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# Reconceptualising Rebel Rule: The Responsiveness of Rebel Governance in Man, Côte d'Ivoire

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**Reconceptualising Rebel Rule:  
The Responsiveness of Rebel Governance in Man, Côte d'Ivoire**

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## About the Author

Sebastian van Baalen is a doctoral candidate at the Department of Peace and Conflict Research at Uppsala University in Sweden. His research focuses on the dynamics of rebel violence and governance. In particular, his dissertation focuses on explaining variation in the responsiveness of rebel governance in Côte d'Ivoire. He has conducted eight months of field research in Côte d'Ivoire. Van Baalen's work has been featured in academic journals like *Journal of Peace Research*, *Terrorism & Political Violence* and *International Studies Review*.

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## Disclaimer

The findings, interpretations, and conclusions expressed in this paper are entirely those of the author and do not represent the views of the Program on Governance and Local Development. All potential mistakes are the author's.

## **Abstract**

This study considers the concept of rebel governance responsiveness by the Forces Nouvelles (FN) in Côte d'Ivoire. Responsiveness refers to the degree to which a government's political decisions correspond to its citizens' desires. The concept of responsiveness is vital for assessing regime types and constitutes an essential metric of democracy. However, the idea is rarely invoked in analyses of how rebel groups relate to civilian preferences in how they govern citizens in rebel areas. The study makes three contributions. First, it develops a conceptualisation of rebel responsiveness across four domains: representation, security, taxation, and welfare. Second, it demonstrates the concept's usefulness through a case study of two ethnic communities in Man, Côte d'Ivoire, using unique interview and archival data. The study shows that while the FN governed both ethnic communities, rebel responsiveness differed in significant ways. This finding highlights that focusing on the mere existence, rather than the responsiveness, of rebel governance is insufficient for capturing the nature of civilian life under rebel rule. Third, the study shows how focusing on rebel governance's responsiveness can uncover new insights about civil war.

**Keywords:** Civil war, rebel governance, responsiveness, Forces Nouvelles, Côte d'Ivoire

## Résumé en Français

Cette étude examine le concept de « réactivité » dans le contexte de la gouvernance rebelle des Forces Nouvelles (FN) en Côte d'Ivoire. La réactivité de la gouvernance fait référence au degré auquel les décisions politiques d'un gouvernement correspondent aux désirs de ses citoyens. En science politique, le concept de réactivité est essentiel pour l'évaluation des types de régimes politiques et constitue une métrique importante de la démocratie. Malgré l'importance de la réactivité dans les débats sur la gouvernance de l'État, le concept est rarement invoqué dans les analyses de la façon dont les groupes rebelles intègrent les préférences des populations civiles dans leur manière de gouverner les territoires sous leur contrôle. Cette étude vise à approfondir les connaissances sur la gouvernance rebelle en développant le concept de réactivité rebelle. L'étude contribue triplement à la littérature sur la guerre civile. Premièrement, elle développe une conceptualisation de la réactivité rebelle qui permet de l'évaluer selon quatre dimensions : la représentation, la sécurité, la fiscalité et la prestation de services. Deuxièmement, l'étude démontre l'utilité du concept en conduisant une étude de cas approfondie de la gouvernance rebelle de deux communautés ethniques dans la ville de Man dans l'ouest de la Côte d'Ivoire, basée sur une série d'entretiens réalisés par l'auteur et sur des données d'archive. Entre 2002 et 2010, les deux communautés ethniques étaient gouvernées par les FN ; cependant, la gouvernance des FN différait de manière importante entre les deux communautés. Alors que les deux communautés ethniques étaient gouvernées par les FN durant la période étudiée, la réactivité de la gouvernance des FN différait de manière importante entre les deux communautés. Se concentrer sur la simple existence de la gouvernance rebelle sans prendre en compte sa réactivité apparaît donc insuffisant pour saisir pleinement la nature de la vie civile sous domination rebelle. Troisièmement, l'étude examine comment le concept de réactivité de la gouvernance rebelle peut être utilisé pour identifier de nouvelles perspectives sur les dynamiques des guerres civiles ainsi que développer et tester de nouvelles théories sur les causes et les effets de la gouvernance rebelle.

**Mots clés :** Guerre civile, gouvernance rebelle, réactivité, Forces Nouvelles, Côte d'Ivoire

## 1. Introduction

Popular and academic analyses tend to associate civil war with violence and anarchy. This is certainly understandable, given the immense human suffering. At least 76,000 people died due to fighting in civil wars in 2018, and at least 4,500 civilians were killed by governments or rebel groups (Pettersson et al., 2019). However, the preoccupation with the violence against civilians has led civil war accounts to neglect other ways in which rebel groups interact with civilians in rebel-held areas. A burgeoning literature has documented how rebel groups invest financial and human resources in governing civilians in recent years. This is known as rebel governance, or ‘the set of actions insurgents engage in to regulate the social, political, and economic life of non-combatants during civil war’ (Arjona et al., 2015, p. 3). Rebel governance is a common phenomenon. Rebels created institutions in about a quarter of the major civil wars that ended in 1950–2006 (Huang, 2016, p. 71), and more than one-third of all rebel groups active between 1945–2011 provided some public goods to civilians (Stewart, 2018).

One important characteristic of state governance is its *responsiveness* – the degree to which governmental political decisions correspond to the desires of its citizens (Binzer Hobolt & Klemmensen, 2005, p. 380). Responsiveness is a crucial metric for assessing the quality of democracy (Dahl, 1971; Lijphart, 1999). But despite the centrality of responsiveness in state governance research, the concept is rarely invoked in analyses of how rebel groups relate to civilian preferences in the way they govern citizens in rebel-held areas. This is a problematic omission because, as a host of documentary evidence shows, rebel groups differ in their responsiveness to civilians. Secondary accounts of civil wars in Liberia (Lidow, 2016), Colombia (Arjona, 2016), Syria (Carnegie et al., 2019), Aceh (Barter, 2015), and the Philippines (Keister, 2011) are full of clues that suggest that rebels differ in their responsiveness. The Sudan People’s Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A), for instance, differed in responsiveness across areas under its control. In the Nuba Mountains, the SPLM/A was ‘well ahead of its counterpart in the South in the creation of institutions of civil administration’ (African Rights, 1995, pp. 328-329). This administration involved chiefs and village councils in local governance by holding elections, took measures to discipline troops, and provided basic social services. According to Rolandsen (2005, p. 66), the Nuba Mountains stood out because the rebels seemed ‘genuinely concerned with the welfare of the local population.’ This raises the question: *How do rebels relate to civilian preferences in the way they govern citizens under their control?*

Existing research offers limited insight into how rebels differ concerning civilian preferences in the way they govern. The literature often treats governance as the inverse of coercion, and assumes that these are distinct and mutually exclusive strategies of rebellion (see Stewart & Liou, 2017).<sup>1</sup> Moreover, when rebels govern, scholars often treat the scope of rebel governance as the main variation of interest, counting the number of institutions they create (Heger et al., 2017; Huang, 2016; Mampilly, 2011). This dichotomisation masks the interconnection of governance and coercion – rebel governance can serve to both protect and repress, enrich or impoverish, and emancipate or disenfranchise civilians. Rebel groups like the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in Sri Lanka and the Islamic State (IS) in Iraq and Syria are examples of groups that not only combined sophisticated governance with excessive violence against civilians, but leveraged rebel governance itself as an instrument of repression (Al-Tamimi, 2015; Mampilly, 2011; Revkin, 2018). In sum, we lack the conceptual language to describe and theorise how rebels relate to civilians’ preferences in their governance.

