A licence to kill?

Ideology and civilian victimisation in Northern Ireland

Abstract. Ideology matters. The return of this insight to the study of civil war has sparked a new line of literature. Drawing on its insights, I argue that ideology can affect civilian victimisation in two ways. The first is the adoption by armed groups of exclusionary frames that justify the killing of civilians; the second is the need of armed groups for civilian approval – what I call ideological licence – from their home constituencies. Civilian victimisation is expected to peak in places where exclusionary group frames and civilian attitudes are dominant. For the empirical analysis, I turn to The Troubles, the thirty year-long armed conflict between Northern Ireland’s Catholic and Protestant communities. I construct a novel dataset using ideological attitudes, based on a pre-conflict survey among over 1200 respondents across Northern Ireland, and new, detailed casualty data on more than 2700 conflict-related fatalities. Although Catholics were the most lethal side in the conflict, I find that the Protestant community is significantly more likely to kill civilians. This finding is driven by national differences between Catholics and Protestants. Subnational differences in civilian attitudes are found to be less relevant.
I sacrificed nothing because I was nothing. I had no skills, no ambition. It wasn’t until I met Dorbeck that I felt I wanted something, if only to be like Dorbeck, if only to want the same things as he did.

— W.F. Hermans, *The Darkroom of Damocles*

War makes it difficult to make a clear distinction between the tragic and the grotesque, and between the heroic and the pathetic.

— Ismail Kadare, *The General of the Dead Army*
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Acknowledgements

Much like a Swedish winter, the writing of a thesis is a barren season, seemingly endless until the light breaks through. Similar, too, are the cures: practical wisdom and good company. All of this is, of course, an elaborate way of saying that this project would not have come to fruition without the help of many.

First and foremost, I am grateful to Professor Kristine Eck, my advisor, who was always there to critically assess my latest idea, guide me through a methodological maze, or suggest an alternative explanation I had overlooked. From the exploratory stage of this project to its final touches, I have been incredibly fortunate to benefit from her insights and inspiration.

At Uppsala’s Department of Peace and Conflict Research, there are many more to thank. This thesis would not have been completed if it were not for the many helpful comments – and much-needed distraction – provided by the Class of 2018. The feedback from the discussants at the midterm thesis seminars proved particularly beneficial in sharpening my mind. In the last few weeks, extensive feedback from Alessandro Fava, Jasper Ginn, Erik Post, and Menno Schellekens helped shape this thesis in its final form. I owe a special thanks to them.

Further afield, I am indebted to Dr. Christopher Sullivan and the Northern Ireland Research Initiative (NIRI). NIRI’s cutting-edge microdata on the armed conflict in Northern Ireland allowed me to delve into the research topic in much more detail than I could have hoped for. The Swedish National Data helped me gain access to survey data from the data archives of the University of Michigan’s ICSPR. Funding for my time in Uppsala came from the VSBfonds, which generously supported my stay with a scholarship.

At home and abroad, I received encouragement, joy, and inspiration from many close friends. As I look back and ahead, I am deeply grateful. To Claire, my stunning mystery companion, for making me believe in long-distance love. To Jan and Roos, my father and sister, for their boundless love and support. And to my mother, whose light always shines through.
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1. Introduction

When rebels speak, should we listen? The scholarship on armed conflict has long offered that there is little to be learned from investigating ideologies. By and large, studies have centred instead on economically rational, material and military-strategic incentives. In this narrative, ideology’s importance has been either cast as hollow rhetoric or downplayed as something that is epiphenomenal to other group characteristics or situational factors.

Yet there is reason to believe that ideology does matter. For those who fight, ideology can provide a motivation and a blueprint for action. Recent studies have used this insight to shed light on variation across armed groups in the choices they make in recruiting combatants, selecting targets, treating civilians, and governing territories and populations (Eck 2010; Drake 1998; Gutiérrez Sanín 2008a; Kalyvas 2015). However, the literature remains divided on the mechanisms that connect ideas to action. While the civil war scholarship has embraced studies of subnational variation, the common methodological choice for single-N studies in studies of ideology makes it difficult to extrapolate their findings.¹ To say that ideology matters is only a first step. Unpacking when it does and does not affect behaviour is the next.

This thesis zooms in on one particular puzzle. During conflicts, some groups regularly kill civilians of the other side as part of their strategy while others do not. Restraint and excess may be costly and inexplicable in purely material terms, but ideological differences may help account for them. How, then, could ideological attitudes influence civilian victimisation in civil war?

To answer that question, I bring together insights from the literature on civil war, mass killing, terrorism, and nonviolence. Ideology shapes the preferences and beliefs of armed groups and their members, as well as the rules and norms under which they operate. Different ideologies prescribe different targeting tactics. In addition, groups will need to take into account the attitudes of their support base – through a process I call ideological licensing – in order to receive its backing. Violence against civilians, under these circumstances, is motivated by group norms and mediated by the ideological attitudes of supporters. Civilian victimisation will partly be a function of the ideological preferences of armed groups and their home populations.

¹ The field of genocide studies is an exception. Leader Maynard (2014) documents a number of comparative case studies.
The empirical part of the thesis centres on the armed conflict in Northern Ireland known as The Troubles (1968-1998). For thirty years, divisions between Northern Ireland’s Catholic and Protestant communities over the status and future of their land produced a continuous stream of intercommunal violence. A reading of historical studies, surveys and political manifestos suggests that the ideologies that prevailed in both communities vastly differed in their content and inclusionary character.

To test the hypothesis, the study draws on two rich sources of data. I make use of a new dataset that covers all conflict-related fatalities in detail (Sullivan, Loyle, and Davenport 2018), allowing me to establish casualty numbers by locality as well as the civilian victimisation rate. To identify the causal role of ideologies, I rely on a survey that collected data on civilian attitudes from over 1200 respondents mere months before the conflict’s violent escalation. For both communities, I compare local attitudes with civilian victimisation rates during the Troubles in a stratified sample of 26 historical electoral districts. The aim is to see whether Protestant or Catholic constituencies whose members are more supportive of exclusionary ideologies beget armed groups that are more likely to kill rival civilians.

A regression analysis finds support for the role of ideologies at the national, but not at the subnational level. The Catholic community – whose principal ideologies were inclusive towards all civilians, not only group members – produced armed groups that killed proportionally fewer civilians. By contrast, Protestants generally followed ideologies that prioritised exclusive group membership and produced armed groups that were much more likely to kill civilians. Across the local constituencies, no such pattern exists: local constituencies that favour exclusionary attitudes are not associated with more violence against civilians.

This thesis contributes to the literature in three ways. Theoretically, this is far from the first analysis of ideology, but it does offer a novel way to understand its effects. Ideological norms, upheld by armed groups themselves and imposed by their own communities, can help explain counter-intuitive patterns in conflicts, like excess and restraint towards civilians. Empirically, I make use of a research design that is not commonly used in studies of violence and ideology: a quantitative approach to in-case variation, that captures variation between as well as within constituencies. Methodologically, the subnational analysis points to the difficulties of credibly identifying regional variation. It is hard to analytically delimit violence to artificial geographic units, a problem that is especially poignant in Northern Ireland but extends to other cases as well.
Following this introduction, Chapter Two investigates the disappearance and comeback of ideology to the spotlight and its particular relevance in armed conflict. It presents the case for why group frames and ideological licensing by their constituencies can combine to permit or constrain civilian victimisation. Chapter Three introduces the historical background of the Troubles and traces the ideological differences of Northern Ireland’s main communities: republicanism and nationalism among Catholics, and loyalism and unionism among Protestants. Chapter Four details the research design for the national and subnational analysis, including the chosen variables, data, possible and confounders. Chapter Five presents and discusses the results of the quantitative analysis, and extends the findings and limitations beyond Northern Ireland. Chapter Six concludes and suggests implications and avenues for further research.
2. Ideology, the missing dimension

“I was a student at Oxford in 1968. I remember joining something called the Revolutionary Socialist Students, a name now beyond parody. But it all seemed simple then.”

Paul Collier

Ideology provides a powerful lens through which the world can be understood – ‘made simple’, one might say – and through which situations can be judged and action can be chosen. This chapter addresses the need for a theory of ideology in civil war, before supplying one that can account for the killing of rival civilians by armed groups. Civilian victimisation, in this explanation, becomes more likely when fighting individuals and groups, as well as their support base, become more exclusionary in nature. Group attitudes directly account for behaviour; the attitudes of supporters matter to groups because their ‘ideological licence’ is a necessary condition for much-needed civilian support. The chapter closes by introducing and situating the hypothesis.

Why ideology matters

Some insurgents proclaim a Marxist revolution or the establishment of an Islamist caliphate, others advocate internationalism or nationalism as their guiding principles. Indeed, “no significant rebellion has been mute” (Gutiérrez-Sanín and Wood 2014, 213). The contemporary conflict scholarship, however, has dedicated most of its efforts to economically rational, material, and strategic drivers of conflict and violence. This disinterest in ideology has both theoretical and methodological foundations. Theoretically, the resurgence of interest in civil strife among political scientists and economists since the 1990s was accompanied by a broader turn to rationalist explanations in those respective fields. The collapse of Communism and the postulation of “mankind’s ideological endpoint” (Fukuyama 1992) strongly influenced how armed conflict was newly understood (Ugarriza 2009; Keen 2012). Wars, both new and old, were de-ideologised and reinterpreted (Kaldor 1999); violence went “from being acceptable during the Cold War, and often justified in national

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3 For comprehensive meta-discussions of the scholarship on ideology in civil war, see Gutiérrez-Sanín 2008a, Ugarriza 2009, Ugarriza and Craig 2013, Keen 2012, Gutiérrez-Sanín and Wood 2014, and Ahmadov and Hughes 2017.
liberation terms, to becoming universally unacceptable today” (Duffield 2008, 157). Instead, emphasis shifted towards self-regarding motives and strategic and material incentives. If ideology received little consideration in the theoretical frameworks, it was even harder to incorporate it in quantitative models that became the norm.

This exclusion of ideology puts limits on the scholarship. In contrast to war as ‘the continuation of politics by other means’ (Von Clausewitz 1842), the removal of ideology and ideational factors creates “a political economy of conflict without politics” (Gutiérrez Sanín 2008b, 4; see also Gutiérrez-Sanín 2008a) Theories of civil war onset, for instance, have largely relied on three types of explanations (Ugarriza 2009). The first of these is the traditional security dilemma, under which parties strategically choose war out of fear or threat (Posen 1993; Walter 2002, 200). This logic has been joined by the rival explanations of greed – the pursuit of power and control over economic resources, legal or illicit – and grievances – in the form of vertical or horizontal inequalities, deprivation, and repression (Collier and Hoeffler 2004; Fearon and Laitin 2003; Stewart 2004). Although these explanations leave significant questions unanswered – for instance, what frames threat perceptions, why do supposedly greedy combatants regularly exhibit restraint, and how do grievances become potent? – the residual variation has usually been relegated to contextual factors such as geography, state size and form of government (Fearon and Laitin 2003; Collier and Hoeffler 2004). Likewise, in the study of conflict dynamics, the rationalist turn has led to an emphasis on the local and strategic nature of violence at the cost of larger, ideology-driven cleavages (Mueller 2000; Kalyvas 2006).

The result is a discipline that is sceptical of ideology’s influence. Where ideology has been invoked by participants, it is presented as hollow rhetoric, or worse, as a pretext or post-fact justification for violence (Kaldor 1999; Collier and Hoeffler 2004). Often, the denial does not concern the existence of ideologies, but their impact: ideology, in this frame, is something “heard in the capitals” and among scholars that obscures rather than illuminates the real dynamics of the conflict (Kalyvas 2006).

Two puzzling facts suggest that ideology does have a role to play. First, ideology is a costly affair. Armed groups often spend considerable effort, time and resources in building,
disseminating and maintaining their ideological platform. Political education, propaganda, wartime institutions and internal discipline based on ideational norms do not come for free. In Nepal, the Maoist CPN-M spent a year educating the civilian population on the existence, goals and methods of the movement prior to the onset of armed strife (Eck 2010). In the Algerian civil war, a commonly cited example of rational rebel behaviour (Kalyvas 1999), factions frequently engaged in ideological infighting, which delivered neither profits nor military gains and only served to weaken the rebels’ cohesion and capacity (Hafez 2017). Moreover, many of the rules that armed groups impose on their members and on their civilian populations do not contribute to the fighting or governing ability of the group at all. Opposition to gender egalitarianism leads many rebel groups, especially those with religious ideological foundations, to ban women from their recruitment pool (Eager 2008; Sanín and Carranza Franco 2017; Wood and Thomas 2017). During Colombia’s civil war, rebels demanded certain haircuts and clothing styles from the members they recruited and the civilians they governed (Amnesty International 2004; Arjona 2016). In eastern Afghanistan, the Taliban’s enforcement of jihad has meant the punishment and near-killing of civilians for using tobacco and not having a beard (Junger 2010, 146). Similar rules, strictly enforced, have been reported from the Islamic State insurgency (Callimachi 2018a). Such measures are unlikely to bring gains to the faction that imposes them and they carry a price tag. A Taliban member who is employed to punish beardless civilians could have spent his time as a combatant instead.

