

Rebel Internal Governance (RIG) Dataset Codebook vi

Ilayda B. Onder*

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I Introduction

The Rebel Internal Governance (RIG) dataset provides a systematic and comprehensive resource for analyzing the institutions and practices rebel groups employ to govern their internal affairs. While the existing literature on rebel governance primarily focuses on how rebel groups regulate civilian populations, the RIG dataset shifts the focus inward, examining the mechanisms through which rebel groups govern their own members. This dataset seeks to fill a gap in the scholarly understanding of rebel internal governance, offering new insights into how these practices shape broader conflict processes.

RIG dataset uses a rebel group-year as its unit of analysis and spans the period from 1990 to 2012. It includes data on 14 distinct rebel internal governance institutions and practices, coding whether such a practice was active in some location at any point during the year. The dataset draws its list of sub-Saharan African rebel groups from the UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Termination dataset (Kreutz 2010), which includes groups active in civil wars resulting in at least 1,000 battle-related deaths. As per, the UCDP's criteria, any rebel group responsible for at least 25 battle-related deaths is included. Overall, the dataset captures 166 rebel groups active in 57 countries between 1990 and 2012.

1.1 How does RIG dataset compare to existing datasets?

Existing datasets on rebel governance primarily emphasize the regulation of civilian populations by rebel groups. These datasets examine areas such as service provision, governance of social and economic life, and civilian-rebel interactions during periods of conflict. While these resources have significantly advanced the field, they do not address how rebel groups manage their internal dynamics.

* Assistant Professor of Political Science, Texas A&M University. Email: ilaydaonder@tamu.edu

The RIG dataset distinguishes itself by focusing specifically on the internal governance institutions and practices of rebel groups. It catalogs institutions and mechanisms designed to regulate the behavior of rebel fighters, including codes of conduct, judicial proceedings, disciplinary actions, and the regulation of personal lives. This inward-looking approach allows for a more granular understanding of how rebels maintain discipline, enhance cohesion, and address challenges such as dissent and disobedience within their ranks.

1.2 What is new about the RIG dataset?

The RIG dataset introduces several distinctive elements that set it apart from existing datasets on rebel governance:

1.2.1 Exclusive Focus on Internal Governance

Unlike other datasets that primarily examine rebel governance of civilians, the RIG dataset is specifically designed to study how rebel groups regulate their own members. By shifting the focus inward, it captures a critical but underexplored dimension of rebellion: how groups enforce discipline, manage dissent, and promote cohesion within their ranks.

1.2.2 Detailed Data on Disciplinary Actions and Judicial Procedures

The RIG dataset systematically catalogs the nature of disciplinary measures (e.g., punishments for violations, peer-enforced actions) and judicial procedures (e.g., tribunal processes, public trials), offering a granular view of internal governance practices that is not typically included in broader datasets.

1.2.3 Inclusion of Personal Regulation Practices

A unique feature of the RIG dataset is its attention to how rebel groups regulate fighters' personal lives. This includes data on restrictions regarding friendships, romantic or sexual relationships, and family ties. Such data provides a novel lens for understanding how governance practices shape group dynamics and fighter behavior.

1.2.4 Theoretical and Empirical Linkages

The dataset is designed to facilitate the study of connections between internal governance and conflict processes, such as recruitment, civilian victimization, and international legitimacy. By including variables that directly address these linkages, the RIG dataset enables researchers to explore how internal governance impacts broader patterns of violent and non-violent behavior.