This study advances knowledge on rebel governance in civil war by developing the concept of rebel responsiveness – the degree to which rebels solicit and act upon civilian preferences in the way they govern – in three ways. Firstly, I develop a conceptualisation that assesses the responsiveness of rebel governance across four key domains: representation, security, taxation, and welfare. I also argue that variation in rebel responsiveness can exist at three levels – across rebel groups, rebel-held localities, and groups of citizens living in rebel-held areas – and highlight the need for disaggregation when studying rebel governance. Secondly, I demonstrate the usefulness of the concept through an in-depth case study of rebel governance in Man, Côte d’Ivoire (2002–2010), and present evidence that rebel responsiveness differed in systematic ways across the two largest ethnic communities in Man: the Yacouba and Dioula.<sup>2</sup> The empirical analysis builds on original interview and archival data collected during eight months of field research. Thirdly, I discuss how the concept of rebel responsiveness can be used to uncover new insights about civilian life under rebel rule and help develop and test new theories about the causes and effects of rebel governance. The purpose is not to provide a theory of rebel responsiveness.<sup>3</sup> Instead, this paper

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<sup>1</sup> This also stems from the tendency to conflate ‘rebel governance’ with ‘rebel service provision’, which only constitutes one aspect of governance.

<sup>2</sup> By ethnic community, I mean a collection of individuals that identify with each other based on one or several shared characteristics related to appearance, language, religion, or tradition (Horowitz, 1985, pp. 17-18).

<sup>3</sup> I provide a theory of rebel responsiveness elsewhere (see Van Baalen, Forthcoming).

seeks to: show that rebel responsiveness varies; conceptualise this variation; and argue for why this variation matters for the study of civil war.

Studying how rebel responsiveness varies is critical to better understand civilian life under rebel rule. Many people live in the presence, or under the direct control, of rebel groups. In 2016, about 840 million people – 12% of the world’s population – were estimated to live in conflict zones. Some 357 million were children (Bahgat et al., 2018, p. 21). Assessing the responsiveness of rebel governance deepens our knowledge of human security risks when living under rebel rule. Several scholars propose that humanitarian and development actors should look for evidence of rebel governance as a criterion for engaging with rebel groups (Jo, 2015; Walch, 2019-03-21). Doing so can provide policy-makers with a primary indication of how rebels relate to civilians. Still, an exclusive focus on the mere existence of rebel governance risks overestimating the degree to which rebels actually take civilian preferences into account. Thus, the concept of rebel responsiveness can inform both scholars’ and policy-makers’ assessments of rebel governance. Moreover, a more accurate appraisal of rebel governance is vital for studying other phenomena of interest to civil war researchers, such as violence against civilians (Heger et al., 2017) and postwar transitions to democracy (Huang, 2016). Therefore, subjecting rebel governance to closer conceptual scrutiny can advance knowledge on civil war and the pursuit of durable peace.

## **2. The concept of rebel responsiveness**

Rebel governance refers to ‘the set of actions insurgents engage in to regulate the social, political, and economic life of non-combatants during civil war’ (Arjona et al., 2015, p. 3). Rebel governance encompasses political organisation, policing, taxation, and service provision by ‘coordinated groups whose members engage in protracted violence with the intention of gaining undisputed political control over all or a portion of a pre-existing state’s territory’, that is, a rebel group (Kasfir, 2015, p. 24). Moreover, rebel governance includes the creation of wartime institutions that structure human interaction, such as the regulation of fishing (Arjona, 2014). Thus, when the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq started creating Islamic courts for enforcing sharia law, they engaged in rebel governance (Al-Tamimi, 2015).

This definition requires some additional clarification. Civil war is a necessary precondition for rebel governance (Kasfir, 2015, p. 23) and is defined as ‘armed combat within the boundaries of a recognized sovereign entity between parties subject to a common authority at the outset of the hostilities’ (Kalyvas, 2006, p. 17). A rebel group is a coordinated group of people whose members



use violence to oppose a state government (Kasfir, 2015, p. 24). Following the outbreak of civil war, rebel governance may persist as long as there is an expectation of protracted violence (Kasfir, 2015, p. 30). Thus, rebels can continue to govern civilians during lulls in the fighting, ceasefires, or peace processes.

Studying rebel governance also requires a distinction between rebels and civilians. International humanitarian law generally defines combatants as members of organised armed groups that take an active part in hostilities, meaning that persons working for a rebel group without taking part in the fighting are considered non-combatants (ICRC, 2018). This strict dichotomy between combatants and civilians is less useful for analytical purposes. Rebel bureaucrats like recruitment officers and tax collectors are often critical to the war effort, whether they actively participate in hostilities or not. Furthermore, very few rebel groups govern directly through their combatants, instead relying on unarmed bureaucrats to manage civilian affairs. Thus, for the purpose of this study, I define rebels as all individuals who are members of a rebel group and actively work to further the political goals of the rebel movement.

The study of rebel governance has advanced rapidly in recent years. The first strand of literature focuses on explaining why rebels invest financial and human resources in governing civilians, thus focusing on the *occurrence* or *scope* of rebel governance as the primary dependent variable (Huang, 2016; Lidow, 2016; Mampilly, 2011; Stewart, 2018; Weinstein, 2007; Wickham-Crowley, 1987). This literature highlights factors including: a dependence on civilian support; a need to project domestic and international legitimacy; a wish to outbid their competitors; and ideational motivations related to religion or ideology as important determinants of rebel governance.

The second strand unpacks variation in the character of rebel governance, such as its effectiveness (Mampilly, 2011), scope (Arjona, 2016), inclusiveness (Mampilly & Stewart, 2020; Stewart, 2018), and legitimacy (Duyvesteyn, 2017; Terpstra & Frerks, 2017). However, research on the responsiveness of rebel governance is scarce.<sup>4</sup> This is surprising, given that the study of political

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<sup>4</sup> For instance, while Duyvesteyn (2017, p. 679) implicitly discusses responsiveness in relation to rebel governance ('good government' in her words), she does not provide a conceptualisation or operational definition of what 'good government' entails. Moreover, while related, responsiveness is different from legitimacy, since the former does not require that citizens perceive rebel governance as legitimate (cf. Terpstra & Frerks, 2017, p. 284). For example, while some citizens in Man perceived the rebels as responsive to their preferences, they still perceived the Ivorian state as the legitimate sovereign.

regimes more broadly tends to centre around the character – responsiveness, accountability, or legitimacy – of governance rather than the existence of parliaments, public bureaucracies, and security apparatuses. To date, only two studies explicitly address variation in rebel responsiveness (Rubin, 2018; Weinstein, 2007). However, neither of these studies advance a multidimensional conceptualisation of rebel responsiveness. Therefore, I will build on these studies and contribute to the literature on rebel governance by developing a conceptual framework for studying rebel responsiveness in civil war.

Responsiveness – the degree to which a government’s political decisions correspond to its citizens’ desires – has long been considered a crucial characteristic of democratic governance (e.g., Dahl, 1971; Lijphart, 1999). According to Dahl (1971, p. 1), the fundamental democratic principle is ‘the continuing responsiveness of the government to the preferences of its citizens, considered as political equals.’ Responsive governments listen to their citizens’ concerns through mechanisms like elections and public opinion polls and make policies that align with the preferences of a qualified majority (Binzer Hobolt & Klemmensen, 2005, p. 380). The concept of responsiveness can also apply to authoritarian governments. While authoritarian leaders are responsive to a smaller number of citizens than democratic governments, there is vast variation across authoritarian regimes. Whereas some authoritarian governments are responsive only to a small privileged class of people, other authoritarian regimes seek to appease a larger number of citizens (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2006; Bueno de Mesquita et al., 2005). Therefore, if rebel governance is anything like state governance, there should be a corresponding variation in the responsiveness of rebel governance.

I conceptualise rebel governance responsiveness (or rebel responsiveness) as the degree to which the rebels solicit and act upon civilian preferences in the way they govern during civil war.<sup>5</sup> The definition captures two critical pillars of governance responsiveness: the congruence of government policy and public opinion, and regular dialogue between representatives and the represented (e.g., Dahl, 1971; Lijphart, 1999; Powell, 2004). For example, rebels who delegate some local governance decision-making to councils with elected civilian representatives – as did the National Resistance Army (NRA) in Uganda (Kasfir, 2005) – are more responsive than rebels who make unilateral decisions on local governance policy.