Secondly, vast differences between armed groups are still in need of an explanation. A key finding of the civil war scholarship is that different non-state armed groups participating in a single conflict vary significantly in their internal organisation, their treatment of civilians and their use of violence. During the Greek civil war, for example, conservative and communist insurgents built very different governance structures to control their territories and govern their populations, even as both sought to conquer the whole country (Kalyvas 2015). In Sri Lanka, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) practised self-abstinence and condemned sexual violence among members and toward civilians. It did so without showing similar restraint in the use of other brutal forms of violence and in the face of an opponent who did not abstain from sexual violence (Wood 2009, 147). Why do groups in the space of a single conflict, all responding to largely similar contextual and material circumstances, behave so differently? Why do some engage in the killing or rape of
civilians while others do not? Why have groups operating in the same area built completely different modes of governance while fighting for the same territory?²⁷

Attempts to account for such variation tend to overlook the possibility that the proximate causes they highlight may in turn have ideological roots (Gutiérrez-Sanín and Wood 2014, 216; Ahmadov and Hughes 2017). For instance, several authors have explored the logic of collective targeting – in which violence is aimed at groups rather than individuals – in careful detail (Fjelde and Hultman 2014; Balcells 2017). While these studies have drawn attention to the identity of the victim population, the identity and ideology of the perpetrating faction remains a black box (Ahmadov and Hughes 2017). A recent study of political education and indoctrination (Oppenheim and Weintraub 2015) argues that the importance of this particular form of rebel training, as opposed to mere military training, has been overlooked. The authors emphasise how a shared doctrine can help a group overcome principal-agent problems and information asymmetries (Oppenheim and Weintraub 2015, 11–12), yet they frame this as a strategic and tactical choice, not an ideological one. Finally, Inside Rebellion, Weinstein’s (2006) hallmark study of insurgent organisation, argues that ideology influences armed group behaviour, but sees its emergence as no more than a product of a group’s resource endowments. To say that groups will only turn ideological when there is no likelihood of greed-based recruiting, as Weinstein does, leaves out the option that an ideological programme can simply be the preferred option of local commanders and populations. To explore whether there is such an autonomous effect at work, in the formation of groups and their subsequent behaviour, a theory that incorporates ideology is necessary.

A theory of ideology in armed conflict does not discard rationalist concerns. It states, however, that the behaviour of actors in a conflict cannot be reduced to such motivations alone. Ideology permits some types of behaviour and restricts others based on the norms and rules it prescribes. As a result, ideology can produce actions that are not necessarily the most efficient in strategic or economic terms. A newer strand of scholarship has paid closer attention to the ideological beliefs of armed groups in a similar vein. Their research (see Table 2.1) sheds light on the choices that armed groups make in their organisation, recruitment, members’ motivation and loyalty, patterns of violence, targeting choices, territorial control, governance structures, and in their relations to civilians, governments, political movements and other armed groups (Gutiérrez Sanín 2008b; Eck 2010; Ugarriza and Craig 2013; Costalli and

²⁷ This is not to say that groups in the same armed conflict are only set apart by their ideologies. However, even some contextual conditions – such as resource access and initial civilian support– are themselves affected by ideological choices.

What does it mean, then, to say that ideology matters? The observable implication is that groups in similar settings will operate differently, at least in part, because of differences in their ideological leanings (Gutiérrez Sanín 2008a). It also implies that groups can shift their own behaviour based on shifts in their ideological commitment or belief system (Thaler 2012).

Table 2.1 Selected studies of ideology and armed group behaviour

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Ideology</th>
<th>Effect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Drake (1998)</td>
<td>Various</td>
<td>Target selection of terrorist attacks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dulić and Hall (2014)</td>
<td>Totalitarianism, nationalism</td>
<td>Violence against civilians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eck (2010)</td>
<td>Marxism</td>
<td>Raising support and recruitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goodwin (2007)</td>
<td>Nonracial internationalism</td>
<td>Restraint against rival civilians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gutiérrez-Sánin (2008)</td>
<td>Marxism, conservativism</td>
<td>Armed group organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalyvas (2015)</td>
<td>Marxism, Conservativism</td>
<td>Extent and content of governance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kendall (2016)</td>
<td>Jihadism</td>
<td>Civilian support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staniland (2015)</td>
<td>Various</td>
<td>Relationship to government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toft and Zhukov (2015)</td>
<td>Nationalism, Islamism</td>
<td>Source of recruits and resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ugarriza and Craig (2013)</td>
<td>Socialism, Bolivarianism</td>
<td>Motivations for joining and staying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wood and Thomas (2017)</td>
<td>Marxism, feminism</td>
<td>Participation of female combatants</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summing up, ideology does not have to be the root cause of a war to affect its course. The focus is on the dynamics, not on the causes, much in the same vein as recent work by Balcells and Kalyvas, who note that “how civil wars are fought ought to be as consequential as to why they are fought” (Balcells and Kalyvas 2014, 1391, emphasis mine). This how is the subject of the next section.

How ideology works

We have seen that ideology matters, but how does it work? Following Ugarriza and Craig, ideology is here defined as “a set of political beliefs that promotes a particular way of understanding the world and shapes relations between members of a group and outsiders,
and among members themselves” as well as “a corpus of thought that incorporates and arranges a series of more specific elements usually present in armed conflict, such as doctrines, narratives, symbols, and myths” (Ugarriza and Craig 2013, 450). This definition answers Gerring’s (1997) call for definitions of ideology that are tailored to their specific context. Specifically, it emphasises (1) the potential of ideology to direct or influence action in the face of concrete, real-world dilemmas (as opposed to abstract political philosophies), (2) the individual as the carrier of ideology (rather than a collective), and (3) the need for ideology to be constructed and transmitted in order to be effective. Gutiérrez-Sanín and Wood make the useful point that ideologies “also prescribe (...) distinct institutions and strategies as the means to attain group goals” (Gutiérrez-Sanín and Wood 2014, 215). Content, scope and objectives can vary widely, ranging from overarching agendas of social revolution to ethnonationalist self-determination to preservation of the status quo (Drake 1996).

Civil war 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, 16). This definition is agnostic of assumptions about violence (for instance, those that use a threshold of 1,000 battle deaths) and group identities. For a theory of ideology in civil war, it thus provides a clean slate.

Against the backdrop of civil war, ideology guides the actions of armed groups by shaping the preferences and beliefs of their members and those of their supporters and sponsors, and setting the rules and norms of their behaviour. Ideologies provide an explanation for events, describe the world as it is, and generally outline something of a blueprint for future action. Using an apt metaphor, an analysis of Peru’s Sendero Luminoso rebels notes that "the world-view of Sendero’s leadership acted as a filter through which it processed information and devised policy" (Ron 2001, 586). As we will see, an important element of this filter entails the group’s judgment on what locations or individuals constitute ‘legitimate’ targets for violence, and which steps are strategically and morally in line with the ideological objective.

*  

Ideology does not act by itself: it is dependent on those who uphold it as a belief or rule to follow. Ideology is upheld at three levels: through the belief of the individual, through the socialisation of the group, and through accountability to the support base. By definition, ideologically-driven groups do not operate in an environment that matches their ideal order
(if not, they would presumably not take up arms). Their programme is adapted to the values of members, group characteristics, and civilian preferences (Gutiérrez-Sanín and Wood 2014).

Individual commitment to an ideology constitutes the most proximate role of ideology. A set of ideological principles makes it possible for an armed-group member, as for any decision-maker, to understand the world in a coherent way and decide on a course of action (Blyth 1997). Ideologies can supply their adherents with a helpful toolbox: a group identity, an explanation for the current state of affairs and a roadmap for the way forward. Among new recruits, ideology can act as the glue that allows discontented civilians to translate their private grievances into public grievances and help them mobilise (Costalli and Ruggeri 2015). Once on board, ideology continues to influence everyday behaviour. Armed conflict continuously confronts combatants with high-stake choices. In these cases, ideology provides a script. The uncertainty of war makes the availability of such a script particularly attractive. Adding to ideology’s appeal is its motivational and justifying role in meeting the extreme demands that combat puts on those who engage in it. Even trained combatants regularly describe the barriers to killing as very high; in battle, conscripts often aim not to killing (Jones 2006; Dwyer 2009; Hoover Green 2016). Ideology can legitimise violence and break down these barriers. On the other hand, an ideological script can also do impose such barriers to motivate restraint toward civilians of uncertain loyalties (Thaler 2012; Oppenheim and Weintraub 2015).

Note that ideology does not defy individual agency. Commanders in Argentina’s Dirty War who did not share the government-imposed ideology frequently deviated from official orders by choosing not to engage in violent repression (Scharpf 2018). A survey of former combatants in Colombia also suggests that guerrilla fighters are more likely to leave their group when they feel that it has strayed from its ideological principles (Ugarriza and Craig 2013).

Socialisation and social control is what upholds ideology at the group level. Groups can, to some extent, direct the content of their ideology and the commitment of their members. During the recruitment process, groups can limit their selection pool to include only those individuals whose beliefs align with the group’s. This can have far-reaching consequences for determining who ends up on the battlefield. For instance, Toft and Zhukov (2015) find that nationalist and Islamist ideologies respectively constrain and widen the

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8 One Islamic State executioner tasked with killing members of another sect recalled overcoming these barriers by reminding himself of the group’s ideological justification, telling himself that “You are doing this for a reason” (Callimachi 2018b).
recruitment pool and support base of rebel groups in the Caucasus. Because nationalist groups recruit from the local population, they are vulnerable to the population’s appeasement by the government. Meanwhile, Salafi-Jihadism gives Islamists access to recruits and resources elsewhere and leaves them largely insulated from the same local pressures.

However, ideological formation does not only occur at the gate. Within armed groups, socialisation through political education can (further) forge the adherence of members to ideological principles. Political education campaigns channel ideological beliefs into templates for action. This sort of training should not be confused with military combat training; one concerns the purpose and management of coercive force, the other the production and application of it (Oppenheim and Weintraub 2015, 5). Together, these two can be seen as the dual solution to what Hoover Green dubs the commander’s dilemma: the need of any armed group’s leadership to have combatants who will kill without hesitation, yet who can also exhibit restraint when necessary (Hoover Green 2016). Whereas military education predominantly teaches killing, political education can teach restraint (though it can also do the opposite). Ideology also makes it easier for groups to shape behaviour than regular discipline – through rules, rewards and retaliation – since a large part of combatant behaviour cannot be monitored in the fog of war (Oppenheim and Weintraub 2015). An ideology is no prerequisite for political education, but a strong ideological foundation makes groups more likely to develop it (Hoover-Green 2016, 625). Likewise, combatants do not have to be natural believers in order to be affected by ideological training. Similar effects have been found for combatants that are initially unsupportive (Ugarriza and Craig 2013) and even for coerced recruits (Eck 2010).

Accountability to the support base provides ideology with additional force. Armed groups do not produce violence by themselves. Instead, “the locus of agency in civil war is simultaneously located at different levels of aggregation: the center, the region, the village, and so on” (Kalyvas 2006, 365). The deep involvement of the local environment has important implications. In its most logical sense, it means that a nationalist insurgency is more likely to erupt from a nationalist population, just as an Islamic revolt is more likely to spring from a population of fundamentalists. As a result, combatant behaviour in one area will likely reflect civilian attitudes to some extent: after all, the possession of a gun can be all that separates today’s civilian from tomorrow’s combatant. These effects still hold when the leadership of an armed group is not normatively committed to its agenda. “Even when the founder chooses instrumentally a certain [ideological] constituency,” As Gutiérrez-Sanín and Wood (2014, 222) argue, “his choice of ideology is constrained to those that resonate with
at least some, and ideally many, prospective supporters and with local social structures”. Almost every armed group relies on local populations, or a part thereof, to operate. Through informers and collaborators, armed groups acquire the information they need to assassinate opponents. With arms, meals, and shelter, civilians provide crucial resources (Wood 2003). One of the most fundamental forms of cooperation does not even require action on the side of civilians: it is the act of staying silent and refusing to provide the opponent with information on the armed group’s members and actions. Local permissiveness is necessary if an armed group wants to operate effectively.

When an armed group is not dependent on a civilian constituency for its operations, it will often face accountability to an external sponsor instead. State-allied militias, for instance, are somewhat immune to popular opposition as long as they receive backing from the state. However, the state’s choice whether or not to support a militia, and how it chooses to do so, is influenced by its ideological preference. Governments will prefer to work with groups whose ideologies align. When such alignment is absent, states will be much less supportive, even if the group’s activities are strategically useful to the state and do not actively fight it (Staniland 2015).

