As Table 3 illustrates, *Regime Type*, *GDP per capita (log)*, *Rebel Group Size (Ordinal)*, *Rebel Ideology – Communism*, *Rebel Ideology – Islamism*, *Rebel Ideology – Other* are statistically significant at a 0.05 alpha level. *Female Educational Attainment* is statistically significant at a 0.10 alpha level. *Female Labor Force Participation*, *Forced Membership*, *Rebel Ideology – Nationalism*, and *Rebel Ideology - Democracy* are insignificant with p-values greater than 0.05 and 0.10; therefore, I accept the null hypothesis that their relationships with female combatant presence are due to random chance.[11]

Table 2.1: Gender Equality and Female Rebel Combatants

Variables	Coefficient	Std. Err.	Pr.>|Z|
Female Labor Force Participation	0.000067	0.011	0.996

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[11] In addition to my ordered logit regression model, I also ran a clustered OLS model with the same variables. I obtained the same substantive results.

Female Educational Attainment	0.013	0.007	0.075*
Regime Type	-1.47	0.374	0.000**
GDP per capita (log)	0.902	0.221	0.000**
Forced Membership	-0.142	0.365	0.696
Rebel Group Size (Ordinal)	-0.289	0.064	0.000**
Rebel Ideology - Nationalism	-1.07	1.890	0.570
Rebel Ideology - Democracy	0.140	0.983	0.887
Rebel Ideology - Communism	2.267	0.383	0.000**
Rebel Ideology - Islamism	-1.56	0.554	0.005**
Rebel Ideology- Other	1.81	0.432	0.000**
cut point 1	6.297		
cut point 2	8.230		
cut point 3	10.043		
Wald chi2	142.53		
Prob>chi2	0.0000		
Log Likelihood	-240.826		
Pseudo R^2	0.2394		
N	239		

*p≤0.10
**p≤0.05
Note: Robust standard errors are clustered by state-year, and the baseline category for ideology is rebel group interests.

While we cannot directly interpret ordered logit coefficients, we can make generalized conclusion and add specifics with our predicted probabilities. As Table 3.1 highlights, *Regime Type* has a statistically significant coefficient of -1.47 broadly meaning that as states become more democratic, states are more likely to have fewer female combatants present within rebel groups. As Table 3 illustrates, when increasing *Regime Type* by one standard deviation and states become more democratic, the percentage chance of there being no female combatant presence in rebel groups is 71.8%, the percentage chance of there being little female combatant presence in

rebel groups is 26.4%, the percentage chance of there being moderate female combatant presence in rebel groups is 23.5%, and the percentage chance of there being high levels of female combatant presence in rebel groups is 18.6%.

Table 3: Predicted Probabilities of Regime Type on Female Rebel Combatant Presence

Evidence of female combatants	Fully Autocratic	Anocracy	Fully Democratic
None	0.323	0.512	**0.718**
Little	0.256	**0.264**	0.192
Moderate	**0.235**	0.155	0.070
High	**0.186**	0.069	0.020

Note: Bold reflects the highest predicted probably for regime type.

GDP per capita (log) has a significant coefficient of 0.902 broadly meaning that as a state's GDP pc output increases, states are more likely to have more female combatants present within rebel groups. More specifically, Table 4 outlines that when *GDP per capita (logged)* output increases by one standard deviation, the percentage chance of there being little female combatant presence in rebel groups is 23.9%, the percentage chance of there being moderate female combatant presence in rebel groups is 27.2%, and the percentage chance of there being high female combatant presence in rebel groups is 32.8%.

Table 4: Predicted Probabilities of Logged GDP pc on Female Rebel Combatant Presence

Evidence of female combatants	0 GDP output	5 GDP output	10 GDP output
None	**0.994**	0.771	0.162
Little	0.005	0.165	**0.239**
Moderate	0.000	0.051	**0.272**
High	0.000	0.013	**0.328**

Note: Bold reflects highest predicted probably for the indicated logged GDP pc output.