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<sup>5</sup> This definition draws on Hagemann et al. (2017, p. 851), who assert that government responsiveness ‘implies that elected representatives are listening to and acting upon the wishes and views of the represented.’

Building on the existing literature (e.g., Mampilly, 2011, p. 62; Wickham-Crowley, 1987, p. 477), I propose that a minimal conceptualisation of rebel responsiveness should focus on four broader domains of governance: civilian involvement in decisions on local governance; the establishment of security institutions, such as a police force; the extraction of rents from the civilian population, for instance through taxation; and the provision of services like healthcare, education, and infrastructure development (Arjona et al., 2015; Kasfir, 2005; Wickham-Crowley, 1987). These four domains correspond to the main functions generally associated with state governance: representation, security, taxation, and welfare (Mampilly, 2011, p. 62). Rebel governance is fully responsive when rebels align their policies with civilian preferences for all four domains. Additionally, a broader conceptualisation of rebel responsiveness could also consider the responsiveness of other institutions that rebels create, such as rules for governing land ownership (see Arjona, 2014).

Civilian involvement refers to the voluntary participation of civilians in local governance decision-making under rebel rule (Kasfir, 2005, 2015, pp. 34-35) – for example, creating feedback mechanisms like elections or civilian councils that signal civilian preferences to the rebel leadership (Cunningham et al., 2020; Huang, 2016, pp. 60-61). However, the existence of mechanisms for soliciting civilians is insufficient for responsive rebel governance if rebels do not take civilian feedback seriously – rebel responsiveness demands that rebels listen to and implement civilian propositions. Regular dialogue between insurgents and civilians is key to responsive rebel governance since the mere implementation of governance outcomes that citizens desire does not necessarily indicate responsiveness, but rather an accidental correspondence of rebel and civilian preferences (Powell, 2004, p. 92).

Security governance is the creation of institutions and practices that serve to control and regulate the use of force in rebel-held areas. Common examples of rebel security governance include creating police forces that are distinct from rebel fighters, implementing certain codes of conduct, and establishing laws governing civilian behaviour. While the creation of police forces is often equated with protecting civilians in the rebel governance literature, this is not necessarily the case. Like state governments, rebel policing can either surveil and repress civilians or protect civilians and their property from crime and rebel abuse. The Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, for instance, created an Islamic police department that primarily served to enforce an unpopular and brutal interpretation of *sharia* (Al-Tamimi, 2015; Revkin & Ahram, 2020). Hence, an essential indicator

of responsiveness is the degree to which rebel security governance is protective, rather than repressive, of civilians.

Taxation, whether through formal or informal mechanisms, refers to the taking of rents from civilians. Rebels that create revenue collection agencies and set fixed fees for the transportation of people and goods, or doing business, engage in taxation. While civilians likely prefer not to share their resources with rebels, a key indicator of responsiveness is the degree to which taxation is perceived as fair and accountable by local citizens. Fairness here refers to whether civilians perceive that the rate of taxation is reasonable. Accountability considers whether local citizens know how much and when they are expected to pay, and whether rebels create mechanisms through which civilians can file complaints to rebel leaders if rebel foot soldiers tax them too much or too often. Thus, rebels that maintain tax rates that are perceived as somewhat reasonable by civilians, provide receipts of tax payments, and allow civilians to complain about taxation are more responsive than those that do not.

Finally, service provision is the provision of public or club goods to civilians, such as education, health care, infrastructure development, sanitation, and public works. Rebel service provision can also include administering and coordinating humanitarian aid for civilians, in concert with national and international organisations (Huang, 2016; Stewart, 2018). The Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF), which provided education and healthcare for an estimated 1.6 million Eritreans in 1978, constitutes an example of service provision by a rebel group (Stewart, 2018, p. 206). Provided that rebels contribute services that civilians want, rebel governance is more responsive when rebels offer more services.

Thus, this study distinguishes a spectrum of rebel responsiveness ranging between two extremes: responsive governance, with extensive civilian involvement, protective security governance, fair and accountable taxation, and extensive service provision; and unresponsive governance, with no civilian involvement, repressive security governance, unfair and unaccountable taxation, and no service provision (Figure 1). This conceptualisation builds on the assumption that civilians generally prefer: to be included in local governance decision-making; security governance to protect civilians; taxation to be fair and accountable; to receive more services. While it is certainly possible that civilians have different preferences, this assumption probably holds for the vast majority of civilians under rebel rule. Moreover, responsive rebel governance does not mean that civilians live lives free of violence and suffering – the difference is a matter of degree.

**Figure 1: The rebel responsiveness spectrum**



Rebel responsiveness can differ at several levels, including across rebel groups, across localities under the control of the same rebel group, and across communities that live in the same locality. For instance, the main difference between the NRA in Uganda and IS was not the extent of rebel rule (both groups created sophisticated rebel administrations), but the stark contrast in its responsiveness. Likewise, a comparison of the cities of Odienné and Vavoua in Côte d'Ivoire shows that, while both areas were under the FN's control and had large rebel administrations, rebel governance was more responsive to civilian preferences in Odienné than in Vavoua (Van Baalen, Forthcoming). Finally, rebels may be more responsive to certain groups of citizens than others. One example of such partisanship in rebel responsiveness is the FN's behaviour towards the Dioula and Yacouba ethnic communities in Man in western Côte d'Ivoire, to which I turn next.

### **3. Rebel Governance in Man, Côte d'Ivoire**

To demonstrate the utility and importance of the concept of rebel responsiveness, I conducted an in-depth case study of Man in western Côte d'Ivoire. Man was under FN control for almost a decade (2002–2010) and had a sophisticated rebel administration. The analysis compares rebel responsiveness towards the two largest ethnic communities in Man: the Yacouba and Dioula communities. Below, I first provide a brief overview of the civil war in Côte d'Ivoire; I then describe the dynamics of violence and governance in western Côte d'Ivoire; and end by discussing the methods, indicators, and data that I use to compare rebel responsiveness.

#### *The Civil War in Côte d'Ivoire*

The civil war in Côte d'Ivoire started in September 2002 when the *Mouvement Patriotique de Côte d'Ivoire* (MPCI) invaded the country from Burkina Faso and attacked strategic army positions in Korhogo, Bouaké, and the economic capital of Abidjan. The invasion was initially designed as a coup d'état, but turned into an open rebellion when the mutineers were forced to retreat from

Abidjan to Bouaké by loyalist forces fighting with French support. Instead, the insurgents captured larger towns throughout the north and west of the country. The rebels' ranks quickly swelled as they were joined by disgruntled civilians and soldiers deserting the national army. Despite several military advances by the Ivorian army to take back the northern half of the country, the rebels stood their ground. By the end of September, the north and centre of the country stood under rebel control (Chelapi-den Hamer, 2011, pp. 65-66).

The rebellion's official justification became evident when the MPCCI announced their political wing, led by Secretary-General Guillaume Soro, in October 2002 (ICG, 2003, p. 8). The MPCCI stressed the need for new elections and an end to the divisive and xenophobic political discourse known as *Ivoirité*. The government of Laurent Gbagbo and his party, the *Front Populaire Ivoirien* (FPI), promoted this discourse and framed 'Northerners' – members of ethnic groups from northern Côte d'Ivoire, Muslims, and naturalised immigrants – as 'non-Ivoirians,' while simultaneously excluding the main opposition candidate, Alassane Ouattara, from running for president based on his citizenship status (Akindès, 2004). An additional source of discontent was the policy of dismissing soldiers of 'Northern' descent from the Ivorian army. The MPCCI vanguard consisted of disgruntled junior army officers that sought refuge in Burkina Faso in 2000–2002 due to the government's purges. These dissidents received support from Burkina Faso, which facilitated 'training of the rebellion's military leaders in logistics, communication, and clandestine operations' (ICG, 2003, p. 10).