* Why groups adopt an ideology does not matter for a theory of its effects. A group can choose an ideology for instrumental or normative reasons – or both. Normative commitments can cause a group and its members to reject or endorse certain forms of violence or targets because they fit with the group’s identity and its morally preferred means and ends. It is possible that a group espouses an ideology for solely instrumental reasons, too. Ideology can increase compliance and loyalty, and improve a group’s ability to plan, fight and govern (Gutiérrez-Sanín and Wood 2014, 218). According to Walter, strong ideological platforms also make it easier to obtain concessions from the opponent (Walter 2017). Even if groups have instrumental reasons for adopting an ideology, that does not rob ideology of its autonomous impact.

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9 The exception to the rule are groups that completely rely on state or external backing for their operations.
10 Armed groups that fully rely on the exploitation or trade in non-human resources for their operations and need no civilian support might be the only groups that are immune to accountability mechanisms.
11 Walters acknowledges that rebel leaders, in part, “choose an ideology based in part on the cleavage structure of society” and “rebel entrepreneurs require at least some true believers for an extreme ideology to be an effective strategy in war.” (Walters 2017, 10-11). Even in cases were ideologies are adopted instrumentally, I argue, it is the ideological content that matters.
First, each ideology has a different impact. A common criticism of ideological explanations notes that most recruits are “molded” and socialised into their group’s ideology instead of born with it (Kalyvas 2006, 45). But this is beside the point. Regardless of why combatants buy into it, every ideology comes with its own distinct platform and real-world prescriptions. What matters, then, is the ideological content. To see why, compare ideological socialisation with military training. Like political beliefs, combat skills are mostly instilled in recruits rather than innate. Yet, the range of tactics and skills available to a combatant is not only a product of the severity of training, but also of the aim and content of the training. In a similar vein, Marxist and Islamist ideologies will produce very different modes of actions.

Second, group ideologies are susceptible to path dependence and institutional stickiness. Over time, this means that adopted norms, rules and habits are likely to become embedded in the behaviour of groups and individuals, even when the original – and possibly instrumental – reason for adoption fades (Gutiérrez-Sanín and Wood 2014; also Pierson 2011; Boettke, Coyne, and Leeson 2008 for a more general argument). For instance, the need for local civilian support and cooperation can lead an armed group’s command to impose heavy norms of restraint on combatants. Such a norm may embed itself and persist, even when a windfall of natural resources or foreign funding makes it less necessary over time to stay on friendly terms with the local population.

**Ideology and civilian victimisation**

Civilians are central to civil war. They suffer from its violence, but they also play a role in producing it. If ideological preferences are powerful, civilian victimisation should show it.

Brutality against civilians is a common feature of civil wars. Civilians are, by definition, non-combatants, although they might serve as part-timers or collaborators (Kalyvas 2006: 19). Their victimisation is not a recent phenomenon (Thucydides 1972; Eckhardt 1989; Kalyvas 2001): in fact, civilians constitute half of all war deaths over the past three centuries (Downes 2006, 152). Civilians also frequently suffer from other forms and "patterns" of civilian abuse (Gutierrez-Sanín and Wood 2017), such as wartime rape (Wood 2009; Cohen 2013) and acts of “extra-lethal violence”, ranging from acts of mutilation to forcing victims to witness the murder or abuse of a relative (Fujii 2013).

The frequency of these various forms of victimisation varies significantly between and within conflicts (Wood 2009). When we limit ourselves to the killing of civilians alone – as this thesis does – we still observe widespread variation. What is more, though some deaths
are accidental, civilians are often targeted deliberately (Downes 2006; Lyall 2009; Zhukov 2014). To account for the occurrence and varying levels of civilian victimisation, previous studies have supplied theories that highlight strategic and military incentives (Downes 2006; Lyall 2009; Wood, Kathman, and Gent 2012; Zhukov 2014). Even among studies that distinguish between rival populations, the focus tends to be on strategic incentives for targeting (Fjelde and Hultman 2014; Balcells 2017; Steele 2017). The red thread running through these different studies is the commonality and deliberate nature of violence against civilians.

At the same time, civilians are also deeply involved in the production of violence. With some exceptions (Wood 2003), civilian interactions with armed groups have frequently been presented simply as a product of their circumstances. From Kalyvas and Kocher (2007) – who argue that indiscriminate counterinsurgent attacks drive civilians into the arms of their opponents – to Lyall (2009) and Zhukov (2014) – who independently argue that such attacks can coerce civilians into supporting them –, the consensus holds that civilian attitudes are little more than a judgment of whatever side is least likely to kill them.

Yet examples of civilian autonomy abound. In Colombia’s civil war, for instance, well-organised civilians had the power to shape rebel governance and diminish the presence and influence of the insurgency (Kaplan 2010; Arjona 2016). In Nazi-occupied Greece, Kalyvas writes, “ideological collaboration was minimal” because the beliefs of Greek civilians and Nazi forces did not align. Tellingly, faced with territorial losses, the Nazis eventually overcame their objections and began rewarding collaboration with significant material rewards (Kalyvas 2008a, 1057). What unites these incentives is the importance they award to civilian cooperation – or at least, civilian permission – for making armed group behaviour possible. When civilians refuse to cooperate, as in the cases of Colombia and Greece, their lack of support can become a serious obstacle to the rebellion.

Ideology is one of the drivers of civilian choice. Civilian support for armed movements can occur for strategic reasons or even be gained through coercion, but it can also reflect a shared set of goals and values (Wood 2003; Costalli and Ruggeri 2015). The ideological worldview of a community, along with strategic and material incentives, influences the choices it makes, from choosing sides to providing active support to a faction. Armed groups therefore face an incentive to match their behaviour to the ideological attitudes of their home constituency – or at the very least, to limit their behaviour to what is accepted. This introduces a particular form of civilian permission toward armed group behaviour: ideological licensing. *Ideological licence* entails that armed groups cannot consider
just the beliefs of their commanders and combatants: instead, they “must feel licensed to do it” by their environment (Blanken, Van de Ven, and Zeelenberg 2015). With reference to Northern Ireland, De la Calle and Sánchez-Cuenca argue that armed groups simply “do not kill as much as they could when potential supporters impose limits on the types of attacks that are acceptable or legitimate” (De la Calle and Sánchez-Cuenca 2006, 13). If an armed group strives to maintain the support of its constituency’s members, it will thus need to consider whether they approve or disapprove of the way the group treats civilians, including those that do not belong to the home population.

Ideology is not simply a product of geography. Past studies of civil war have often focused on territorial control as the main aim of war (Downes 2006; Kalyvas 2006; Wood, Kathman, and Gent 2012). Looking through the lens of territorial gains and losses, these studies implicitly assume that all individuals in a single territory share the same mindset. Upon closer inspection, the generic label of ‘civilian population’ nearly always breaks down into different, distinct, and often rival constituencies living on the same soil (Steele 2017; Ahmadov and Hughes 2017). Geographic neighbours can be ideological rivals – and vice versa.

Armed groups are aware of the existence of this ideological diversity. They often do not attempt to appeal to the entire population of an area, but only to one subset of it – the group’s home constituency. This home constituency is the support base whose ideological licence the group seeks – and needs – in its operations. Whether such licence is given for the group’s targeting choices and armed activity will depend on the population’s ideological principles and attitudes. In place where a group does not rely on civilian support but on an external sponsor, like a state or foreign party, it will instead depend on the ideological licence of that support base for the continuation of support.

To a lesser extent, variation can occur within one ideological population as well. Civilian constituencies, even those that share an ideology, are not unitary. Likewise, armed groups that adopt a single ideology can nevertheless exhibit different targeting patterns across different regions. For instance, urban Marxists might have views on the legitimacy of violence 12

12 Ideological licensing should not be confused with moral licensing, which posits that people use their morally correct behaviour at one stage as a ‘licence’ to justify immoral behaviour at another stage. In this case, the licence for controversial behaviour – i.e. civilian victimisation – comes in the form of civilian approval.

13 Consider the following statement by a former CIA agent: “We write these strategic white papers, saying things like ‘Get the local Sunni population on our side,’ ” Skinner said. “Cool. Got it. But, then, if I say, ‘Get the people who live at Thirty-eighth and Bulloch on our side,’ you realize, man, that’s fucking hard—and it’s just a city block. It sounds so stupid when you apply the rhetoric over here. Who’s the leader of the white community in Live Oak neighborhood? Or the poor community?” Skinner shook his head. “ ‘Leader of the Iraqi community.’ What the fuck does that mean?” Ben Taub, “The Spy Who Came Home”, The New Yorker, May 7, 2018.
in certain cases that differ significantly from rural Marxists. This thesis argues that this is partly explained by variation in local attitudes. A faction may operate in places where the local community of the ideological constituency it claims to represent, endorses its use of excessive violence, while encountering more stubborn communities of the same constituency elsewhere. Hence, groups will have to refine their message and behaviour at the subnational level to adequately respond to local preferences (Kendall 2015).

The need for ideological licence, together with the self-imposed norms that groups and members adhere to, can thus help explain patterns of civilian targeting. What ideologies, then, will predispose groups towards civilian victimisation? Within the field of civil war studies, surprisingly little has been written on the subject. Instead, most studies of civilian attitudes to violence limit their focus to violence that puts the responding civilians themselves at risk (Pape 1996; Arreguin-Toft 2001; Kalyvas and Kocher 2007; Lyall 2009; Kocher, Pepinsky, and Kalyvas 2011; Zhukov 2014). For civilian responses to excessive violence against the rival constituency, where they face no threat themselves, there is only an anecdotal case to be made. Instances include the Bulgarian response to Jewish persecution in the Second World War (Reicher et al. 2006), American opposition to the Vietnam war (Lewis 2013), and Shi'a Iraqis protecting Sunni neighbours from reprisal attacks following the (Sunni-driven) Islamic State insurgency (Finer 2005).

In the absence of a more theoretical study, the insights of other disciplines provide useful clues. Scholars of genocide, nonviolence and terrorism have provided more substantial theories for ideology’s role in motivating and justifying the killing of civilians (Valentino 2013; Kim 2016; Straus 2012; Drake 1998; Goodwin 2007; Sánchez-Cuenca and De la Calle 2009). These fields highlight the importance of two related concepts: threat perception and target legitimacy. Threat perception entails the perceived danger that an opponent poses to one’s ideological community. The formulation and construction of a threat perception serves three purposes, according to Leader Maynard: it establishes a motivation, it frames the victims as ‘guilty’ parties, and reframes the perpetrator’s behaviour as an act of self-defence (Leader Maynard 2014, 831). Regardless of whether there is any truth to these perceptions, “[p]erceived threats have real consequences” (Stephan 2009, 6). The threat perception informs the definition and range of legitimate targets, that is, the people and locations against whom violence is believed to be ideologically justified (Drake 1998). In other cases, groups
derive the legitimacy from the supposed ‘complicity’ of their targets, or their ability to influence the opponent’s behaviour (Drake 1998, 55; Goodwin 2007, 201).

A reading of the literature thus suggests the importance of one particular ideological factor: the scope of inclusion. Although there are many ways to disentangle armed groups and their ideological principles, objectives and actions, the question of inclusion raises one of the most visible differences between various ideologies. Who gets to be a part of the ideological community and its proposed future order? Are outsiders seen as threats, as neutral agents or as potential allies? The extensive variation on this metric is best captured in the distinction between exclusionary and inclusionary ideological frames and attitudes (Dulić and Hall 2014, 8). The distinction is not absolute: groups will find themselves somewhere on the spectrum between exclusion and inclusion. Crucially, exclusionary and inclusionary ideologies carry important implications for targeting choices.

An exclusionary ideology will frame civilians of rival constituencies as a threat, or at least as an obstacle to the ideal-type that the armed group aspires to achieve. When armed groups envision a future order, in which the abstract principles of the ideology attain concrete form, they can choose to exclude parts of society from that order. In its most extreme form, the excluded civilians are seen as inherently “undesirable” – as has been the case with many genocidal ideologies – and the complete annihilation of their community is legitimised by the ideology (Dulić and Hall 2014; Leader Maynard 2014; Kim 2016). The totalitarian ideology of the Croatian Ustasha government during the Second World War, for instance, “produced modes of exclusion that precluded any form of accommodation with out-groups which insisted on preserving their distinctiveness” (Dulić and Hall 2014, 2). Alternatively, there are groups who are seen as threats to the community or as obstacles to the fulfilment of the ideology – for instance, the Soviet terror against the Russian bourgeoisie – and often fall victim to indiscriminate killing and cleansing campaigns, but whose complete elimination is not a goal in itself. Whether the final objective is annihilation or cleansing, exclusion serves two purposes for the ideologue. First, it frames the victims as somehow deserving of their treatment; and second, it absolves the perpetrator of their guilt and possible feelings of remorse (Drake 1998; Leader Maynard 2014; Williams and Neilsen 2016). Armed groups with exclusionary agendas are predicted to make use of this frame when they decide what constitutes a legitimate target, and when they try to attain ideological licence from their support base.