2 List of Variables

Table 1: Variables in the RIG Dataset

	<i>Variable</i>	<i>Variation</i>
<i>Regulatory Frameworks</i>	Written codes of conduct	Yes / No
	Codified amendment procedures	Yes / No
<i>Judicial Procedures</i>	Official Complaint Mechanism	Yes / No
	Investigative branches	Yes / No
	Tribunal proceedings	Yes / No
	Public proceedings	Yes / No
	Comparability across locations	Uniform / Ad hoc
<i>Disciplinary Actions</i>	Death penalty	Yes / No Violations warranting death penalty
	Incarceration	Yes / No Violations warranting incarceration
	Reprimands or denial of promotion	Yes / No Violations warranting reprimands
	Punishments for families of violators	Yes / No
	Comparability across locations	Uniform / Ad hoc
	Enforcement mechanism	Commander enforced / Peer enforced / Mixed
<i>Regulation of Personal Life</i>	Restrictions on friendships among fighters	Yes / No
	Restrictions on romantic or sexual relationships among fighters	Yes / No
	Restrictions on maintaining family ties outside the group	Yes / No

More information about variables included is presented below.

3 Universe of Cases and Time Period

The dataset draws its list of sub-Saharan African rebel groups from the UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Termination dataset (Kreutz 2010), which includes groups active in civil wars resulting in at least 1,000 battle-related deaths. As per, the UCDP's criteria, any rebel group responsible for at least 25 battle-related deaths is included. The inclusion criteria align with the Uppsala Conflict Data Program's Armed Conflict Dataset (UCDP-ACD) definition of armed conflict. Specifically, the dataset includes cases meeting the following conditions:

1. The conflict is classified as a civil war with at least 1,000 battle-related deaths over the course of the conflict.
2. The rebel group functions as a distinct entity with identifiable leadership and organizational structures.

The temporal scope of the dataset spans from 1990 to 2012. The RIG dataset also records the years during which each rebel group was active. A rebel group is considered to cease existing when it either disbands or transitions into a political party, formally renouncing violence. By relying on the UCDP's list of rebel groups, the Rebel QSI dataset is compatible with numerous other datasets and can be adjusted to align with other common units of analysis, such as conflict episodes or individual rebel groups.

4 Definition of Variables

This section provides a definition for each variable in the RIG dataset, integrating conceptual clarity, operational distinctions, and real-life examples to illustrate what these institutions, restrictions, or procedures might look like in practice.

4.1 Regulatory Frameworks

4.1.1 Written Codes of Conduct (codeconduct)

This variable measures whether a rebel group has a formal, written document outlining rules, behavioral expectations, and operational procedures for its members. These codes often regulate combat ethics, interpersonal conduct, and even interactions with civilian populations, and may address a wide range of behaviors, from combat ethics and treatment of civilians to daily conduct within the group.

This variable highlights the group's ability to communicate expectations in a systematic and enduring manner. It differs from unwritten norms, which rely on oral transmission and are more susceptible to local interpretation. The focus here is on written codes of conduct that specifically regulate the behavior and actions of rebel fighters within the organization. We are not interested in codes that govern civilians under rebel control, such as rules for civilian behavior, tax collection, or community obligations.

Example: The Afghan Taliban's *Layeha* (code of conduct) is a detailed document that outlines rules for its fighters, such as proper treatment of civilians, prohibition of theft, and guidelines for dividing war booty. Another example is the Moro Islamic Liberation Front's General Order No. 1, which emphasized adherence to humanitarian law.

Coding: This variable is coded "Yes" if evidence of such a document exists (e.g., through rebel propaganda, secondary sources, or historical accounts). It is coded "No" if the rules are conveyed orally or through informal channels.

4.1.2 Codified Amendment Procedures (amendmentprocedures)

This variable assesses whether the rebel group has formal mechanisms to amend its code of conduct. These procedures typically involve voting mechanisms, or the creation of special committees to approve revisions.

Example: Groups like the MILF in the Philippines amended their General Order No. 1 to General Order No. 2 to expand its scope as their conflict evolved. In contrast, groups like the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in Sierra Leone did not codify rules or create mechanisms for adjustments, resulting in a more ad hoc governance approach.

Coding: This variable is coded "Yes" if sources indicate a formal process for revisions and "No" if there is no evidence of such a mechanism.

4.2 Judicial Procedures

4.2.1 Official Complaint Mechanism (peercomplaints)

This variable captures the presence of a formal complaint mechanism that allows both rank-and-file members and commanders to file complaints against either rank-and-file members or commanders. It focuses on internal channels for reporting alleged violations of group rules or codes of conduct, regardless of the complainant's or accused's position in the hierarchy.