French intervention brought an end to the fighting within a month, and on 17 October 2002, the MPCCI declared a unilateral ceasefire. The country was subsequently divided along a ceasefire line known as the *zone de confiance* – the zone of confidence. With the beginning of peace talks in France, the ceasefire line was reinforced by French intervention forces and troops from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). In May 2003, the United Nations Security Council announced a UN peacekeeping operation, the United Nations Mission in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI), that effectively cemented rebel control over some 60% of the country (ICG, 2003, p. 1).

### *Governing the 'Wild West'*

Man lies among the rolling hills of the Montagnes district in western Côte d'Ivoire, not far from the border with Liberia and Guinea. These forested slopes are the backbone of the local economy, producing cash crops like coffee, cocoa, bananas, and timber. The city rests at a geographical borderland, near the northernmost limit of the coastal rain forests, and just south of the arboreal

savanna of northern Côte d'Ivoire. This geographical frontier is a social mosaic, where western, northern, and southern ethnic groups live side by side.

The most populous autochthonous, or firstcomer, ethnic group in Man are the Yacouba.<sup>6</sup> The Yacouba are a southern Mandé-speaking ethnic group that migrated to western Côte d'Ivoire from the Sahel during the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries (Heitz-Tokpa, 2013, p. 61). During the civil war, the Yacouba accounted for about half of the local population in the city of Man (Reed, 2003, p. 36). Like other groups in the West, the Yacouba are characterised by 'a high plurality of religious beliefs' (Heitz-Tokpa, 2013, p. 60), but have, to a much greater extent, converted to Islam. However, local animist practices and the use of ritual masks remain deeply immersed within Islam locally (Reed, 2003, p. 41).

The largest allochthonous, or settler, ethnic group in Man are the Dioula.<sup>7</sup> Despite outsiders' tendency to view the Dioula as a homogenous group, they are not an ethnic group per se but a broader ethnic identity that encompasses Muslims, 'Northerners,' and immigrants from all over West Africa. Due to their shared status as settlers, the Dioula are often seen (and see themselves) as a unified ethnic community. Because the French colonialists perceived the western ethnic groups – including the Yacouba – as 'unstable and fractious' (Allouche & Bley, 2017, p. 152), colonial occupation often involved the subjugation and expulsion of western ethnic groups. This gap was filled by openly encouraging the migration of 'Northerners' to the plantations in the western rainforests (Chelapi-den Hamer, 2011, p. 109). By the end of the twentieth century, the Dioula constituted close to a majority of the local population, a significant population shift that 'amounted to no less than a social and ethnic revolution' (Reed, 2003, p. 39). The Dioula almost exclusively ascribe to a more traditional form of Sufi Islam common in northern Côte d'Ivoire.

The western front in Côte d'Ivoire was the theatre of some of the most intense fighting of the Ivorian civil war. Hostilities between the government and MPCJ had largely ended in October 2002 when a ceasefire agreement established the demilitarised zone just south of Man. The ceasefire shifted the focus from central Côte d'Ivoire to the West. Man was first attacked on 28 November 2002. Two new rebel groups that cooperated with the MPCJ, but had not signed the ceasefire agreement, were behind the attack: the *Mouvement pour la Justice et la Paix* (MJP) and the

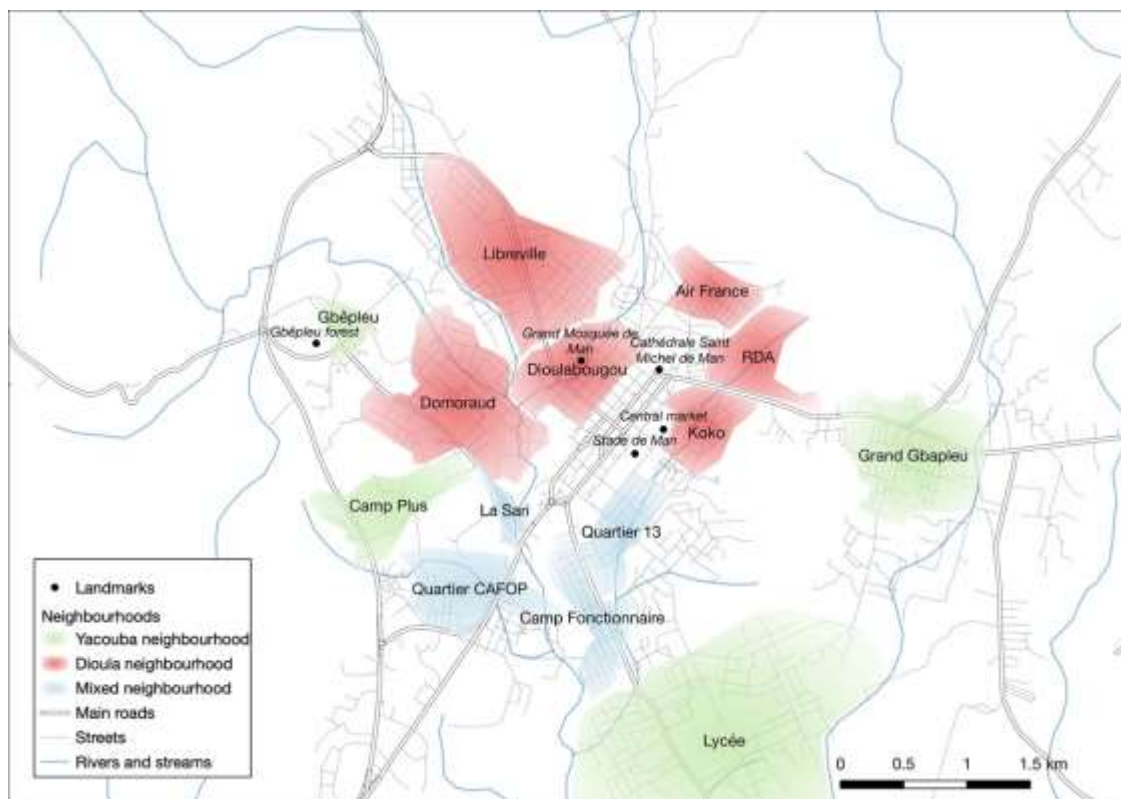
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<sup>6</sup> The Yacouba are also known as the Dan.

<sup>7</sup> 'Dioula' is a generic term that both means Muslim trader and Muslim from northern Côte d'Ivoire or the Sahel.

*Mouvement Populaire Ivoirien du Grand Ouest* (MPIGO). Their official justification for joining the civil war was that they sought to avenge the death of General Robert Gueï, a prominent military general and former president from the West, at the hands of government forces on the first day of the rebellion (ICG, 2003, p. 18). However, more sinister reasons motivated the formation of these groups. The smaller MJP is widely considered a satellite organisation of the MPCI, who used it to try to conquer the West and the southern harbour of San Pedro despite the ceasefire agreement (Heitz-Tokpa, 2013, p. 73). MIPGO was created with the active support of Liberian President Charles Taylor, in response to Ivorian backing for rebels in southern Liberia, and had a significant number of Liberian and Sierra Leonean mercenaries in its ranks (Ero et al., 2003, p. 98).