Rebel Group Size (Ordinal) also has a significant coefficient of -0.289 broadly meaning that rebel groups increase in membership, states are more likely have fewer female combatants present within rebel groups. More specifically, Table 5 demonstrates that as *Rebel Group Size*

(Ordinal) increases, the percentage chance of there being no female combatant presence in rebel groups is 59.6%, the percentage chance of there being little female combatant presence in rebel groups is 31.9%, the percentage chance of there being moderate female combatant presence in rebel groups is 27.5%, and the percentage chance of there being high female combatant presence in rebel groups is 19.4%.

Table 5: Predicted Probabilities of Rebel Group Size on Female Rebel Combatant Presence

Evidence of female combatants	Rebel Group Size 1k-3k	Rebel Group Size 13k-15k	Rebel Group Size 31k-50k
None	0.235	0.400	**0.596**
Little	0.296	**0.319**	0.264
Moderate	**0.275**	0.194	0.107
High	**0.194**	0.087	0.033

Note: Bold reflects highest predicted probably for the rebel group category.

Rebel Ideology – Communism, *Rebel Ideology – Islamism*, *Rebel Ideology – Other* are also statistically significant, and the baseline category is *Rebel Ideology – Rebel Interests*. This broadly indicates that rebel groups with a communist ideology, Islamic ideology, or fall into the "other" category of ideology on average have greater female combatant presence than rebel groups holding rebel interests as their central ideology. Table 6 offers the specific predicted probabilities for each rebel group ideology.

Table 6: Predicted Probabilities of Rebel Group Ideology on Female Rebel Combatant Presence

Evidence of female combatants	Rebel Ideology - Islam	Rebel Ideology - Communism	Rebel Ideology - Other
None	0.355	0.335	**0.365**
Little	0.316	**0.331**	0.290
Moderate	0.206	**0.229**	0.203
High	**0.123**	0.105	0.141

While my main independent variables of interests are statistically insignificant when holding a p-value standard of 0.05, they results provide unique insight into the relationship between rebel group characteristics and the presence of female rebel combatants. More

specifically, Table 2.1 and Table 6 provide primary evidence supporting the notion that a rebel group's ideology can impact the degree of female combatants within the group. Additionally, *Female Educational Attainment* is statistically significant when holding a 0.10 alpha level and approaches 0.05 alpha level statistical significance with a p-value of 0.075, indicating (the potential for) increased secondary school educational attainment can increase the presence of female combatants. These findings can provide a jumpstart for future research interested in understanding how various rebel group ideologies can have different impacts on female membership.

In addition to my main model, I ran the same exact ordered logit regression but included interaction terms for *Female Labor Force Participation* and *Regime Type* and *Female Education Attainment* and *Regime Type*. I include these interaction terms to investigate how female education levels and female labor force integration may be driven by regime types or have differing effects across different regimes. The results of the model are outlined in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2: Gender Equality and Female Rebel Combatants Interaction Terms

Variables	Coefficient	Std. Err.	Pr.>|Z|
Female Labor Force Participation	-0.0065	0.010	0.526
Female Educational Attainment	0.018	0.008	0.016**
Fem. Labor Force Part. & Regime Type	-0.066	0.158	0.000**
Fem. Edu. Attainment & Regime Type	-0.007	0.008	0.354
Regime Type	1.65	0.916	0.071*
GDP per capita (log)	1.083	0.217	0.000**
Forced Membership	-0.504	0.337	0.134
Rebel Group Size (Ordinal)	-0.217	0.065	0.001**
Rebel Ideology - Nationalism	-0.547	0.899	0.543

Rebel Ideology - Democracy	2.515	1.075	0.019**
Rebel Ideology - Communism	2.741	0.440	0.000**
Rebel Ideology - Islamism	-1.039	0.525	0.048**
Rebel Ideology- Other	2.084	0.469	0.000**
cut point 1	7.935		
cut point 2	10.119		
cut point 3	12.097		
Wald chi2	140.77		
Prob>chi2	0.0000		
Log Likelihood	-2228.671		
Pseudo R^2	0.2778		
N	239		

*p≤0.05
**p≤0.05
Note: Robust standard errors are clustered by state-year.