14 The word choice for exclusionary and inclusionary, over exclusive and inclusive, is made to signify the conscious intent behind it – either to constrain membership or to accommodate diversity.
An inclusionary ideology, on the other hand, will not regard civilians outside the core of the ideology community as threats or obstacles. Inclusionary ideologies award to such civilians a role in the ideal or imagined future order of the group’s ideology. This does not mean that armed groups who adopt inclusionary ideologies treat all civilians as equal, or considers them to be ideological fellow travellers. It also does not necessarily mean that an inclusionary ideology is weak and fluid in nature. Crucially, however, it means that the populations of ‘rival’ constituencies are not seen as intrinsic enemies. Consider, for instance, South Africa’s ANC in its struggle against Apartheid. In spite of its opposition against a system that privileged whiteness, the ANC’s “ideological commitment assumed that any particular white person—including whites who lived in South Africa and thereby materially benefited from apartheid (and even poor whites benefited in myriad ways from apartheid)—was a potential supporter of the antiapartheid movement” (Goodwin 2007, 196). Unlike their exclusionary counterparts, inclusionary ideologies do not legitimise the killing of civilians: doing so may in fact hurt the legitimacy of the ideological movement. Armed groups with inclusionary agendas are not necessarily less lethal, but they are expected to be more narrow in their selection of legitimate targets.

To understand why exclusionary ideologies would produce high rates of civilian victimisation, it is helpful to consider the work by Hafez on ideological extremism, a broader concept that, like exclusion, is based on an existential framing of the conflict and a wide selection of ‘legitimate’ targets (Hafez 2017, 2). Extremism is also closely tied to concepts of ideological rigidity and intensity. Hafez outlines four reasons that help explain why ideological extremism is associated with a higher likelihood of violence, including civilian victimisation. First, ideological extremists “exaggerate the ideological distance” (Hafez 2017, 9) and see even those that are relatively proximate as distant foes rather than allies. Second, ideological extremism is associated with belief supremacism, intolerance, and an unwillingness to compromise. Third, ideological extremists are more likely to seek certainty and perceive uncertainty as a threat. Fourth, and finally, ideological extremism is more likely to permit and justify extreme measures for the sake of its purpose. This can include the victimisation of civilians.

This section has highlighted how civilians find themselves at both the sending and receiving end of civilian victimisation. Importantly, what civilians think matters to the armed groups who seek their approval – their ideological licence – in exchange for their help. To

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15 Note, however, that extremism is not the same as commitment. Nonviolent leaders like Gandhi can be considered strongly committed to their cause, but their worldview is not extremist (Gandhi 1948; Weber 2003).
understand in what places killing of civilians is rare and where it is not, we must study how the norms that groups uphold by themselves interact with the attitudes of their support base in that specific area. The key element of ideologies that matters for our understanding of civilian victimisation is the question of membership: is the ideology exclusionary or inclusionary in nature?

**Figure 2.1** From exclusionary ideologies to civilian victimisation: flowchart of the causal path

Hypothesis: exclusionary ideologies raise civilian victimisation

This thesis hypothesises that ideologies that are more exclusionary in nature produce patterns of violence against civilians, as a result of their heightened threat perceptions and wider target selection. Three observable implications follow from this hypothesis.

First, we should be able see the effect of ideologies at the national level. Ideologies with exclusionary frames and attitudes are predicted to be associated with more violence against civilians. More inclusionary ideologies, meanwhile, are predicted to feature relatively fewer cases of such violence.

Second, we should observe subnational variation. Local constituencies within the larger population can choose to be more or less exclusionary – more or less extremist – in their interpretation of the ideology. Here the logic is expected to be the same: constituencies that are more ideologically committed to exclusion are more likely to exhibit higher rates of civilian victimisation. Communities that are less exclusionary are expected to exhibit lower victimisation rates.

Third, we should expect to see explicit references to ideology in the communications and opinions of armed groups and their constituencies. If ideological values – especially on inclusion and exclusion, on the framing of threats, and on the legitimacy of targeting – were indeed influential, they should be reflected in the self-representation of these groups.
The novelty of this hypothesis becomes clearer when its implications are contrasted with those of existing theories. According to Kalyvas, for instance, civilian victimisation becomes more indiscriminate (i.e. less narrow) and more abundant without civilian support, because armed groups will lack the necessary information, supplied by civilians, to kill selectively. In such an explanation, violence is a negative function of support (Kalyvas 2006, 149). But that assumption rests on a theory that makes no distinction between home and rival populations and abandons ideology as a factor of importance. This hypothesis, by contrast, incorporates both of those elements and suggests that high support can be associated with higher, not lower, rates of victimisation – namely, of the area’s rival population – if the ideological attitude favours exclusionary frames and provides ideological licence for broad targeting.

On the other hand, studies of collective civilian targeting do distinguish between subsets of the population, but their theories are generally driven by demographics and strategy (Balcells 2017; Steele 2017). According to Balcells, armed actors will primarily target places of intercommunal parity (Balcells 2010); according to Steele, political cleansing will occur in areas where elections demonstrate the presence of a large rival population (Steele 2011). Such strategic incentives exist, but they do not cancel out the role of attitudes toward the rival population: when ideological attitudes are inclusionary in nature, the hypothesis predicts low levels of civilian victimisation even in those places where the demographic is said to favour targeting. Group norms against broad non-selective targeting, accompanied by a lack of ideological licence from the support base for such excessive violence, can override the strategic gains associated with victimisation.

One notable quantitative study of the effect of ideological attitudes on civilian victimisation is conducted by Hirose, Imai, and Lyall (2017). Using survey methods and data on violent attacks from Afghanistan, they, too, suggest that “civilian attitudes are an important predictor of insurgent violence” (Hirose, Imai, and Lyall 2017, 60). Yet their study differs in important ways. The focus of Hirose e.a. is on violence by the insurgent in areas that sympathise with a foreign counterinsurgent (the international, US-led coalition). As a result, they look at the killing of civilians in retaliation for their beliefs, not at killings of the other side made possible by civilian support. Moreover, the authors limit the sample of their study to areas with a Pashtun majority. Since the insurgent force, the Taliban, is predominantly made up of Pashtun members, their case appears to be not a story of supporters and ideological licensing, but of rebel vengeance against its home population.
Altogether, there have been previous attempts to decipher the link between civilian attitudes and armed group behaviour, but a gap remains. Starting with the qualitative analysis of the Troubles in the next chapter, this thesis sets out to fill that gap.
3. The Troubles in Northern Ireland

The armed conflict in Northern Ireland known as the Troubles constitutes a “typical case” (Gerring 2006) for a study of ideology and violence against civilians. An ideological dichotomy served as the conflict’s main cleavage, separating two communities and numerous armed groups. The conflict is also representative of the archetype of guerrilla or irregular war. Such wars are characterised by the reliance of armed groups on small factions and civilian populations, the avoidance of large-scale direct combat with the state, and their long duration (Kalyvas and Balcells 2010; Balcells and Kalyvas 2014). Typical cases are seen as an adequate method for hypothesis-testing and for probing in-case variation (Seawright and Gerring 2008). Although Northern Ireland features some particularities of its own, its representativeness can indicate patterns that exist elsewhere too.

This chapter’s critical look at the histories, ideological projects and popular attitudes of the Catholic and Protestant communities reveals a key difference in their framing of group membership and their stance on violence. Catholics, whose history was tied strongly to the republican and nationalist struggle and whose principles advocated popular self-rule, generally had a more inclusionary vision of their home population – one that incorporated Protestants, even though they never perceived the two populations as interchangeable. Protestants, by contrast, tended to take a more exclusionary view, rooted in their minority status on the Irish island and their strong ties to the state institutions that preserved the status quo. During the Troubles, this divergence came to the surface in the communication and strategy of both sides. Inclusion and restraint received more emphasis in the Catholic camp than among Protestants.


For nearly 30 years, between 1969 and 1998, Northern Ireland was the site of a civil war that produced between 3,500 and 4,000 fatalities. Although British security forces played a significant role in the conflict, the majority of fatalities was inflicted by armed groups that killed across the communal lines of the Protestant-Catholic cleavage, the dominant dividing line running across Northern Irish society. The divide between these two populations is evidently religious in origin, but it has come to encompass many more elements over time.

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16 Sporadic violence by dissident groups on both sides has occurred since the 1998 peace agreement, but it is not part of this study. See Balcells e.a. (2016) and Horgan and Morrison (2011) for discussions.
including ethnicity, the settler-native dichotomy and the question of national identity. As a result, the labels ‘Protestant’ and ‘Catholic’ now refer not only to faith but serve as “the mark of community membership” (Ruane and Todd 1996, xiv). Crucially, the two communities have long found themselves at odds over the status and future of the land they shared. The Troubles were the most violent outburst of these tensions. In the Catholic camp, groups with nationalist and republican ideologies fought for the reunification of the island of Ireland under a single flag. In the Protestant camp, militant unionists and loyalists entered combat aiming to keep their territory a part of the United Kingdom (or, in some cases, for the territory’s full independence). A minority has emphasised the autonomous, ‘Ulster’ identity of the country.

The Troubles began in the late 1960s, when a mostly Catholic (Hughes 2013) civil-rights campaign against the British, Protestant-dominated government was met with harsh suppression. By 1969, intercommunal strife and riots and confrontations with the local security forces were so widespread that British troops were deployed on Northern Irish soil. The army was initially welcomed by many Catholics, but it soon came to be seen as a hostile actor aligned with the Protestants (Hughes 2013). On both sides, militias and paramilitary groups took up arms to fight on behalf of their communities. The violence reached its peak in 1972, when nearly 500 people were killed. In the same year, the British government suspended the Northern Ireland parliament and imposed direct rule. It also attempted to confine the conflict by handing over everyday security to local police and armed forces, but as these forces mostly recruited unionists and Protestant, Catholics continued to feel alienated.

Fatalities numbered around 100 a year in the two decades that followed, until a peace deal came within sight in the early 1990s. Republicans were not winning, but the damage they continued to wreak – especially through several destructive attacks on British infrastructure in the 1990s – convinced the British government that it, too, would benefit from a negotiated peace (Toolis 1996). Official negotiations between political representatives, along with behind-the-scenes talks with the armed factions, culminated in the Good Friday Agreement, signed and approved by referendum in 1998. Although sporadic violence by dissident groups has continued, the armed groups that inflicted the majority of the violence have dissolved since then (Toolis 1996, McKittrick and O’Shea 2001, Hughes 2013).
Table 3.1 Main armed groups on both sides, key figures, and fatalities in the 1968-1998 period

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Armed group</th>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Founded</th>
<th>Fatalities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CATHOLIC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provisional Irish Republican Army</td>
<td>(P)IRA</td>
<td>1969</td>
<td>1,684</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irish National Liberation Army</td>
<td>INLA</td>
<td>1974</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Official Irish Republican Army</td>
<td>OIRA</td>
<td>1969</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irish People's Liberation Organisation</td>
<td>IPLO</td>
<td>1986</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other republican and nationalist groups</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROTESTANT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ulster Volunteer Force</td>
<td>UVF</td>
<td>1966</td>
<td>529</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ Red Hand Commando</td>
<td>RHC</td>
<td>1972</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ulster Defence Association</td>
<td>UDA</td>
<td>1971</td>
<td>389</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ Ulster Freedom Fighters</td>
<td>UFF</td>
<td>1972</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyalist Volunteer Force</td>
<td>LVF</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other loyalist and unionist groups</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Did the Troubles constitute a civil war? Technically, the violence never reached the threshold of 1,000 deaths a year used by the Correlates of War (CoW). British politicians as well as several scholars have instead referred to the conflict as a ‘terrorism campaign’ (Toolis 1997). Yet this overlooks the omnipresence of security forces, attacks, nonlethal violence and intimidation that persisted throughout the conflict. The death toll of several thousand may pale in comparison to some other conflicts, but it weighed heavily on a population of only 1.3 million living on a parcel of land that measured less than one-tenth of the total size of the United Kingdom. If the casualty figures of Northern Ireland were extrapolated to Britain, “some 111,000 people would have died, with 1.4 million people injured” (Hayes and McAllister 2001, 902). Although it was possible to avoid much of the violence, the war-like nature of the conflict could hardly be denied (Toolis 1997, 21):

Because it was not a big war, the British Government said it was not a war at all but a battle against a criminal terrorist conspiracy. To sustain that belief, one had to ignore the thirty thousand combat troops in Ulster, the squadrons of helicopter gunships and the extensive network of military bases along the three-hundred-mile border with the Irish Republic designed to withstand hundred-pound flying bombs.