**Figure 2: Map of Man**



*Note:* Author's rendition of ethnic neighbourhoods in the city of Man. The map was constructed using Quantum GIS 3.4.8 and is based on spatial data provided by the United Nation's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

During the month that followed, Man shifted hands between government and rebel forces several times. A wave of political persecution of suspected government and rebel loyalists accompanied each shift in territorial control (HRW, 2003, pp. 18-19, 27-28). On 19 December 2002, Man fell into rebel hands again and remained under their control until the crisis ended in 2011. The full



incorporation of Man into rebel-held territory became the start of a period (roughly December 2002–July 2003) known by locals as *le temps sauvage* – the wild times. This was a time of disorder and violence. Low-ranking commanders battled each other in Man’s streets, crime rose to endemic levels, and social life changed in profound ways. Many civilians were abused during this period, and few efforts were made by the MJP and MPIGO to establish any sort of governance structure (Heitz-Tokpa, 2013, pp. 73-74). In January 2003, when the rebels’ indiscipline in western Cote d’Ivoire became too much to bear for the rebel leadership in Bouaké, it initiated a prolonged campaign in the West to push the Liberian mercenaries out (ICG, 2003, p. 24). The leaders of the MJP and MPIGO were killed under mysterious circumstances, and some 1,800 foreign mercenaries were expelled from the West. This brought an end to the MJP and MPIGO, uniting the three rebel movements under a unified command that became the FN (Ero et al., 2003). The appointment of Losseni Fofana, a former special forces commander in the Ivorian army, as zone commander of Man in July 2003, signalled the end of *le temps sauvage*. Losseni Fofana remained the most powerful local authority in Man until 2011 (Heitz, 2009).

### *Assessing Rebel Responsiveness*

The study uses structured and focused comparison to investigate the degree of responsiveness towards the two ethnic communities. This method systematically poses the same set of theoretically derived questions to each community (George & Bennett, 2005), and focuses on the following questions:

- *Civilian involvement*: Did the FN regularly solicit the views of civilian representatives on local governance? Did the FN take input from civilian representatives seriously?
- *Security*: Did FN police forces effectively protect civilians from crime? Did the FN establish clear codes of conduct that effectively forbade and sanctioned rebel soldiers from abusing civilians? Did the FN establish effective mechanisms through which civilians could file complaints against abusive rebel soldiers?
- *Taxation*: Did the FN establish a taxation regime that civilians perceived as somewhat fair? Did the FN establish effective mechanisms through which civilians could file complaints if they were taxed too much or too often?
- *Service provision*: Did the FN provide education for civilians? Did the FN provide healthcare for civilians? Did the FN conduct public cleaning campaigns? Did the FN help rehabilitate or maintain damaged infrastructure?

The analysis builds primarily on original interview and archival data collected during eight months of field research in 2017–2020. During these field trips, I conducted 28 semi-structured individual and group interviews in Man and Abidjan with more than 50 experts, local elites, former FN members, and residents. I further draw upon more than 1,500 local newspaper articles collected in Ivorian archives, including the local newspaper *Le Tambour*, produced by a group of journalists who stayed in Man during the crisis. These articles help me verify and compare information from the interviews, and – in the case of *Le Tambour* – offer a rare glimpse of the daily interactions that took place between the civilian population and the rebels.<sup>8</sup> To assess the effectiveness of rebel security governance, I also draw on survey data collected by the Ivorian National Institute of Statistics (INS, 2008). The data comes from a nationwide household survey – the Household Living Standards Survey – conducted by INS in 2008.<sup>9</sup> This survey, co-administered with UNICEF, focused explicitly on documenting the consequences of the civil war, and includes information on exposure to different forms of violence and insecurity for 556 respondents in Man. Surveyed households were selected using random walks, and were visited by trained enumerators between June and September 2008 (INS, 2008). Finally, the analysis builds on secondary sources, like NGO reports and UN documents, and scholarly work on the region, such as the Reed (2003) and Heitz-Tokpa (2013) ethnographies.

#### 4. Comparing Rebel Responsiveness

Losseni Fofana's first order of business was to establish an FN administration in Man. The rebel administration in Man was divided into military and civil branches. The military administration consisted of the zone commander – locally known as 'Loss' or 'Papa Cobra' – his second-in-command Tuo Adama Diarrassouba, third-in-command Eloy Zouaty, and chief-of-security Commander Ouattara (alias 'Cobra'). These military men, all former members of the Ivorian army, were in charge of ensuring public order and defending the zone against government attacks. The military administration also ran a military police station, a small prison, and a liaison office that served as an interlocutor with the French and UNOCI forces. Inza Fofana, the zone commander's chief-of-staff (*Directeur de Cabinet du Comzone*) and cousin, headed the civil administration and managed most everyday local governance aspects. Before the crisis, he served as a bailiff at the court in Man. His main tasks were to organise the collection of taxes, act as an intermediary

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<sup>8</sup> Direct quotes from French sources (academic articles, newspaper articles, and interviews) in this paper were translated by the author.

<sup>9</sup> The data was provided by the INS upon request.

between civilians and the military authorities, and run a civilian affairs department to coordinate service provision with international humanitarian organisations and civilian representatives (Heitz-Tokpa, 2013, pp. 258-259). There were also institutions created by the rebel leadership in Bouaké, which served to counteract FN zone commanders' demands for greater autonomy. FN Secretary-General Guillaume Soro demanded centralised control over taxation through a centralised revenue collection agency called *La Centrale*, and appointed both a political delegate (*délégué général*) and tax agent (*régisseur*) to Man. Nevertheless, most FN administration members in Man remained loyal to Losseni Fofana, thus curtailing the national rebel leadership's influence.

Many zone commanders openly defied the leadership of Guillaume Soro to establish their own fiefdoms. In contrast, Losseni Fofana kept a low profile and modest appearance, all while he and his entourage profited from the spoils of the war economy. Fofana was generally known as a man who cared for the well-being of the population. For instance, respondents noted that 'he defended the population'<sup>10</sup> and that, with Losseni Fofana, 'we found peace and stability.'<sup>11</sup> His assistance in driving the Liberian mercenaries out of the region, and his efforts in bringing abusive factions under control, greatly contributed to his popularity.<sup>12</sup> According to an anthropologist living in Man in 2008, people generally described the zone commander as 'a nice person' that would 'often take sides with the civilians.'<sup>13</sup> Losseni Fofana was so popular among some citizens that, when the FN leadership announced that he would be transferred to another zone in 2006, civilians organised a large manifestation against the decision that derailed the transfer indefinitely.

The zone commander's support was directly related to investments in security and services. As one of the demonstrators explained: 'We are demonstrating to say "no" to the departure of our commander. We feel good with Commander Loss. Can you not see how he secured the city?' (NordSud Quotidien, 2006-06-13). However, not all residents benefited from the increased responsiveness of rebel governance.

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<sup>10</sup> Interview with Yacouba female community leader, Man, 3 November 2018.

<sup>11</sup> Interview with Dioula NGO representative, Man, 5 May 2018.

<sup>12</sup> Group interview with Yacouba NGO representatives, Man, 3 May 2018.

<sup>13</sup> Interview with Dr Kathrin Heitz-Tokpa, researcher, Abidjan, 20 October 2017.

**Table 1: Overview of rebel responsiveness indicators**

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Yacouba community</i>	<i>Dioula community</i>
<i>Civilian involvement</i>		
Did the FN solicit the views of civilian representatives on local governance regularly?	Rarely	Often
Did the FN take input from civilian representatives seriously?	No	Yes
<i>Security provision</i>		
Did FN police forces effectively protect civilians from crime?	No	Yes
Did the FN establish clear codes of conduct that effectively forbade and sanctioned rebel soldiers from abusing civilians?	No	Yes
Did the FN establish effective mechanisms through which civilians could file complaints against abusive rebel soldiers?	No	Yes
<i>Taxation</i>		
Did the FN establish a taxation regime that civilians perceived as somewhat fair?	No	Yes
Did the FN establish effective mechanisms through which civilians could file complaints if they were taxed too much or too often?	No	Yes
<i>Service provision</i>		
Did the FN provide education for civilians?	Yes	Yes
Did the FN provide health care for civilians?	Sometimes	Sometimes
Did the FN conduct public cleaning campaigns?	Sometimes	Sometimes
Did the FN help rehabilitate or maintain damaged infrastructure?	Sometimes	Sometimes

The most striking feature of rebel rule in Man was the partisan character of FN governance. Analysis of the eleven indicators of rebel responsiveness reveals that rebel governance was significantly more responsive towards the Dioula than Yacouba. Table 1 provides an overview of the examined rebel responsiveness indicators by ethnic community. This partisanship in rebel responsiveness was possible because Yacouba and Dioula citizens are recognisable by their physical appearance, clothing, and language. Also, the two communities – to a large extent – live in separate neighbourhoods of the city (Heitz-Tokpa, 2013, p. 182). Below, I describe the responsiveness of rebel governance in greater detail, focusing on these eleven indicators.