The scope is limited to intra-organization complaints; it excludes grievances from civilians against fighters or commanders, as well as civilian disputes brought before rebel authorities. For example, if a commander files a complaint against a fighter for insubordination, or a fighter reports a commander for abuse of authority, it falls within the scope. In contrast, a civilian reporting a fighter for property damage is not relevant.

Example: In some factions of the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) in El Salvador, rank-and-file fighters were encouraged to report violations such as theft or misuse of resources.

Coding: This variable is coded “Yes” if documentation shows that group members have a sanctioned avenue to file complaints, and “No” otherwise.

4.2.2 Investigative Branches (investigativebranch)

This variable identifies whether the group maintains a specialized entity or branch responsible for regulating internal conduct, which may involve investigating rule violations or primarily functioning as a mediation channel to address and resolve disputes within the ranks. Such branches can operate as impartial bodies that gather evidence, interview witnesses, mediate conflicts, and recommend resolutions or disciplinary actions.

This variable differs from **Official Complaint Mechanism**, which measures the initiation of complaints rather than the institutional capacity to investigate or mediate them. The scope is limited to mechanisms addressing issues among members of the group, whether between fighters, between commanders, or across hierarchical levels. It excludes bodies that primarily investigate or mediate civilian disputes, enforce civilian compliance with rebel laws, or address civilian grievances. For example, a branch tasked with mediating tensions between rival commanders or investigating allegations of corruption among officers is relevant, whereas a body resolving land disputes between civilians in rebel-controlled areas is not.

Example: The PKK in Turkey maintained military courts that included investigative functions to address allegations of human rights abuses or corruption within their ranks.

Coding: This variable is coded “Yes” if such branches or their equivalents are documented and “No” if investigations are handled informally or inconsistently.

4.2.3 Tribunal Proceedings (tribunalproceedings)

This variable examines whether the rebel group conducts structured tribunals for adjudicating rule violations. Tribunal proceedings often involve formal hearings, designated judges, and opportunities for the accused to present a defense. Tribunals differ from informal adjudication processes by their reliance on established procedures rather than ad hoc decision-making.

Tribunal proceedings must involve cases where fighters are adjudicated for internal rule violations. The dataset does not seek to capture instances where rebels conduct tribunals for civilians, such as trials for civilians accused of collaborating with enemy forces. For instance, a tribunal that tries a fighter for insubordination or desertion is relevant, but one that adjudicates civilian property disputes or enforces civilian taxation is excluded.

Example: The LTTE operated formal tribunals that were modeled after civilian courts to address serious violations like treason or misuse of funds. In contrast, some PKK units relied on summary judgments issued by mid-level commanders without formal hearings.

Coding: This variable is coded “Yes” if evidence of structured tribunals exists and “No” if decisions are made without formal hearings.

4.2.4 Public Proceedings (publicproceedings)

This variable assesses whether judicial proceedings are conducted in the presence of other fighters or group members. Public trials can serve as a tool for moral education and deterrence by reinforcing norms and demonstrating consequences for rule violations. Unlike **Tribunal Proceedings**, which focuses on the structure of the trial, this variable emphasizes the visibility and audience of the process.

This variable focuses on public judicial proceedings involving fighters. These could include public trials for rule violations like treason or theft by combatants. It excludes public proceedings targeting civilians, such as public punishments for civilian noncompliance with rebel-imposed taxes or loyalty obligations. For example, a trial held in front of other fighters to deter desertion is relevant, while one held to punish a civilian collaborator is not.

Example: In the PKK, public trials were sometimes held to discipline fighters and instill fear among newcomers, as described in accounts of executions witnessed by large groups. Such practices contrasted with private hearings conducted behind closed doors.

Coding: This variable is coded “Yes” if sources describe trials held in front of group members and “No” otherwise.