As illustrated above, when the interaction terms are included in the model, the results change slightly. The interaction term between *Female Labor Force Participation* and *Regime Type* is statistically significant with a p-value of 0.000 suggesting that *Female Labor Force Participation* has an impact on female rebel combatant levels, but that the impact depends on regime type. More specifically, the margins informs us that for every unit increase of the *Female Labor Force Participation* and *Regime Type* interaction term, there is a 35.9% increase in the category of no evidence of female rebel combatants, 30.5% increase in the category of low evidence of female rebel combatants, 20% increase in the category of moderate evidence of female rebel combatants,, 13.5% increase in the category of high evidence of female rebel combatants.

Table 2.2 also illustrates that constitutive terms *Female Educational Attainment* is statistically significant at the 0.05 alpha level with a p-value of 0.016. This result suggests that *Female Educational Attainment* has a positive and significant effect on the presence of female

rebel combatant in anocracies (when *Regime Type* is at its mean). Additionally, *Regime Type* is significant at the 0.10 alpha level with a p-value of 0.071 indicating that *Regime Type* has a positive and significant effect on the presence of female rebel combatants when holding *Female Educational Attainment* at its mean. In other words, there is an increased likelihood of more female combatants present in rebel groups operating in democratic states when holding *Female Educational Attainment* constant. Even though the interaction term between *Female Educational Attainment* and *Regime Type* is insignificant, the two constituent variables are able to provide us with limited information. Specifically, Table 2.2's results suggest that democracy and female education rates matter when considering female combatant presence in rebel organizations.

Overall, Table 2.2 inform us that there is no uniform effect of the independent variables on female combatant presence in rebel groups, but a mediated effect depending on regime type. When considering both Tables 2.1 and 2.2, I find preliminary support for the need to theoretically and methodologically differentiate between the factors that influence women's motivation to join rebel organizations and the factors that enable women to join rebel groups as combatants. However, in order to confidently conclude that rebel leader gendered perspectives directly relate to women's participation as combatants within rebel organizations, additional research is required.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

While research on women's involvement in rebellion has recently grown, few studies have differentiated between women's motivation to participate and women's actual participation in rebellion. Throughout this manuscript, I explore this underdeveloped area within the literature by creating a new dataset and generating a large-N analysis of both women's motivation to join and their actual participation in rebellion as combatants.

Chapter 1 offers a brief introduction and summation of the existing literature of women in conflict by highlighting the roles women hold, why women choose to rebel, and the gendered experiences of conflict. Chapter 2 considers grievance theory, ways in which both men and women might be motivated to join rebellion, and situations where women might have additional, compounding motivations to participate. I hypothesize that states with greater gender-related grievances (that is, higher gender inequality) experience larger regime opposition groups, and find support for this hypothesis. I show that as economic and social grievances for women increase, rebel opposition sizes also increase. Political grievances acted contrary to what I hypothesized, where regime opposition membership increases when political power distribution between men and women becomes more equal. This result, however, speaks to the main argument presented in Chapter 3 and highlights the need for separating women's motivation to participate in rebellion and their actual participation.

Chapter 3 theorizes that as women gain greater access to opportunities to increase their social network and practical skills, they increase their attractiveness to rebel leaders as potential contributing members to the rebel organization. This chapter assumes that rebel leaders act as gatekeepers into the rebel organization and decision-makers to how/to whom combatant positions are allocated. I argue that women's motivation to join rebel groups is a necessary but

insufficient condition for women to placed into combatant positions. State-level gender orders and gendered norms inform rebel leaders' decisions to admit women into the rebel organization and their decisions to allow or support them as female combatants. I quantitatively analyze this theory with an ordered logit regression, and the results show mixed results. The empirical analyses fail to support the hypothesis that states with greater female labor force participation experience higher rates of female combatants in rebel groups. However, there may be some indication that states with greater female secondary educational attainment experience higher rates of female combatants in rebel groups. Overall, I conclude that the social, economic, and political opportunities afforded to women impact their motivation to participate in rebellion, and additional research is required to confidently conclude that rebel leader gendered perspectives directly relate to women's participation as combatants within rebel organizations.