The violence during the Troubles took different forms. Shootings and bombings were a common feature: in all, there were 35,000 shooting incidents and 15,000 bomb explosions. (Hayes and McAllister 2001, 902). Roughly half of all deadly victims were civilians.
What is there to suggest that the violence is strongly linked to ideology? To start, there are the breadth and depth of both ideologies in the population. Catholic republicanism has been described as “the last great political passion of Europe” (Toolis 1997, 26), and Protestants were decidedly “fighting to keep Ulster British” (Bruce 1992b, 1). Second, the armed groups frequently referred to these ideologies and their histories in their manifestos and communications. In fact, the groups themselves could be seen as “the direct descendants of (...) agrarian groups, which used similar methods, for similar ends, centuries before” (Hayes and McAllister 2001, 902). Finally, the conflict stood out for the “popular ambiguity” towards political violence of both communities. Hayes and McAllister suggest that “there is perhaps no other advanced industrial society where such large numbers of people effectively condone paramilitary activity” (Hayes and McAllister 2001, 915).

What did these dominant ideological frames look like, who supported them, and how did they relate to violence? The next sections tackle these questions for both communities.

Catholics, republicans and nationalists

The three terms most commonly associated with the Catholic community are often used interchangeably. Catholics, while in its most literal sense a reference to the adherents of the Roman Catholic Church, is used here to describe the community that has emerged around the faith, inspired but not defined by it. Nationalism is most closely associated with the religious fundamentals of Catholicism, whereas republicanism is less orthodox and more preoccupied with the goal of, simply put, "Irish unity as soon as possible" (Ruane and Todd 1996, 71). Put otherwise, Irish reunification is aspirational for nationalists, imperative for republicans. Outside the Catholic community, both objectives are rare.

Republican and nationalist ideologies are today both seen as the near-exclusive domain of Catholics, but their history spans across community lines. The centuries-long Irish liberation struggle under British rule had been a united effort at the outset, with Protestants giving the movement much of its “intellectual impetus” and going the furthest to unite the islanders into “a single, inclusive Irish nation” (Ruane and Todd 1996, 87). Resistance against foreign domination – in the historical canon stretching from Vikings to the British – was its central theme (McLoughlin 2006). Among Catholics, this inclusive idea coexisted with the narrower bond of their faith, strengthened by “the strong ideological control over its members” of the Church (Ruane and Todd 1996, 50). Bouts of violence by Catholic militias
against Protestant communities were not uncommon, but most violence targeted the British state (White 1997, 25).

Catholics and Protestants ultimately grew apart into “two culturally and politically polarised communities” over the span of the 19th century (Ruane and Todd 1996). As pro-British groups mobilised against Irish independence in the early 20th century, nationalists formed the militias that would later become the IRA. Yet, even as the Easter Rising (1916), the War of Independence (1916-21) and the Irish Civil War (1922-23) intensified the struggle over Irish republicanism, this did not automatically translate into communal strife. Indeed, sectarian violence during the 1922-23 Civil War was limited, leaving Lewis (2017, 21) to wonder “why it was not more frequent or extreme.” Although the republican movement had become the near-absolute domain of Catholics by the 1960s, it still advocated its inclusionary message. Following this tradition, Catholics continued to welcome (to some extent, at least) Protestant interest in their culture and associational life, seeing “‘openness’ and ‘tolerance’ as part of its communal tradition” (Ruane and Todd 1996, 76).

Although the armed groups that emerged from the Catholic camp differed in their perceptions of violence, much of the scholarship agrees that their violence was strongly rooted in the republican and nationalist ideologies. The use of violence, in turn, “has been primarily strategic, aimed at its official legitimate targets, rather than sectarian” (O’Leary 2005: 239, see also White 1997; Gill, Piazza and Horgan 2016). That is not to say that views on violence were uniform. In fact, the question of violence split the original IRA at the outset of the Troubles, giving rise to the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) and the Official Irish Republican Army (OIRA). The OIRA, though engaged in a military campaign of its own, largely rejected violence and sought instead to bring together the Protestant and Catholic working classes. By contrast, the Provisionals saw violence as a just response to the threats against by the Catholic community and would be responsible for the vast majority of killings by Catholics during the conflict (Gill and Horgan 2013, 436-437). The Irish National Liberation Army (INLA) and the Irish People’s Liberation Organisation (IPLO) both emerged as rogue breakaway groups. Their split with the PIRA partly followed a fall-out over their preference for more violence (McKittrick and McVea 2002; McDonald and Holland 1995).

Yet the Provisional IRA, by far the most deadly armed group with (largely) Catholic roots, still set out rules to constrain its use of violence. Its founders and early recruits were influenced by attacks on Catholic neighbourhoods, but “were not directly victimized by Protestant attacks” (White 1997, 25). Early in the conflict, the first President of Provisional
Sinn Fein, the political affiliate of the Provisional IRA, Ruári O Brádaigh, wrote in an open letter that republicans should strive for “The rights of man in Ireland. The greatest happiness of the greatest number.” (White 1997, 26–27). His successor, Gerry Adams, drew upon a similar inclusionary message in his first presidential address. In it, he appealed to the North’s Protestants “who have justifiable, if misguided, fear about their future in an independent Ireland.” He did so by making the following pledge (White 1997, 28):

> Republicans do not seek a sectarian state. On the contrary, we seek a secular, or at least a pluralist, society. We in Sinn Fein remember with pride that our republicanism grew from the separatist roots of the mainly Presbyterian United Irishmen.

The same inclusionary attitude can be found in the movement’s membership. Early on, “the stressing of radical non-sectarian politics had seen a number of Southern Protestants joining the IRA.” (Hanley and Millar, 68) It is true that, as Bruce (1992b) rightly points out, if the Provisional IRA truly aimed to kill no civilians in its campaigns, it utterly failed: hundreds of Protestant civilians died at the IRA’s hands. Contrasted with its opponents and other armed groups elsewhere, however, civilians take up a significantly lower proportion of all victims.

The Provisional IRA organised itself like a regular army, a residue of the IRA’s pivotal role in the 1922-23 Civil War. Subnational brigades, with several dozen combatants in their ranks, operated under the central command of its Army Council, which aimed “to hit British economic targets, not kill civilians” (Toolis 1997, 281). There was significant local variation in the methods and patterns of violence, and the central command responded to this in different ways. In some cases, it “sought to justify actions by local units after attacks which they would not have sanctioned had they received prior notice” (Drake 1998, 61). In other cases, especially when popular support took a hit, it punished local combatants. After a bombing in the town of Enniskillen killed ten civilians, the local unit responsible for the attack was disbanded (McKittrick and McVea 2002). Most local units, however, retained their autonomy. Because of this, “the rate of IRA activity [was] almost totally dependent on the leading IRA figures within that specific geographic power structure” (Toolis 1997, 319).

Armed activity was also informed by civilian attitudes. Opinion polls among Catholics generally registered large support for republicanism and nationalism in principle, but a quick reunification was rarely on the agenda (Rose 1971; Hayes and McAllister 2001). The PIRA’s military campaigns heavily depended on civilian support. For instance, the focal point of most PIRA campaigns were the urban areas, where, as one Provisional document
stated, “the majority of our operations are carried out, and where the biggest proportion of our support lies anyway” (quoted in Gill and Horgan 2013, 449).

Protestants, loyalists and unionists

The Protestant community, itself composed of various strains of the Protestant faith,\(^1\) exhibits considerable ideological diversity. Its main strains are loyalism – characterised by its adherence to the Protestant faith – and unionism – which saw Britain not only as a helpful ally, but as a civilising force. In spite of these differences, loyalism and unionism have both consistently advocated in favour of the Protestant community and against the reunification of Ireland.

The protestant faith came to the island with the arrival of settlers from England (Anglicans) and Scotland (Presbyterians) (White 1997, 24). Loyalism emerged from the early days of settlement and religious strife, feeding among the settlers a perception of “irreconcilable conflict” between Protestants and Catholics (Ruane and Todd 1996, 84). Although its name betrays the loyalty of its adherents to the British Crown, this attitude was always “conditioned on the Crown’s support for Protestant rights and the Protestant community against its enemies” (Ruane and Todd 1996, 84; see also Bruce 1992). Loyalism bridged the religious divisions within the Protestant community. The formation of the Orange Order, a Protestant mass-based institution, in 1795, marked its ascension to politics. Unionism arrived to the scene shortly after, setting itself apart from loyalism by underscoring the value of British institutions, progress and identity (Ruane and Todd 1996, 88).

The preservation of the Protestant community’s interests united loyalists and unionists. In the early 20\(^{th}\) century, fears that self-government for Ireland would bring the island’s Catholic majority to power— ‘Home Rule means Rome Rule,’ proclaimed a popular protest slogan – drove the Protestants closer together in mass movements and militias. After the (southern) Irish state broke away, the Protestants came to dominate the British institutions that governed the north. The result was a role so powerful that it fed the community’s “incapacity to conceive of compromise” (Ruane and Todd 1996, 85). The participation in both World Wars and the incorporation into the British postwar welfare state further cemented the community’s ties to the United Kingdom (Ruane and Todd 1996;

\(^1\) The Protestant population in Northern Ireland consists of Presbyterians (42%), members of the Church of Ireland (35%), and Methodists (7.5%), as well several smaller sects. The percentages given here are from 1991 (Ruane and Todd 1996, 54).
Politically, the growing cleavage between Protestants and Catholics was intensified further by the dominance of the Ulster Unionist Party, which ruled Northern Ireland with an absolute majority and without interruption from 1921 until 1973. To prevent the rise of a labour-based or liberal party, the Party had good reason to promote a self-serving narrative “which was exclusivist in character and which gave priority to issues of identity over issues of a material or class nature” (Cash 1996, 131-132).

How did these ideologies affect the patterns of loyalist and unionist violence during the Troubles? The armed factions of the Protestant population have been derided as “little more than murder gangs” (Toolis 1996, 21), but this overlooks the adherence to their ideological agendas and their search for broad support. The first group to form was the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF), “essentially a self-recruiting working-class movement” rooted in the unionist movement that resisted Home Rule (Bruce 1992b, 26). The other principal group was the Ulster Defence Association (UDA), a mass-based organisation with fewer historical roots and a more loyalist agenda (Reed 2011). Both groups published policy documents and manifestos; and Ulster loyalism featured “ideological variance and internecine discord” that included more moderate, inclusionary voices (Reed 2011, 49).

Yet the ideological agendas of the Protestant armed groups were nearly unanimous in favouring an ideological frame that systemically excluded Catholics and justified violence with more ease than their Catholic counterparts (Drake 1996, 1998; Cash 1996; Edwards 2009; Reed 2011; Harris 2012). The UVF, in its Policy Document 1/74, “eschewed politics and adopted strictly military objectives” (Reed 2011, 47). Drake has referred to the violence of Protestant groups as ‘conservative terrorism’, meaning that it is “carried out in order to defend the existing social, economic or political order or to gain a reversion of an earlier arrangement” (Drake 1996, 30). In doing so, little distinction was made between combatants and civilians. Based on a survey of former loyalist combatants, most of them UDA veterans, Harris (2012, 7) argues that “the targeting of the wider nationalist community also existed as a specific aim rather than just an operational mistake.” The answers of her respondents are telling. One respondent stated that it was necessary to “put fear into the other community” (Harris 2012, 7). Another explained the targeting tactics of as “do unto others as they do to you, but do it first.” (Harris 2012, 8). A senior member of the Ulster Unionist Party said he believed “that one in three Catholics was ‘either a supporter of murder or worse still a murderer’” (Harris 2012).

18 It is worth noting that Drake has also described IRA activity as a form of terrorism (Drake 1998).
There was little group discipline in the Protestant camp. Moderate voices in the Protestant camps existed, but they were largely mute for the first half of the conflict (Reed 2011). When the most violent anti-civilian campaign was largely discontinued after 1976, this had nothing to do with moral or ideological objections of the population or leadership: it was simply deemed an ineffective method in halting IRA violence (Hayes and McAllister 2001, 908). During the conflict’s final decade, the UVF tried taking a political path in the footsteps of the Provisional IRA and Sinn Fein, but failed to garner public support (Bruce 1992a). The UDA simultaneously began to reconsider its ideological principles. By the second half of the 1980s, it advocated for a politically negotiated solution, pledged to "dispel the fear of exclusion felt by the ‘Ulster Catholic’ community and allow all minorities to play a full and productive role in our society" in a policy document (UPRG 1987) and became significantly more selective in its targeting of republicans (Reed 2011, 51). These turning points demonstrate that ideologies are not immutable, but their novelty also highlights the contrast with the indiscriminate violence that had been so common in the years before.

Finally, a key factor in understanding the activity of Protestant groups is their engagement in collusion with the British state security forces. The cooperation between these groups and the British state is well-documented (Cochrane 2013; McGovern 2017) and far exceeded anything that existed between the Catholic groups and the Irish government (Faoleán 2014). While this can be argued to trouble a study of ideology (Bruce 1997), the emergence of this alliance is itself a product of ideological alignment (Staniland 2015; Ahmadov and Hughes 2017).