4.2.5 Judicial Consistency (judicialconsistency)

This variable identifies whether judicial procedures are applied uniformly across all operational areas of the rebel group. Uniformity reflects centralized governance, while ad hoc practices indicate localized decision-making and variability in governance standards.

We aim to capture the consistency of judicial procedures for fighters across different regions where the rebel group operates. This does not include variations in how civilians are governed or disciplined in different locations. For example, if a rebel group applies uniform disciplinary procedures for fighters across its territories, it is within scope, but differences in how civilian taxes are collected in various areas are not.

Coding: This variable is coded “Uniform” if procedures are consistent across locations and “Ad Hoc” if variations are documented.

4.3 Disciplinary Measures

4.3.1 Death Penalty (deathpenalty)

This variable captures whether the rebel group imposes the death penalty for certain rule violations. The use of executions reflects the severity of internal discipline and the group's reliance on deterrence through fear. This variable captures instances where the death penalty is applied to fighters for violations of internal rules, such as desertion or treason. It explicitly excludes cases where civilians are executed for disobedience, or other perceived offenses against rebel governance. For example, the execution of a fighter for spying is relevant, but the execution of a civilian accused of supporting the enemy is not.

Example: The PKK frequently executed fighters accused of treason, often in public settings to deter dissent. Similarly, the Lord's Resistance Army used executions to maintain cohesion among forcibly recruited members.

Coding: This variable is coded "Yes" if executions are documented and "No" otherwise.

4.3.2 Violations Warranting Death Penalty (deathpenaltyviolations)

This variable specifies the types of violations that warrant capital punishment, such as desertion, treason, or insubordination. It provides granular insight into the group's prioritization of specific norms. We are interested in the types of violations by fighters that lead to the death penalty, such as mutiny or betrayal within the group. Violations by civilians, such as failing to pay taxes or aiding government forces, are not within scope. For instance, a death penalty imposed for a fighter's treason is relevant, but one for a civilian's disobedience is excluded.

Coding: This variable is coded based on detailed documentation of offenses.

4.3.3 Incarceration (incarceration)

This variable measures whether imprisonment in rebel camps is used as a punishment. This variable focuses on whether fighters are incarcerated for violations of internal rules. Instances where civilians are detained for failing to comply with rebel governance, such as withholding taxes or disobeying curfews, are not relevant. For example, the imprisonment of a fighter for theft is within scope, but the detention of a civilian for not following curfew rules is not.

Example: The Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA) publicly announced prison sentences for fighters accused of power abuse, signaling their use of formal incarceration mechanisms.

Coding: This variable is coded "Yes" if imprisonment is documented and "No" otherwise.

4.3.4 Violations Warranting Incarceration (incarcerationviolations)

This variable captures the types of offenses that result in imprisonment. Common examples include theft, insubordination, or misconduct. We are only interested in the offenses committed by fighters that result in incarceration, such as misconduct or insubordination. Infractions by civilians, like resistance to civilian governance systems, are excluded. For instance, incarceration for a fighter's misuse of group resources is relevant, while a civilian's imprisonment for harboring enemy troops is not.

Coding: This variable is coded based on detailed documentation of offenses.

4.3.5 Reprimands or Denial of Promotion (reprimandpromotion)

This variable captures whether the group employs non-physical disciplinary measures aimed at addressing misconduct or poor performance, including issuing disciplinary warnings, imposing fines, enforcing formal reprimands, or withholding promotions. These actions target a fighter's reputation, standing, or career trajectory within the organization, rather than restricting their physical liberty.

The scope is limited to sanctions against group members, whether rank-and-file or commanders, for violations of internal rules—such as insubordination, negligence, or breaches of conduct. It excludes actions taken against civilians, such as penalizing a community leader for failing to comply with rebel demands. For example, a commander issuing a disciplinary warning to a fighter for repeated lateness, or denying promotion due to poor performance, is relevant, whereas civilian sanctions are not.

Coding: This variable is coded “Yes” if reprimands are documented and “No” otherwise.