### *Civilian Involvement*

The first important feature of rebel responsiveness concerns how frequently the rebels solicit civilian representatives' views and the degree to which they take input from civilian representatives seriously, regardless of the processes' formality. The evidence suggests that there were clear civilian involvement differences across the Yacouba and Dioula communities.

The Dioula community had several direct channels to the FN administration and were often included in decisions about the city's governance. Civilian representatives, linked to influential merchant families in the Dioulabougou neighbourhood, regularly met with the local FN leadership. According to the respondents, these leaders included: Mamadou Maméry Soumahoro, a local politician from a wealthy merchant family; Ballo Mamadou, the president of the trader's union in Man; and Daouda Camara, an influential civil society leader. Mamadou Maméry Soumahoro, openly supportive of the rebellion's political aims, became a particularly trusted intermediary between Losseni Fofana and the Dioula population. According to Katrin Heitz, he met Losseni Fofana every Thursday to give him 'a general account of things going wrong in town' (Heitz, 2009, p. 122). Ballo Mamadou served as a focal point between local businesses and the FN.<sup>14</sup> Because Ballo Mamadou was in close contact with the zone commander's chief-of-staff Inza Fofana,<sup>15</sup> the trader's union provided a forum through which traders could make their voices heard with the FN (Le Tambour, 20-07-01a). According to one businessman, Inza Fofana 'had a very good relation [sic] with traders in Man,' which he claimed was 'because he [Inza Fofana] had a lot of contact with the traders.'<sup>16</sup> Finally, Daouda Camara served as FN Secretary-General Guillaume Soro's political

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<sup>14</sup> Interview with Dioula NGO representative, Man, 5 May 2018.

<sup>15</sup> Interview with Dioula chief, Man, 27 February 2020; Interview with Dioula NGO representative, Man, 5 May 2018.

<sup>16</sup> Interview with Dioula businessman, Man, 8 May 2018.

delegate to Man. He had an office in town where the public – mainly Dioula – could bring local governance complaints to the secretary-general’s attention. This allowed Dioula citizens to side-step the local FN leadership and communicate directly with the FN central command in Bouaké. According to one respondent, Daouda Camara was seen as Guillaume Soro’s ‘ambassador’ and ‘very close to the people.’<sup>17</sup>

There were fewer channels for raising concerns with the FN for the Yacouba community. By most accounts, the leading Yacouba intermediary in Man was Vice-Mayor Salia Michel Tiémoko, who ‘had a particularly good rapport’ with the FN (Heitz, 2009, p. 123). Most Yacouba respondents did, however, see the vice-mayor as relatively inconspicuous<sup>18</sup> – little more than a rebel puppet that had taken the opportunity to depose the real mayor Albert Flindé.<sup>19</sup> He often represented the mayor’s office at public meetings organised by the FN and called upon Yacouba chiefs and residents to do what they could to support the rebels’ cause (Le Jour, 2006-08-08; Le Tambour, 2003-02-12; 2003-02-19). Some respondents also said that Yacouba chiefs sometimes acted as intermediaries,<sup>20</sup> but the chiefs’ willingness to approach the rebels and the degree to which their concerns were genuinely considered was relatively limited.<sup>21</sup> Yacouba chiefs themselves identified Dioula leaders as the most important intermediaries between the population and the FN.<sup>22</sup> Without any clear intermediaries between themselves and the FN, Yacouba respondents often despaired that they had few opportunities to influence rebel governance in Man.

### *Security Provision*

The second feature of rebel responsiveness relates to the degree to which the rebels invest in creating security institutions to effectively protect civilians from rebel abuse and violent crime. Examples of such investments are the deployment of rebel police forces, the establishment of clear codes of conduct that sanction rebel soldiers for abusing civilians, and the creation of mechanisms through which civilians can file complaints against abusive rebel soldiers. Both qualitative and quantitative data show that rebel security provisions primarily benefitted the Dioula community.

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<sup>17</sup> Interview with Dioula NGO representative, Man, 5 May 2018.

<sup>18</sup> Group interview with Yacouba chiefs, Man, 28 February 2020.

<sup>19</sup> Group interview with Toura and Yacouba female community leaders, Man, 26 February 2020.

<sup>20</sup> Interview with Yacouba chief, Man, 26 February 2020.

<sup>21</sup> Group interview with Wê and Yacouba chiefs, Man, 8 May 2018; Group interview with Yacouba chiefs, Man, 28 February 2020.

<sup>22</sup> Interview with Yacouba chief, Man, 26 February 2020.

Security governance in Man was the prerogative of zone commander Losseni Fofana and his chief-of-security. One of the most important measures was the establishment of a rebel police force with branches in many of the neighbourhoods of Man (Le Tambour, 2003-08-20a). Rebel police officers were recruited according to ‘national criteria,’ which included a basic education and a rudimentary understanding of human rights (Chelapi-den Hamer, 2011, pp. 119-120), and were remunerated by taxes.<sup>23</sup> The FN leadership in Man also established strict codes of conduct that banned and sanctioned civilian abuse (Chelapi-den Hamer, 2011, p. 178). Losseni Fofana publicly warned his soldiers against terrorising civilians on several occasions, both in a public meeting (Le Tambour, 2003-08-20b) and in a radio broadcast (Chelapi-den Hamer, 2011, p. 178). Rebel soldiers that overstepped these rules were systematically ‘subjected, eliminated, or pushed into exile’ (Heitz-Tokpa, 2013, p. 255). Rape was punishable by death. Recruits entering the FN ranks were notified about the codes of conduct upon registration and forced to undergo military discipline training (Chelapi-den Hamer, 2011, p. 173). The creation of civilian reporting mechanisms paralleled the establishment of these codes of conduct through the offices of Inza Fofana, the chief-of-security commander ‘Cobra,’ or one of the sector commanders (Heitz-Tokpa, 2013, p. 258). Dioula respondents said that bringing a case to the attention of Losseni Fofana or Inza Fofana often led to the arrest of abusive soldiers.<sup>24</sup> One respondent noted: ‘Such elements were sought-after, found, and placed under arrest.’<sup>25</sup> This was no small task given that impunity for abusing civilians was one of the primary sources of insecurity in the rebel zone.<sup>26</sup>

While rebel policing did not quell crime completely,<sup>27</sup> it did help decrease the high crime levels of the first year of rebel rule (Heitz-Tokpa, 2013, p. 257). One respondent summarised:

They [the FN] played the role of the police, gendarmerie, and justice system. [But] it was not easy because they had no concept of law. At times, we found that they were unfair in the settlement of certain conflicts.<sup>28</sup>

However, the degree to which rebel policing actually protected civilians did vary across the two ethnic communities. Figure 3 shows the rate of exposure to different types of physical violence,

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<sup>23</sup> Interview with Dioula businessman, Man, 8 May 2018.

<sup>24</sup> Interview with Dioula NGO representative, Man, 5 May 2018.

<sup>25</sup> Interview with UCJM youth leader, Man, 31 October 2018.