The preservation of the status quo was a widely shared objective of the Northern Irish Protestant population (Bruce 1992b). However, unlike the Catholic movement, the Protestant armed groups never managed to tie themselves to a successful political movement.

Conclusion

At the outset of the Troubles, Northern Ireland’s Catholic community favoured more inclusionary attitudes than the Protestant population. These ideological preferences were not inevitable: nationalism had frequently invoked violence, while unionism offered fertile ground for an ideology of cosmopolitan values. Eventually, however, the Catholic and Protestant communities diverged sharply on the ideological spectrum. During the Troubles,

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19 The issue of loyalist collusion is taken up further in the discussion of alternative explanations in the Analysis chapter.
groups with roots in the Catholic population, the Provisional IRA most prominently, were the most lethal side in the conflict. Yet the qualitative evidence suggests they were significantly less likely to kill civilians during their campaigns than Protestant groups.

To inspect the ideological differences between and within the two populations, and their effect on civilian victimisation, at a deeper level, the next chapter turns to new material and methods.
4. Research design

The history of the Troubles suggests that ideology shaped the patterns of killing during the war. To better understand variation, between and within ideological communities, the following analysis will take a closer look at the attitudes of the Protestant and Catholic population. The aim is to capture the importance of ideological licensing by seeing whether civilian attitudes align with the local patterns of violence against civilians by armed groups.

Following the hypothesis, I predict that exclusionary ideologies permit and promote violence against civilians. At large, ideological communities that favour exclusionary attitudes are expected to generate higher rates of civilian victimisation. Within these communities, moreover, I expect that violence against rival civilians peaks in those places where the local population is at its most exclusionary.

Methodological choices

A micro-study of ideology and violence against civilians is challenging, for two reasons. The first is the difficulty of quantifying ideology, especially in comparison to the more easily available indicators for greed and grievances (Ugarriza and Craig 2013, 448). The second is the challenge of obtaining detailed data on the victims, perpetrators, and locations of civilian victimisation (Ahmadow and Hughes 2017). The near-absence of ideology from statistical studies of war can be considered as an indication of the former, the confusion over casualty numbers and victim identities in Rwanda, Congo and Bosnia (among many other examples) as evidence of the latter.

Done right, however, quantitative microstudies of ideology and civilian victimisation can do much to improve our understanding of conflict. On the one hand, the subnational level of analysis “offers the possibility of improving data quality, testing microfoundations and causal mechanisms, maximizing the fit between concepts and data, and controlling for many variables that can be held constant” (Kalyvas 2008b, 397–98). By zooming in on the micro-dynamics within a single case, we can avoid both the loss of detail of a large cross-country study and the limited ability to generalise from a small or qualitative case study (Gerring 2007). Simultaneously, the quantified approach to ideology allows us to make a diffuse concept measurable and get an idea of ideology’s influence relative to other factors (Ugarriza and Craig 2013, 469).
The Troubles in Northern Ireland offer detailed data on both counts, a rare feature compared to other wars. Although the study can illustrate the impact of ideology on patterns of violence to some extent, the specifics of the Northern Irish context call for moderation in taking its conclusions elsewhere (Sartori 1970).

For this analysis, I conduct an Ordinary Least Square (OLS) linear regression to test the hypothesis that exclusionary ideologies raise the likelihood of violence against civilians. To operationalise the causal effect of ideology, I use survey data on civilian attitudes on both sides. Importantly, these data are uncorrelated with the dynamics of the conflict: the survey was conducted in 1968 and was completed shortly before the start of the civil-rights protests that initiated the conflict. Next, the analysis employs a new dataset covering all conflict-related fatalities during the Troubles, 1968-1998 (NIRI 2018). For nearly every fatality, the victim’s identity, the armed group (or, at least, the communal side) behind it and the location are provided. This makes it possible to establish not only how many people were killed in every district by armed groups of each side, but also how many of these victims were civilians. This yields the civilian victimisation rate.

**Table 4.1 Breakdown of the conceptualisation and operationalisation of the key variables**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ideology</td>
<td>Proportion of community’s civilians willing to “take any measures” to achieve ideological objective</td>
<td>Constituency</td>
<td>Rose 1968</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civilian victimisation</td>
<td>Proportion of civilians among all casualties inflicted by community’s armed groups</td>
<td>Constituency</td>
<td>NIRI 2018</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ideology and violence are measured across 26 electoral districts (see Table 4.1). In each of these districts, Protestants and Catholics make up separate populations, or constituencies as I call them. These constituencies – two for every district, 52 in total – serve as the unit of analysis. The district level is dictated by the geographic division of the attitudes survey,

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20 The victim identity and location are provided for every fatality in the dataset. In a small number of cases, the perpetrating armed group is not known. However, even for these cases the community on which the perpetrating group operated is usually provided.
21 The districts are officially called Northern Ireland Parliament constituencies, and were in use between 1929 and 1969. I use the term ‘district’ or ‘electoral district’ from here onwards, to avoid confusion with the terms ‘home constituency’ and ‘rival constituency’ that refer to the civilian support base of an armed group or its opponent.
22 Since both populations did not inflict any fatalities in one of their constituencies, only 50 constituencies are included in the sample.
which arrived at the same geographic sample following a stratification process by religion, partisanship, and urban, semi-urban or rural character. The survey interviews were geographically scattered throughout the sampled districts to ensure that the respondents formed a representative cross-section of the district population (Rose 1968, pt. II). A comparison of civilian victimisation rates also finds that the figures for the sample match those of Northern Ireland as a whole. In both cases, around half of all victims were civilians. Finally, nearly all electoral districts had historical roots as former provinces. They are political units, but are not rooted in gerrymandering.

Figure 4.1 District map of Northern Ireland (sample coverage in blue)

One significant change was made to the official administrative map in drawing the district boundaries. The sixteen administrative borough districts of Belfast have been recoded into the four districts they formed until 1929, for practical and theoretical reasons. Practically, the fatality data for the capital includes information on the location down to the city quarter (e.g. West or East Belfast), but not at the level of the historical district. Theoretically, the sixteen boroughs consist of such small slivers of land that they make it
impossible to denote what is and is not local violence. Three of the final four districts are featured in the sample; where multiple boroughs had to be redistricted into one district, their values were weighed and combined into one.

**DV: Civilian victimisation during the Troubles**

The dependent variable in the analysis is the rate of civilian victimisation. More specifically, the victimisation rate is captured by taking the number of killed civilians of the rival constituency in a district as a proportion of all conflict-related fatalities inflicted by armed groups of the home constituency. The resulting number gives us the likelihood that a random fatality, selected from all fatalities inflicted by all Protestant or Catholic groups in a district, is civilian.

Though many forms of nonlethal (and even nonphysical) forms of violence and intimidation play a role in wartime, conflict-related deaths are the clearest and least ambiguous measurement (Straus 2001; Kalyvas 2006). Suicides related to the conflict, like the hunger campaign by Bobby Sands and other incarcerated Republicans at Long Kesh prison, are excluded from the total number of fatalities, because they do not target anyone and because they do not reflect on their location. Accidents related to the conflict, like self-explosions by IRA members, are included in the total, because they occurred in the process of inflicting hurt. As such, they can be considered collateral damage.

In the 26 districts covered by the survey sample, 2,733 fatalities occurred between the summer of 1968, when the civil-rights protests that started the Troubles commenced, and April 10, 1998, the announcement of the Good Friday Agreement. The first fatality in the dataset occurred on July 14, 1969, the final fatality took place on April 8, 1998.

First, I establish how many people were killed in every district by each side. Next, I distinguish how many of these deaths involved civilians to determine the rate of victimisation (see Figure 4.2). Civilian victimisation can be of a targeted nature – a bombing aimed at a Protestant shop or Catholic pub can hardly be called random – but it is never selective at the individual level. If the fatality is listed as a matter of social control within the armed group or in its community, I consider it to be selective. Likewise, if the target is a member of the

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23 The 1929 redivision was very straightforward. For instance, the district of Clifton, Duncairn, Oldpark and Shankill were redistricted into Belfast North. Because no part of South Belfast was surveyed, that district was dropped from the analysis.

24 Although Francis McCloskey, a Catholic in Dungiven, who died on July 14, 1969 is usually counted as the conflict’s first deadly victim, the death of Samuel Devenny on July 17, 1969 can also be considered the first, since it resulted from injuries received during a beating from RUC officers in April of the same year. Both are included in the data set.
British Army, the Northern Irish police force, an opposing armed group, or the (nationalist) Sinn Fein party, or another military or political organisation, it can reasonably be argued that they have been targeted for their individual characteristics and the threat they are deemed to pose. When a victim is targeted solely for being ‘of the other side’, such fatalities are counted as cases of civilian victimisation. In these cases, targets are only identified at the level of their communal identity, not for the value they represent (as a political figure might) or any acute danger (as a paramilitary or a member of the security forces might). Brawls, clashes and shootouts involving civilians are included in the civilian victimisation rate as well, because they tend not to be preordained and individually selective.

Cases in which one side inflicted zero fatalities were coded as missing for that community’s analysis (this is true for two cases: Larne for Catholic paramilitary groups, Foyle for Protestant groups). The Appendix lists the rates of civilian victimisation for both communities, as well as their ideological attitudes, in all districts (a visualisation of these figures can also be found in the Appendix).

**Figure 4.2 Where did civilian victimisation rates peak, by Catholics (left) and Protestants (right)**

![Map of civilian victimisation rates](image)

**IV: Measuring ideological attitudes**

The *independent variable* is the support for exclusionary ideologies. It is constructed using the 1968 attitudes survey by Rose, commonly referred to as the Northern Ireland Loyalty Study. After being asked whether they are Protestant or Catholic (or of another faith) earlier on, both communities received a similar question to measure the commitment to their ideological position vis-à-vis their willingness to compromise over the future of Northern Ireland, that is, their ideological extremism. Respondents were asked whether they agreed with one of the following statements: Ideological attitudes are measured using a survey that was conducted
in 1968 among 1,200 respondents across large swaths of Northern Ireland (Rose 1971). The survey asked Protestants and Catholics whether they thought “any measures” were permitted to pursue their community’s desired outcome: either Northern Ireland remaining Protestant (for Protestants), or the end of Irish partition (for Catholics). Interviews for the survey were conducted in 1968, shortly before the outbreak of the civil-rights protests that initiated the conflict. The precise formulation of the question was as follows:

- For Catholics: It is right to take any measures in order to end Irish partition
- For Protestants: It is right to take any measures in order to keep Northern Ireland a Protestant country

Although the question does not probe exclusionary attitudes directly, responses that indicate a preparedness to ‘take any measures’ suggest an attitude that treats those who disagree as outsiders to the ideological community or order, and hence, as legitimate targets.

Using survey data on public support for political violence is difficult, as few respondents are likely to reveal their true preference in a personal confrontation with a stranger (Hayes and McAllister 2001, 912) However, the question in the Rose survey avoids a direct reference to the use of violence. Survey data is in any case preferable over election results as an indicator of public preference. Elections in Northern Ireland, at every level, were plagued by low turnout levels in lopsided districts and by boycotts initiated by the Catholic republican population.

From the answers, I construct an indicator that captures the percentage of respondents agreeing with the given statement, called attitude. At the individual level, respondents can either agree (1), disagree (0) or say that ‘it depends’ (which counts as 0.5 and is relatively rare). At the constituency level, then, attitude can take on any value between 0 (none agree) and 1 (all respondents agree). Communities willing to defend their ideological position at any cost thus score higher than those who express more nuance. Because the survey was conducted in 1968, the answers are unaffected by the later violence of the Troubles, eliminating the possibility that the responses reflect the violence rather than vice versa. Although the ideological attitudes are likely to have changed during the decades of conflict, this means that the answers were exogenous to the dynamics of conflict itself. It also speaks for the credibility and accuracy of the results: as the Troubles escalated,

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25 To be precise, the answer “it depends” was given by 24 Catholics (4.66%) and 61 Protestants (8.09%).
26 Of course, the violence of earlier confrontations and civil wars is likely to have influenced civilian attitudes.
respondents likely became more loath to express their actual attitudes. Surveys and censuses also fell victim to intimidation and violence, including the murder of a census worker by the IRA in 1981 (Toolis 1997).

Figure 4.3 Civilian attitudes, measured by survey responses, among both communities

The survey responses demonstrate vast ideological differences between the Catholic and Protestant populations (see Figure 4.3). Among Catholics, only 13% of the respondents agreed that "any measures" should be taken (to ensure an end to Irish partition), with 83% choosing to disagree. Among Protestants, a majority positively responded that any measures were right to pursue the ideological objective (to keep Northern Ireland Protestant).

Control variables

To test for the presence and influence of confounding factors, the model incorporates four control variables. One – in-community fatalities – is conflict-related, the others are socioeconomic and demographic indicators.