4.3.6 Violations Warranting Reprimands (reprimandviolations)

This variable captures the types of offenses that result in reprimands or denials of promotion. Common examples include theft, insubordination, or misconduct. We are only interested in the offenses committed by fighters that result in reprimands, such as misconduct or insubordination. Infractions by civilians, like resistance to civilian governance systems, are excluded.

Coding: This variable is coded based on detailed documentation of offenses.

4.3.7 Punishments for Families of Violators (familypunishments)

This variable identifies whether the group extends disciplinary actions to the families of rule violators. Such collective punishments aim to deter violations by leveraging familial loyalty. We are interested in cases where a fighter's family is punished for the fighter's rule violations, such as desertion or betrayal. This excludes punishments targeting civilians or their families for failing to comply with rebel governance. For instance, withholding resources from a deserter's family is relevant, but punishing civilians for non-payment of taxes is not.

Coding: This variable is coded "Yes" if punishments being delivered to fighters' families are documented and "No" otherwise.

4.3.8 Disciplinary Consistency (disciplinaryconsistency)

This variable identifies whether disciplinary procedures are applied uniformly across all operational areas of the rebel group. Uniformity reflects centralized governance, while ad hoc practices indicate localized decision-making and variability in governance standards.

We aim to capture the consistency of disciplinary procedures for fighters across different regions where the rebel group operates. This does not include variations in how civilians are governed or disciplined in different locations. For example, if a rebel group applies uniform disciplinary procedures for fighters across its territories, it is within scope, but differences in how civilian taxes are collected in various areas are not.

Coding: This variable is coded "Uniform" if procedures are consistent across locations and "Ad Hoc" if variations are documented.

4.3.9 Enforcement Mechanism (enforcementmechanism)

This variable captures whether disciplinary actions are enforced by commanders, peers, or a mix of both. The focus is on the actors responsible for carrying out disciplinary measures against fighters, rather than enforcement related to civilian governance (e.g., tax collection, curfew enforcement). For example, a commander enforcing punishment for a fighter's disobedience is relevant, whereas actions to compel civilian compliance are not.

Coding: By default, this variable is coded as "Commander-Enforced" unless there is verifiable evidence that peers were ever involved in delivering disciplinary actions. It is coded as "Peer-Enforced" if disciplinary actions are primarily carried out by regular fighters, and as "Mixed" if both commanders and fighters are verifiably involved.

4.4 Regulation of Personal Life

4.4.1 Restrictions on Friendships Among Fighters (friendshiprestrictions)

This variable measures whether the group restricts social relationships among its members, such as close friendships. This variable captures whether restrictions are imposed on friendships within the group to prevent informal alliances that could undermine leadership. It does not include rules on how civilians interact with one another under rebel governance. For instance, prohibiting close friendships between fighters is relevant, while civilian social restrictions are not.

Coding: It is coded “Yes” if evidence of such rules is documented and “No” otherwise.

4.4.2 Restrictions on Romantic or Sexual Relationships (romanticrestrictions)

This variable examines whether the group prohibits or restricts romantic or sexual relationships within its ranks. In addition to explicit rules banning such relationships, it also includes cases where female fighters were physically separated from male fighters in female-only units, as this constitutes a structural measure to prevent such relationships.

We are interested in rules regulating romantic or sexual relationships among fighters. This excludes rules governing civilian relationships, such as prohibitions on civilian marriages to government-affiliated individuals. For example, a ban on fighters engaging in romantic relationships within the group is relevant, but marriage restrictions for civilians are not.

Coding: It is coded “Yes” if evidence of such rules is documented and “No” otherwise.

4.4.3 Restrictions on Maintaining Family Ties (familytierrestrictions)

This variable captures whether fighters are restricted from maintaining contact with their families. This variable focuses on whether fighters are restricted from maintaining contact with their families outside the group. It does not include cases where civilians are prohibited from interacting with individuals outside rebel-controlled areas. For instance, a rule preventing fighters from visiting their families is relevant, but civilian restrictions on outside travel are not.

Coding: It is coded “Yes” if evidence of such rules is documented and “No” otherwise.