A main restriction within both models is data limitations. More specifically, when I began this research, WARD was the only existing dataset with empirical information on female involvement in rebel groups, especially as combatants. As a result, my models are limited to data available in WARD. An additional dataset was released in the midst of my research; however, more comprehensive data on women's involvement in rebel organizations is needed for the future. Future research should also consider expanding the amount of rebel groups and countries analyzed as majority of my data limitations stem from the loss of information in my models.

It is important to note that I hold the assumption that women's participation in the labor force as a generally positive indicator for gender inequality within a state; however, there are specific circumstances in which women's labor force participation can reflect negative contexts instead, such as cases in which poverty and deprivation are so extreme that women are forced to participate in the labor market to pay for basic necessities. Additionally, there are situations in

which female labor force participation can increase simply because men are fighting in conflict and women are then forced to move into the labor force and keep the economy operating. While it is unlikely that these small number of situations altered the outcome of my results, they are important to recognize. Future research should further examine the context of women's agency in conflict through economic sectors like labor markets to better identify and distinguish between women's rights and potentially forced labor.

Similarly, future research should examine the role of rebel group ideology and its relationship to women's participation in conflict. Future research can consider how and if ideology of a rebel group demographics and strategies changes throughout the war. For example, if a rebel organization is losing the war and they have an increased need for bodies, does this circumstance override sexist perceptions? One can also consider how this ties into recruitment strategies, and if they change throughout the war. Additionally, the extent to which ideology truly represent a rebel organizations' beliefs is interesting as there are cases in which rebel groups claim an ideology; however, the organization does not follow such ideology in reality.

The impact of the gendered composition of rebel groups on the conflict's outcome and duration is also worthy of further consideration as current research on the topic is contradictory. Wood and Allemang (2022) argue that female combatants extend conflict duration because female combatants create conflicting perceptions on the rebel group's capabilities and depth of resolve, which hinders successful bargaining and prolongs conflict duration. Mehrl (2022) has contrasting conclusions for the impact of women in organized intrastate violence. Specifically, Mehrl (2022) finds preliminary support that female combatants can decrease conflict duration by reducing rebel performance as the presence of female combatants decreases unit cohesion adversely affecting battlefield performance. Mehrl (2022), however, also finds that rebel

organizations with more female combatants perpetrate less violence against civilians because women increase the rebel group's rapport with the civilians. This result suggests that female combatants have a positive consequence for rebel organizations potentially outweighing or negating any negative effects on combat performance (Mehrl 2022). A future research question might similarly inquire how the gender composition of rebel organizations can influence a rebel organizations proclivity to rely on strategies and permissibility of gendered and sexual violence (Whitaker, Walsh, and Conrad 2019). For instance, Chu and Braithwaite (2017) consider the relationship between rebel organizations use of sexual violence and negotiated outcomes of civil war suggesting that some rebel groups can rely on sexual violence to force opponents to negotiations.

Overall, this thesis contributes to existing scholarship by exploring the conditions that drive women to participate in rebellion as well as the role gender perceptions play in the actual integration of women into combat specific positions.

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Vita

Alexandra (Alex) Giggie pursued a Master of Arts in Political Science at University of Texas El Paso from 2021-2022. Before that, she attended the United States Air Force Academy where she played four years of Division I soccer for the Falcons and graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Political Science. Her primary research interests include international security with a focus in gender and security.

Alex grew up in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, and she currently serves in the United States Air Force as a Logistics Readiness Officer.

Contact Information : agiggie@miners.utep.edu