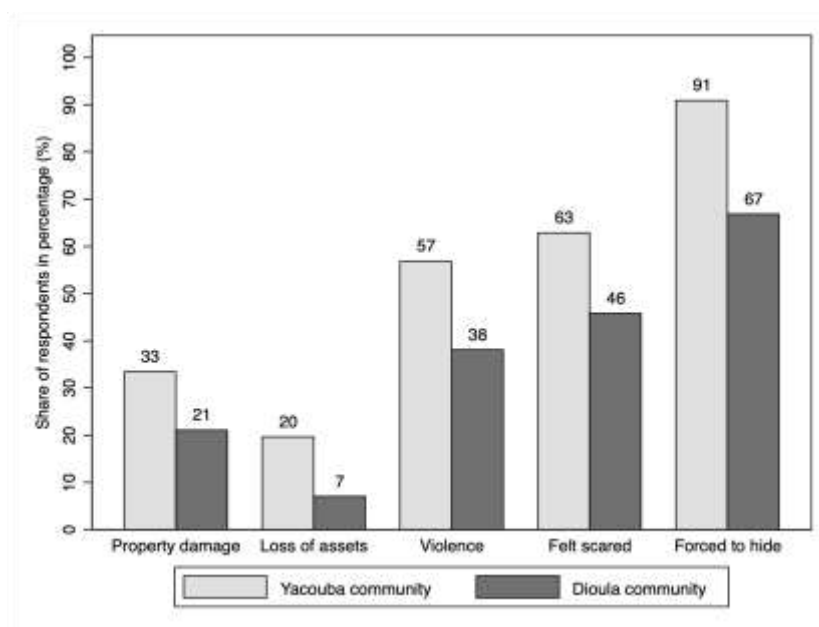
<sup>26</sup> Interview with Prof. Alain Sissoko, academic, Abidjan, 10 February 2020.

<sup>27</sup> Newspaper reports in *Le Tambour* document numerous cases of rebel abuse of civilians in Man, despite FN investments in civilian protection.

<sup>28</sup> Interview with Dioula NGO representative, Man, 5 May 2018.

and fear of violence, by ethnic communities in Man. Compared to Dioula respondents, Yacouba respondents reported significantly higher exposure to violence in 2002–2008. For example, while 38% of Dioula respondents said they suffered violence against their person, 57% of the Yacouba respondents reported being physically harmed. Likewise, while 91% of Yacouba respondents said they were forced to hide at some point during the crisis, 67% of the Dioula respondents reported hiding. In interviews, Dioula respondents often rated rebel security provision as more efficient (albeit far from perfect) than Yacouba respondents, who said they hesitated to address the rebels for fear of reprisal. Police patrols against crime were both confined to, and more effective in, Dioula neighbourhoods (Heitz-Tokpa, 2013, p. 279).

**Figure 3: Exposure to, and fear of, violence in Man by ethnic community (2002– 2008).**



Author's calculations based on data from INS (2008).

### *Taxation*

The third feature of rebel responsiveness concerns the degree to which taxation is perceived as fair and accountable, both in the sense that citizens know how much and when they are expected to pay, and whether effective mechanisms through which civilians can file complaints exist.

FN's central revenue and expenditure agency, *La Centrale*, organised Man's taxation and was represented locally by tax agent Babou Traoré. Taxes were levied on all businesses, goods, and services in Man. All trucks passing through the zone required a *laissez-passer* at the cost of about 15,000 CFA francs (USD 28), plus a price for the transported goods. Taxis paid around 5,000 CFA



francs (USD 9) per month, whereas shops paid a *patente* of approximately 1,000–2,000 CFA francs/month (\$2–4 USD) or 100 CFA francs/day (USD 0.20) for a small table at the market.<sup>29</sup> Taxes allegedly decreased with time, following discussions between the rebels and the different business associations in Man.<sup>30</sup> The FN also created a tax declaration form that allowed business owners and traders to prove to rebel soldiers that they had already paid their taxes. Such documents could then be displayed on the windows of cars and trucks or at the shop entrances.<sup>31</sup>

Somewhat fair and accountable taxation was, however, a privilege primarily extended to the Dioula community. All respondents complained about the heavy tax burden that the FN levied upon the population to some extent. Yet, Dioula respondents were generally less negative in their assessment of rebel taxation than Yacouba respondents, and explained that rebel taxes were generally lower than state taxes before the crisis. They further emphasised the FN's taxation regime's predictability and the dialogue between the trading community and the FN.<sup>32</sup> For instance, one respondent compared the FN taxes to the blatant looting in neighbouring Liberia and said: 'Compared to Liberia, we were very lucky here. It was an organised rebellion.'<sup>33</sup> Yacouba respondents, in contrast, compared rebel taxation to blatant extortion and described how rebel soldiers would extort them with impunity at roadblocks and the market. The survey data supports these claims. Whereas more Dioula than Yacouba respondents reported that their income decreased due to the crisis (67% versus 57%),<sup>34</sup> Yacouba respondents were more likely to attribute income loss to the expropriation of productive assets, like their plantation or cattle, than Dioula respondents (20% versus 7%). Thus, while the crisis harmed people's livelihoods across the board, members of the Yacouba community were systematically targeted by extortion and appropriation.

### *Service Provision*

The fourth and final feature of rebel responsiveness is whether the rebels provide services to civilians. The main focus here is on whether the FN provided three types of services to the respective communities: education, public cleaning, and infrastructure.

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<sup>29</sup> Interview with Dioula businessman, Man, 8 May 2018.

<sup>30</sup> Interview with Dioula union leader, Man, 25 February 2020.

<sup>31</sup> Interview with Dioula businessman, Man, 8 May 2018.

<sup>32</sup> Interview with Dioula businessman, Man, 8 May 2018; Interview with Dioula NGO representative, Man, 5 May 2018.

<sup>33</sup> Interview with Dioula union leader, Man, 25 February 2020.

<sup>34</sup> Author's calculations based on survey data provided by INS (2008).

The FN made considerable investments in service provision, most notably education. The civil war in Man led to the closure of schools and the exodus of many formal teachers. But despite continuing insecurity and a lack of teachers, the education system in Man proved remarkable in its ability to quickly resume classes. The initiative came from the FN in 2003, who organised a group of school administrators and teachers and asked them to reopen the schools for remedial courses (Heitz-Tokpa, 2013, p. 228). These administrators and teachers organised as the *Comité de Pilotage pour le Sauvetage de l'Année Scolaire 2002–2003*.<sup>35</sup> The FN supported the committee by vouching for the security of formal teachers who wanted to return to Man,<sup>36</sup> and appointing a regional representative for civilian affairs who held meetings with community representatives and parents to mobilise the financial and human resources to keep the schools operational.<sup>37</sup> As a result, schools reopened in Man as early as March 2003 (Le Tambour, 2003-03-26; 2003-06-18). By the end of 2003, 70% of the schools were reportedly operational, and some 40% of teachers were formally recognised – the highest rate in the rebel zone (Azoh et al., 2004, pp. 27-34). The rebels aided the schools by recruiting volunteer teachers through their civil administration or CSOs with close ties to the rebellion. In March 2006, the government's regional board of education representative reported that formal and volunteer teachers served some 18,000 students in Man (Le Tambour, 2006-05). As noted by one respondent: "They [the FN] were very supportive of the teachers. They also supported the schools, they (sic) donated school benches. The schools that had difficulties, they gave them donations. Every school year, they donated school kits."<sup>38</sup> Newspaper accounts further suggest that the rebels provided some financial support for the schools (Le Tambour, 2007-01b; 2007-05/06b), yet such contributions were, in all likelihood, relatively small.

The rebels also conducted public cleaning campaigns and helped rehabilitate decayed infrastructure. The FN made some efforts to prevent the spread of disease by ordering soldiers to clean the city and get rid of ponds of stagnant water (Le Jour, 2006-06-07; Le Tambour, 2007-07/08). They also collaborated with the municipal administration to manage garbage collection (Le Tambour, 2003-03-19) and helped rehabilitate the infirmary at one of the schools in town (Le Tambour, 2007-05/06a). Investments in service provision beyond education were, however, relatively modest. Nevertheless, rebel service provision constituted an important exception to the

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<sup>35</sup> Interview with volunteer teacher organiser, Man, 3 May 2018.