In-community fatalities. Violence during the Troubles has frequently been attributed to dynamics of retaliation and escalation (Bruce 1992b; Toolis 1997; McKittrick and McVea 2002; De la Calle and Sánchez-Cuenca 2006). This can reflect deeper ideological motives, but they can also be endogenous to the conflict. For instance, the first study to make use of the NIRI fatality data finds that republican killings tended to become more indiscriminate and sectarian in response to indiscriminate killings of Catholic civilians wielded by security forces (Sullivan, Loyle, and Davenport 2012).
The *ingroupfatalities* variable measures all fatalities (logged)\(^{27}\) suffered by a single constituency, inflicted on it by all actors. Without logging the variable, over 90% of all constituencies have fewer than 90 casualties, with the remaining constituencies numbering 203, 209, 294 and 430 casualties.\(^{28}\) Even in its logged format, the validity of this variable must be treated with caution, as retaliation and escalation can reflect ideological explanations. Indeed, “when supporters of terrorist organizations undergo more intense experiences of violence, terrorists face lower constraints on the selectivity of their attacks” (De la Calle and Sánchez-Cuenca 2006, 26). Since it is difficult to separate external factors from ideological ones, this variable is only included in two versions of the model.

**Dominance.** Some accounts of the Troubles have emphasised the role of demographics. In particular, these studies have emphasised that armed actors were more likely to use violence in the heartlands of their communities, rather than in places where the rival constituency was larger in size (H. Mueller, Rohner, and Schoenholzer 2013; Cunningham and Gregory 2014). To account for this, I make use of the survey data, which notes for every respondent whether their local ward – a subnational denominator below the district – is dominated by one of the two communities. I then construct a variable called *dominance* at the constituency level, which represents the mean of all respondents’ living situations. Since the respondents were selected using a scattered sampling method, I expect that this is an adequate and representative figure.

The *dominance* variable is a numeric variable that takes on a positive value of 1 when the constituency population (Catholic or Protestant) enjoys a popular majority, a negative value of -1 in areas where it is a minority, and a value of zero in mixed areas. That is, in the analysis of Catholic constituencies, the variable takes on a value of 1 if every surveyed Catholic in the district lives in a Catholic-majority area and a value of -1 if every Catholic in the survey resides in a Protestant-majority areas as -1. A weakness of this measure is that it does not account for variation over time, but only reflects the demographic situation at the time of the survey in 1968. It is included in two of the four versions of the model.

**Urbanisation.** The Troubles took on different forms in different parts of the country. Both recruitment and much of the violence were concentrated in cities, especially in Belfast (O’Sullivan 1983; Poole 1983; Kalyvas 2006; Gill and Horgan 2013). At the same time, rural areas were the only parts of Northern Ireland over which the Provisional IRA gained the *de*
facto territorial control at some point, as it did in South Amargh (Toolis 1997). Northern Ireland’s rural communities also differed in their communal relations and conflict resolution mechanisms (Murtagh 1998; Grubb 2016). Moreover, rural and urban violence are seen as different by the scholarship of civil war at large, because, among other factors, rural violence tends to be more intimate (Kalyvas 2004).

In two of the four models, I use an urbanisation variable. It is an ordinal variable that takes on a value of 4 in fully urban districts (the city boroughs of Belfast), 3 in largely urban districts (Belfast’s suburbs in North Down and the city boroughs of Derry/Londonderry), 2 in semi-urban districts (various) and 1 for rural districts (various).

**Unemployment.** Unemployment is a commonly used predictor of civil war onset and violence. During the Troubles, and especially early on, Northern Ireland’s Catholic population exhibited a much higher unemployment rate than the Protestant population. In previous studies, areas with high Catholic unemployment have been associated with more violence by Catholic groups and individuals (White 1993; Maney 2005). The mechanism that links rises in unemployment to a higher likelihood in violence may be driven by deprivation as well as opportunism. In both cases, however, ideology plays no direct role.

To isolate the effect of local employment conditions, the unemployment variable is used in two of the models. It is constructed from the responses to a question in the 1968 survey. Unemployment is a continuous variable, taking a value ranging from 0 (no one in the home constituency is unemployed) to 1 (the home constituency is completely unemployed). As with the other socio-economic variables, it does not change over time. Its predictions should be treated with caution.
5. Empirical analysis

This chapter presents the results and discussion of the OLS regression. After presenting the summary statistics on the data, I first regress a complete sample including all constituencies, then analyse the Catholic and Protestant constituencies separately. As we will see, the disaggregation process produces a stark contrast, that can largely be explained using a series of robustness checks.

Throughout the analysis in this chapter, four models are used for every regression. The first model presents a bivariate regression of ideological attitudes and civilian victimisation rates. The second model augments the regression with the conflict variable of in-community fatalities. The third model includes the ideology and the set of socioeconomic and demographic variables. The fourth model includes all variables.

Results

Before proceeding with the analysis, Table 5.1 presents the summary statistics for the independent, dependent and confounding variables in the analysis, all measured at the constituency level.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Obs</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>victimrate</td>
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<td>0.476006</td>
<td>0.316697</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>0.241411</td>
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</tr>
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<td>ingroupfatalities</td>
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<td>1.155862</td>
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<td>dominance</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>urbanisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>unemployment</td>
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<td>0.044892</td>
<td>0.058109</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.222222</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the first step of the empirical analysis, I include the full sample including both populations and all districts in the regression – hence 50 observations, 2 for every district. This gives us a general overview of the relationship between attitudes and civilian victimisation, without specifying the variation within the respective communities themselves (Table 5.2).

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29 Additional material is provided in the Appendix.
30 For each population, one district is coded as missing because it contained not a single fatality (neither civilian nor otherwise) by armed groups representing their population.
The results initially demonstrate a strong positive association between the ideological attitudes of a constituency’s members and the victimisation rates of that constituency’s armed groups. The finding is statistically significant, at the 99% confidence level, in every one of the four models. It is substantively significant, too. A full 1-point increase in ideological attitude – in the popularity of exclusionary attitudes, that is – the proportion of civilians among the casualties goes up by 66.5%. This finding appears to suggest that the presence of exclusionary attitudes among a constituency’s members strongly predicts the occurrence of civilian victimisation in the area by that constituency’s groups, in line with the hypothesis.

Besides this strong association, unemployment is also significant (at the 0.1 level) in the third model. The association is negative, surprisingly suggesting that unemployment in a constituency drives down the likelihood that armed groups will kill civilians there. The adjusted R-squared is 27%.

When we take a closer look at the data, however, it becomes clear that the results in the initial regression are largely driven by differences between the Catholic and Protestant populations. Figure 5.1 shows the distribution of all 50 constituencies by their attitudes and the rates of civilian victimisation. What looks like an overall positive correlation is in fact highly skewed by the overall Catholic-Protestant dichotomy, as figure 5.2 demonstrates. Nearly all Catholic constituencies (displayed in green) are concentrated in the lower-left corner, where exclusionary attitudes and victimisation rates are both low. Meanwhile, most

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VARIABLES</th>
<th>(1)</th>
<th>(2)</th>
<th>(3)</th>
<th>(4)</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Model 1</td>
<td>Model 2</td>
<td>Model 3</td>
<td>Model 4</td>
</tr>
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<td>0.733***</td>
<td>0.734***</td>
<td>0.673***</td>
<td>0.665***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.170)</td>
<td>(0.176)</td>
<td>(0.206)</td>
<td>(0.211)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ingroupfatalities</td>
<td>0.0187</td>
<td>0.0306</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0434)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dominance</td>
<td>-0.0415</td>
<td>-0.0456</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0722)</td>
<td>(0.0677)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>urbanisation</td>
<td>0.0177</td>
<td>-0.000776</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0306)</td>
<td>(0.0551)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>unemployment</td>
<td>-0.981</td>
<td>-1.119*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.693)</td>
<td>(0.636)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>constant</td>
<td>0.217***</td>
<td>0.158</td>
<td>0.251**</td>
<td>0.202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0731)</td>
<td>(0.184)</td>
<td>(0.122)</td>
<td>(0.173)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted R-squared</td>
<td>0.285</td>
<td>0.274</td>
<td>0.279</td>
<td>0.270</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Robust standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1
Protestant constituencies (displayed in orange) are concentrated in the upper-right quadrant, scoring high on exclusionary attitudes as well as on the victimisation rate of their armed groups.

In short, Protestant constituencies are both much more likely to exhibit exclusionary ideological attitudes and much more likely to produce armed groups that kill civilians. Comparisons between Protestants and Catholics on the attitudinal responses and on the victimisation rates for every district are both featured in the Appendix.

This study set out to investigate the effect of attitudinal differences not only between but also within the two populations. In the second stage of the regression, I therefore disaggregate the original sample into separate sets for the Catholic and Protestant constituencies, each containing 25 observations. Tables 5.3 and 5.4 show the results of the OLS regressions on these subsets. Separating the Catholic and Protestant populations in the regression turns the initial results on their head. The positive association that was initially found is completely explained away by the differences between the two populations.

Within Northern Ireland’s Catholic constituencies, the relationship between exclusionary attitudes and victimisation is negative, a finding that is substantially significant and statistically significant at the 90% confidence level in every model. It is significant at the 95% confidence level in the third model, which includes general socio-demographic factors but not in-community fatalities. This seems to suggest that Catholic constituencies that are more inclusionary produce less violence against civilians. Yet, in a robustness check that eliminates the outliers (discussed in the Appendix), however, the correlation between attitudes and civilian victimisation loses all significance.

*Figure 5.1 Scatterplot of attitudes and victimisation*  
*Figure 5.2 Scatterplot (again), disaggregated*
Table 5.3 OLS regression of ideological attitudes and victimisation (by Catholics) at the constituency level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VARIABLES</th>
<th>(1)</th>
<th>(2)</th>
<th>(3)</th>
<th>(4)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>attitude</td>
<td>-0.715*</td>
<td>-0.714*</td>
<td>-0.821**</td>
<td>-0.810*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.353)</td>
<td>(0.364)</td>
<td>(0.375)</td>
<td>(0.414)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ingroupfatalities</td>
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<td></td>
<td>8.65e-05</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.000292)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.000412)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dominance</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.0427</td>
<td>-0.0542</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0714)</td>
<td>(0.0722)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>urbanisation</td>
<td>0.0330</td>
<td>0.0271</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0316)</td>
<td>(0.0533)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unemployment</td>
<td></td>
<td>-1.094*</td>
<td>-1.105*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.583)</td>
<td>(0.580)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.356***</td>
<td>0.346***</td>
<td>0.376**</td>
<td>0.381**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0885)</td>
<td>(0.102)</td>
<td>(0.134)</td>
<td>(0.134)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted R-squared</td>
<td>0.096</td>
<td>0.073</td>
<td>0.164</td>
<td>0.145</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Robust standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

The intercept is positive and significant at the 0.05 to 0.01 level in every model. In the third and fourth model, unemployment is negative and significant at the 0.1 mark. This seems to defy the greed- and opportunism-based reasoning on unemployment, as those factors are often associated with more brute force and more violence against civilians in the literature. The adjusted R-squared tells us that this model can explain 14.5% of variance in victimisation rates when all control variables are included.

Table 5.4 OLS regression of ideological attitudes and victimisation (by Protestants) at the constituency level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VARIABLES</th>
<th>(1)</th>
<th>(2)</th>
<th>(3)</th>
<th>(4)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>attitude</td>
<td>-0.0896</td>
<td>-0.0199</td>
<td>-0.0347</td>
<td>-0.00216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.272)</td>
<td>(0.299)</td>
<td>(0.299)</td>
<td>(0.369)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ingroupfatalities</td>
<td>0.000553</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.000297</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.000428)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.00105)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dominance</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.0654</td>
<td>-0.0548</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0755)</td>
<td>(0.0812)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>urbanisation</td>
<td>0.0276</td>
<td>0.0165</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0278)</td>
<td>(0.0586)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unemployment</td>
<td>0.576</td>
<td>0.684</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.132)</td>
<td>(1.191)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.757***</td>
<td>0.697***</td>
<td>0.674***</td>
<td>0.661***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.140)</td>
<td>(0.169)</td>
<td>(0.176)</td>
<td>(0.199)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted R-squared</td>
<td>-0.039</td>
<td>-0.000</td>
<td>-0.095</td>
<td>-0.107</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Robust standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1
For the 25 sampled Protestant constituencies, the relationship between exclusionary attitudes and victimisation is also negative, but it is nowhere near statistical significance. The control variables are also all insignificant in all four models. Only the intercept is consistently high and statistically significant, at the 99% confidence level.

**Discussion**

Based on the OLS regression, two very different findings emerge. At the general level, ideological attitudes that promote exclusion serve as a strong predictor of the rate of civilian victimisation. A comparison of both populations shows why: Protestant constituencies harbour more exclusionary attitudes, and Protestant armed groups kill more civilians. Both exclusion and civilian victimisation are consistently and significantly lower among Catholics.

At the subnational level, the picture is diffuse. Protestants still harbour more exclusionary attitudes and their armed groups are more likely to strike at civilians, but these two phenomena do not reach their extremes in the same places. Meanwhile, Catholic civilian constituencies are much less likely to favour exclusion overall. The first attempt at disaggregation suggests that Catholic groups are also less likely to kill civilians, but when they do, it is most likely to happen in those places where their civilians are the least exclusionary.

To tease apart the true drivers of correlation, I conduct two robustness checks (the Appendix contains a methodological note discussing and displaying these additional calculations in more detail). First, I add an interaction term to the original model that multiplies the subnational civilian attitude by a national ideological dummy (Protestant/Catholic). The interaction itself is not significant, but the national ideological dummy is significant and offsets much of the explanatory power of subnational attitudes. Second, to establish the impact of constituencies in which few casualties skew their victimisation rates (the primary cause of outliers in the data), I drop all constituencies from the sample that feature five or fewer inflicted casualties (in total, combatants and non-combatants). With the outliers excluded from the sample, the significance of subnational attitudes completely dissipates, while the national ideological barely changes and remains a strong predictor at the 95% confidence level.

In short, the initial positive association between subnational ideological attitudes and violence against civilians is completely driven by the national Protestant-Catholic dichotomy. It is possible that his national difference is explained by something other than ideology. State collusion is one example of such an alternative explanation. The existence of
collusion between the Protestant armed groups and the British state is well-documented (Cochrane 2013; McGovern 2017). Members of the (largely Protestant) state security apparatus would sometimes moonlight as paramilitary members in their after-hours. The ‘intelligence’ that the UDA used largely came from British government sources (Ahmadov and Hughes 2017). Previous studies have argued that a reliance on external sponsors – states, kinship communities, or resources – relieves fighters of the need to stay on good terms with local civilians (Weinstein 2006; Salehyan, Siroky, and Wood 2014; Toft and Zhukov 2015) and obtain ideological licence. In theory, an ideology that cautiously restrains over excess could potentially reduce this effect, but in the case of Northern Ireland’s Protestant ideologies, the frames of unionism and loyalism are unlikely to have moderated the effect of state collusion. As documented in the historical chapter, both of these ideologies have long been characterised by exclusionary attitudes, a heightened threat perception, and a broad target selection, stretching back to the period before they were co-opted by British state institutions. Moreover, state collusion could arise in large part because of the ideological proximity of loyalism and, especially unionism, vis-a-vis the British state (Ahmadov and Hughes 2017). Finally, it is clear from the survey data that the exclusionary Protestant attitudes date back to before the start of the Troubles.

Does group discipline account for the difference between both communities instead? Group discipline – or rather, the lack of it – is a known cause of violence against civilians (Weinstein 2006). During the Troubles, the lack of cohesion and restraint in the INLA seems suggestive of the same logic. At the same time, the theoretical chapter has suggested that ideologies can overcome the challenges of discipline. The Provisional IRA’s punishment of local actions that ran counter to its ideological platform exemplify this. Ultimately, the direction of the causal arrows is hard to establish. However, Ahmadov and Hughes (2017) find a significant causal effect for ideology on armed group behaviour in Northern Ireland, even after incorporating an indicator for group discipline into their model.

**Limitations and implications**

In addition to the possible confounding effect of collusion and discipline, this study faces two key limitations – one specific to this study, one carrying important lessons for other studies as well. They first concerns the data of this study, the second is a general, methodological issue regarding subnational variation.
First, the availability and quality of the data. Although the analysis relies on over 1,300 survey respondents and nearly 3,000 fatalities, the disaggregated regression features only 25 observations for each community. This makes for a rather small sample that is prone to errors and easily skewed by outliers, especially when it coincides with other data concerns. Consider two of these concerns. For one, neither the dependent nor the independent variable is operationalised using time-series data in the analysis, nor is any of the control variables: both the attitudes and the victimisation rates are likely to have varied over the years. In particular, “violence may generate radicalism and support endogenously” (De la Calle and Sánchez-Cuenca 2006, 7) In addition, the presence of exclusionary attitudes is inferred from respondents who agree that "any measures should be taken" to achieve their objective (keeping Northern Ireland Protestant/ending Irish partition), which is only an indirect attempt at gauging how the respondent frames their threats and whom they consider to be legitimate targets.

Second, the analysis points to the methodological hurdles that any subnational analysis of armed conflict faces. Armed groups are mobile: perhaps Northern Ireland’s armed groups could rely on resources (food, shelter, getaway cars) and information from outside the constituency in which they operated. If such outside support was available, their behaviour would be much less conditioned by the need for licence and help in their own area. Considering the tiny size of Northern Ireland – the stretch from Belfast to Belleek on the western border is 140 km, while the north-south distance is 133 km as the crow flies at its maximum - crossing the country could be done in a matter of hours. It is still possible, for instance, that more exclusionary Protestant constituencies produced many of the combatants who joined the ranks of the Protestant armed groups, yet spent their days of combat in different parts of the country before returning home. Suggesting as much, one account of the Troubles mentions that, according to a persistent rumour “all personal acts of intimidation were carried out by outsiders to the area” (Darby 1986, 83).

The more general lesion here is that subnational studies should take into account that geographic areas are not artificially delimited units. Although the conflict scholarship has emphasises the ‘local’ aspects of the production of violence (Kalyvas 2003), it should not be forgotten that armed groups can still easily move beyond the confines of their native constituency. In Nepal, Maoist combatants often travelled more than 500 kilometres away from where they were recruited through difficult terrain (Eck 2018, 271). This is not an

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31 Several studies and reports on the Troubles mention that civilian victimisation was higher on both sides in the 1970s (Toolis 1997; White 1997; Hayes and McAllister 2001).
unlikely scenario in other conflicts, many of which take place in landscapes that are much more hospitable than Nepal’s. Microstudies have previously been criticised for overaggregating variables and omitting territorial control from the analysis (Kalyvas 2008b). The challenge of delimiting geographic units in an effective way deserves equal attention from future researchers of subnational variation.

To future studies of ideology, this thesis offers a novel way to theorise the effects of ideology – through the logic of exclusionary frames and attitudes, and through ideological licensing – and a way to quantify these effects. If some of the particular obstacles of this study – such as the small size of the sample and the lack of time-series data – can be overcome, a meso-level study like his one can take a useful place between single cases (Goodwin 2007), micro-level (Ugarriza and Craig 2013; Costalli and Ruggeri 2015) and macro-level (Thaler 2012) studies of ideology and civil war.

Finally, the findings of this study are also relevant for policy-makers. The enduring importance of ideological factors demonstrates that not all armed groups can be managed and met in the same way: their ideological agendas are likely to be more than rhetorical devices, and are worth paying attention to if a group is to be fought or accommodated. Civilians are frequently presented as powerless actors in conflict zones, despite amassing evidence to the contrary (Kaplan 2017). If future studies in line with this thesis project find more evidence for a link between popular attitudes and armed activity, that further underscores the agency of civilians in conflict. At the same time, this path should be followed with caution by policy-makers. If civilians are convinced by ideological messages to give up their support for an armed group, but do not receive adequate protection after doing so, they may themselves become targets of civilian victimisation (Hirose, Imai, and Lyall 2017).
6. Conclusion

The protagonist in W.F. Hermans’ *The Darkroom of Damocles*, regarded as the quintessential Dutch novel of the 20th century, is a good-for-nothing who finds meaning in his life when he is commissioned by a mysterious man to kill suspected war criminals, only to be arrested afterwards for cold-blooded murder and to be told that his superior was a mere figment of his imagination. Real or imagined, human beliefs shape human behaviour. This thesis has taken that insight and applied it to a persisting puzzle: the observation that some armed groups are much more likely to kill civilians during civil wars than others.

At the national level, in comparing the ideologies of armed groups and populations, there is evidence in support of the hypothesis. Protestant ideologies and communities are associated with significantly higher civilian victimisation than Catholic ideologies. This suggests that armed-group behaviour is informed by ideological attitudes, which is itself a joint product of group norms and the ideological licence of the support base. Northern Ireland’s Protestant population produced both exclusionary ideological frames and armed groups that targeted civilians with regularity, a consistent finding across the country and across groups. This contrast with the Catholic population, whose population adopted inclusionary frames and whose armed groups limited their targets to a narrower set of opponents.

At the subnational level, the picture is much more diffuse. In Northern Ireland, ideological attitudes varied across Protestant as well as Catholic communities, but these attitudinal differences were not matched by the predicted variation in the local victimisation rates of the armed groups claiming to represent the respective communities. Instead, the observed differences were fully driven by the national ideological cleavage between Protestants and Catholics. The limitations of the study are plenty: the ability of the survey to capture exclusionary ideological attitudes, the low number of observations in the analysis, and the difficulty of credibly establishing subnational variation.

Although the external validity of these findings is difficult to estimate, the thesis adds to a long debate over the drivers of civilian victimisation during the Troubles. More broadly, the theory provided here suggests a new way to think about the pathway from ideology to violence. The empirical analysis carries implications for the use of subnational analyses in studies of violence. In all, this study suggests that ideologies matter for civilian victimisation, but much remains unknown on its mechanisms.
7. Bibliography

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## Appendix

### Description

In addition to the overall summary statistics, the following table lists the level of civilian support for exclusionary attitudes, total fatalities and victimisation rates for all constituencies:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Catholic constituencies</th>
<th>Protestant constituencies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>attitude</td>
<td>fatalities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belfast North</td>
<td>23.3%</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belfast West</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
<td>358</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belfast East</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Down</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foyle</td>
<td>18.1%</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Londonderry-City</td>
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<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carrick</td>
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<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Armagh</td>
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<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enniskillen</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Larne</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-Down</td>
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<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Armagh</td>
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<tr>
<td>North Londonderry</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Antrim</td>
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<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Down</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Tyrone</td>
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<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Down</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Tyrone</td>
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<tr>
<td>Iveagh</td>
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<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mourne</td>
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<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>North Tyrone</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Armagh</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Londonderry</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Down</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The following visualisation compares the extent of civilian victimisation – as a proportion of all casualties per constituency – of Catholic (green) and Protestant (orange) groups in every district:

**Disaggregation**

The disaggregation of the initial regression into separate models for the Catholic and Protestant constituencies demonstrated that the positive, statistically and substantively significant coefficient that was found at first, was explained not by subnational variation but by the national communal dichotomy. The following table shows the scatterplots after disaggregation of Catholics (left) and Protestants (right).
Robustness checks

The analytical chapter questioned the validity of the initial model, and the initial finding of a correlation between attitudes and violence. To test the validity, the following regression table shows the effects of two changes to the initial model. Model (1) replicates the original model, in which attitude is strongly, positively linked to the civilian victimisation rate.

To isolate direct from indirect effects, Model (2) adds both a protestant dummy variable and an interaction variable between ideology and attitude (in this case, attitude*protestant). The protestant dummy and the attitude dummy are found to be of around equal statistical significance (both at the 95% confidence level). The absence of significance for the interaction variable suggests that the effect of the protestant ideology at large is not dependent on the subnational level of civilian support.

To investigate the influence of outliers, model (3) drops constituencies where armed groups inflicted fewer than five casualties (in total, combatants and non-combatants). As a consequence, the subnational attitude variable now loses all of the statistical significance that remained after the second model. The protestant dummy barely budges, providing further evidence to suggest that the differences in violence are indeed driven by ideology, but only at the national level.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VARIABLES</th>
<th>(1) original</th>
<th>(2) interaction</th>
<th>(3) fewfatalities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>attitude</td>
<td>0.665***</td>
<td>-0.786**</td>
<td>-0.507</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.181)</td>
<td>(0.366)</td>
<td>(0.426)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>att*protestant</td>
<td>0.688</td>
<td>0.204</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>(0.480)</td>
<td>(0.558)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>protestant</td>
<td>0.399**</td>
<td>0.552**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.191)</td>
<td>(0.206)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ingroupfatalities</td>
<td>0.0306</td>
<td>9.89e-05</td>
<td>-0.0678*</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0398)</td>
<td>(0.0312)</td>
<td>(0.0371)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dominance</td>
<td>-0.0456</td>
<td>-0.0796</td>
<td>-0.0158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0611)</td>
<td>(0.0476)</td>
<td>(0.0528)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>urbanisation</td>
<td>-0.000776</td>
<td>0.0313</td>
<td>0.0830**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0456)</td>
<td>(0.0359)</td>
<td>(0.0393)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unemployment</td>
<td>-1.119</td>
<td>-0.659</td>
<td>-1.006*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.733)</td>
<td>(0.571)</td>
<td>(0.575)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.202</td>
<td>0.338***</td>
<td>0.451***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.136)</td>
<td>(0.111)</td>
<td>(0.107)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted R-squared</td>
<td>0.270</td>
<td>0.568</td>
<td>0.664</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1
When the fitted values of the interaction term are plotted against the residuals, the lack of explanatory value at the subnational level is even more evident.