<sup>36</sup> Interview with teacher, Man, 2 May 2018; Interview with volunteer teacher organiser, Man, 3 May 2018.

<sup>37</sup> Interview with UCJM youth leader, Man, 31 October 2018.

<sup>38</sup> Interview with Dioula NGO representative, Man, 5 May 2018.

partisan character of rebel governance in Man – no respondents reported favouritism towards any particular community.

#### *Other Institutions: The Sacred Forest of Gbêpleu*

The partisan character of rebel responsiveness in Man was replicated in other institutions created by the FN. While discussing the responsiveness of all rebel institutions in Man is beyond this paper's scope, rebel governance of the sacred Gbêpleu Forest provides an illustrative example often raised by the respondents.

The Gbêpleu Forest is a small stretch of land located on the outskirts of Man. Like most Yacouba villages, the Gbêpleu neighbourhood is near a sacred forest used for rituals (Reed, 2003, p. 33). The FN's governance of the Forest was a prominent source of Yacouba resentment. Yacouba respondents complained that the Forest was desecrated by both the rebels, who exploited it for firewood, and Dioula and Burkinabe settlers that cultivated its land.<sup>39</sup> Other common complaints were that the rebels killed and ate the Forest's sacred monkeys and that influential Dioula were allowed to appropriate land and build houses at the Forest's edge.<sup>40</sup> Although the FN in Man established a special brigade for the protection of forests (Le Tambour, 2005-04), it allegedly did not intervene to protect the Gbêpleu Forest, instead siding with the Dioula community.<sup>41</sup>

#### *Variation in Rebel Responsiveness*

In sum, the degree of rebel responsiveness in Man depended on your ethnic community. Rebel responsiveness was significantly higher towards the Dioula than the Yacouba. The difference in rebel responsiveness across the two communities presented above provides a general description of differences and similarities. This is not to say that all Yacouba suffered under rebel rule, nor that no Dioula experienced any abuse by the FN. All residents living in Man suffered in one way or another. Individual-level factors related to political affiliation, gender, age, and social status also played a role in how citizens experienced rebel governance (see Heitz, 2009; Heitz-Tokpa, 2013, 2014, 2016). Exploring these fine-tuned nuances is, however, beyond the scope of this paper.

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<sup>39</sup> Group interview with Wê and Yacouba chiefs, Man, 8 May 2018; Group interview with Yacouba NGO representatives, Man, 3 May 2018.

<sup>40</sup> Interview with female FPI politician, Man, 3 November 2018; Interview with Yacouba female community leader, Man, 3 November 2018.

<sup>41</sup> Interview with Yacouba female community leader, Man, 3 November 2018.

Instead, the purpose here was to demonstrate the rebel responsiveness concept in highlighting a significant variation.

## **5. Rebel Responsiveness and the Study of Civil War**

This study has developed the concept of rebel responsiveness and demonstrated how it applies to rebel governance in Man, Côte d'Ivoire. The analysis shows that even though the FN developed a sophisticated system of governance in Man – including an administration, police force, system of taxation, and service provision – the governance responsiveness differed between the Dioula and Yacouba ethnic communities. Dioula citizens were more likely to be involved in local governance decision-making, more likely to view rebel security governance as protective, and more likely to perceive rebel taxation as fair and accountable than their Yacouba neighbours. The variation in Man is not unique, and similar variations existed across other rebel-held localities in Côte d'Ivoire and around the world (see Van Baalen, Forthcoming).

The concept of rebel responsiveness can help uncover new insights about civilian life in civil war. The study of rebel governance is of great importance to our knowledge of civil war, but more work on the character of that governance is needed (see Mampilly & Stewart, 2020). The Man case study illustrates that a focus on rebel responsiveness helps to identify and document new variations. It allows researchers to ask how rebel institutions relate to civilian preferences and whether they relate to citizen groups in the same way. Hence, a focus on rebel responsiveness can advance knowledge on the severity of human security risks. Correct assessments of rebel governance are also important to policy-makers. Several scholars argue that rebel governance can serve as an indicator for humanitarian and development actors seeking to engage with rebel groups (Jo, 2015). Walch (2019-03-21), for example, argues that development actors 'should privilege engagement with NSAGs [non-state armed groups] that have already established parallel governance systems.' The insights from this study suggest that humanitarian and development actors should also consider the responsiveness of rebel governance, as – in the case of Man – the mere creation of governance systems does not tell us whether rebels use those institutions to protect or repress civilians.

A focus on rebel responsiveness also challenges common assumptions in the rebel governance literature. There is a tendency to assume that violence and governance are two distinct and mutually exclusive rebellion strategies, where governance is often equated with 'good governance.' This ignores that governance often works as an instrument of coercion. Heger et al. (2017) show that

rebel groups that provide governance are *more* likely to engage in various forms of violence against civilians than those that provide no governance. The case of Man examined in this study, for example, shows that rebel police forces were seen in different ways by local citizens; as a source of protection by the Dioula community, and as a source of repression by the Yacouba community. Studying the responsiveness – rather than occurrence – of rebel governance unpacks the heterogeneity of rebel regimes and can help develop new theories about rebel governance’s impact on the rate of violence against civilians. The Man case study also illustrates that an exclusive focus on rebel service provision can be misleading. Rebel responsiveness was considerably greater towards the Dioula than Yacouba community, but since service provision did not differ across the communities, this pattern only emerges when assessing responsiveness across several domains. Just like poor state governments can be responsive towards their citizens without significant service provision, so can rebel groups be unresponsive towards civilians despite significant investments in public goods. The LTTE in Sri Lanka and the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria are good examples of the latter.

The concept of rebel responsiveness also introduces a new dependent variable and serves as a starting point for asking further questions about rebel governance determinants. Putting rebel governance responsiveness in the theoretical limelight means that scholars can start exploring the causes of rebel responsiveness towards civilians. Some scholars have already done so, implicitly or explicitly, and highlight civilians’ resistance capacity as an essential determinant of local variation in rebel responsiveness (Arjona, 2016; Van Baalen, Forthcoming; Barter, 2014; Rubin, 2018). However, more research is required to fully understand variation across groups, localities, and groups of citizens. This concept can also help nuance existing theories; for example, a common argument in the existing literature is that rebel governance is a strategy for winning the civilian population’s hearts and minds (see Huang, 2016; Weinstein, 2007; Wickham-Crowley, 1987). These theories could explain the emergence of responsive rebel governance, but not why many rebel groups form governments that repress the civilian population.

Finally, greater attention to variation in rebel responsiveness yields a new independent variable that can shed light on how rebel governance shapes the dynamics of civil war and postwar societies. Variation in rebel responsiveness means that civilians live in different ‘institutional contexts’ (Arjona, 2014), not only because citizens are exposed to different institutions, but because those institutions serve different purposes. Given that institutions are ‘rules and procedures (both formal and informal) that structure social interaction by constraining and enabling actors’ behaviour’

(Helmke & Levitsky, 2004, p. 727), it follows that rebel institutions' responsiveness shapes civilian interactions with rebel groups and other actors. Therefore, a focus on rebel responsiveness can help explain why and when civilians cooperate with rebels, resist their rule, or collaborate with counterinsurgents (Arjona, 2016, p. 309). Identifying variation in rebel responsiveness can also develop better theories about how rebel governance influences various postwar phenomena. Studies show that rebel governance shapes whether rebels target civilians (Heger et al., 2017) or fragment during peace negotiations (Heger & Jung, 2017). Moreover, rebel governance has been found to set in motion social processes associated with postwar state-building (Kubota, 2017; Podder, 2014) and democratisation (Huang, 2016). However, there is good reason to believe that these effects are dependent on the responsiveness of rebel governance. For example, several studies argue that rebel governance aids rebel-to-party transitions and helps rebels build stronger political parties (Dresden, 2017; Matanock, 2017). Because citizens are likely to expect rebels that solicit their opinions and provide them with services to be better politicians, more responsive rebel governance should enhance this effect.

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